



November 15, 2007

Sharon Heywood, Forest Supervisor
Shasta-Trinity National Forest
3644 Avtech Parkway
Redding, CA 96002
(530)226-2500

RE: Mt. Shasta Avalanche Center

Dear Ms. Heywood,

Thank you for your time in reviewing and addressing our comments with regards to the Mt. Shasta Avalanche Center. We look forward to years of partnership with the USFS in providing exceptional educational, safety, awareness and stewardship services to the users of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

The Friends of the Mt. Shasta Avalanche Center (Friends) would like to express our appreciation for the labors and services that the Mt. Shasta Avalanche Center (MSAC) has provided over the past 9 years, and we encourage the Forest Supervisor's Office to continue to support, in every way feasible, the sustainability and growth of the Mt. Shasta Avalanche Center. As wintertime utilization of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest by the general public and winter recreation enthusiasts continues to increase, we believe that the MSAC, and their dedicated directors and staff, provide an essential link between the community and the USFS and encourages the appreciation of, safe utilization of and stewardship of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

The MSAC provides valuable educational opportunities and outreach to adults and children alike, in an effort to educate current and future backcountry winter enthusiasts, and promote a community of intelligent, inspired and aware users of the backcountry environment that we are surrounded by, the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The MSAC provides daily avalanche forecasts, and education outreach in an effort to promote safety in the backcountry, and the MSAC provides essential search and rescue services in the unfortunate event of an avalanche in an effort to save

lives. The MSAC serves an area 1,000 square kilometers in size, an area that has seen increased use every year in the winter months by skiers, hikers, snowboarders, snowmobilers, campers and day-use recreationalists. While the MSAC avalanche forecasts are written for Mt. Shasta and surrounding areas, skiers and snowmobilers from Ashland to Mt. Lassen use the forecasts to evaluate snow and avalanche conditions in their area as well. It is truly a regional service.

It is our concern that the MSAC is staffed by one full-time individual this year (and no part-time position has been filled to assist the MSAC). It is our understanding that there exists at least one additional full-time position for the MSAC that has not been filled since the position was vacated in June, 2007. It is our concern that if the MSAC continues to be staffed by only one individual for the 2007-2008 year, and into the future, that the community and the Forest will be significantly at a loss, and that public safety in the backcountry will be increasingly compromised.

It is our concern that the lack of daily forecasts, the limited resource for education and outreach and the limited resource for search and rescue efforts will not only pose a public safety concern, but will also take away from an excellent nationally recognized Type II Avalanche Center that has taken many hours of labor, endless dedication, funding, research and knowledge to create. It is our concern that the lack of additional staffing support for the MSAC for the 2007-2008 season, and into the future, could result in the minimization of or the loss of a valuable resource from the community.

The MSAC is a community resource whose value is measured in so much more than dollars, and it is evidenced by the support and partnership of the Friends with the USFS for the past five years, over 100 members of the Friends, over \$10,000 raised annually (\$50,000 since the Friends group started fundraising efforts) by the Friends to support the educational and safety efforts of the MSAC and the general outpourings of appreciation that are expressed on the streets and in the mountains for the MSAC.

Simply put the Friends group and the Mt. Shasta backcountry community has put a lot into the MSAC by fundraising, assisting with clinics, supporting the program (and the Forest Service) and purchasing sophisticated meteorological equipment used in avalanche forecasting and search and rescue equipment used in the event of an avalanche rescue. We hope that our efforts and the effectiveness of the MSAC are not reduced by a lack of commitment or staffing on the part of the Forest Service.

The Friends encourage the Forest Supervisor's Office to support the MSAC by hiring one additional Avalanche Forecaster for the 2007-2008 year in either a temporary or permanent position and to eventually fill the position that has been vacated by the previous Lead Climbing Ranger and Avalanche Specialist, Matt Hill, with a permanent employee position.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue further, please feel free to contact myself, on behalf of the Friends, and I would be more than glad to discuss this issue with you in person. Thank you for your efforts and timely response to our concerns about this issue.

Regards,

Tuliyani Potts
FMSAC Board Member
Friends of the Mt. Shasta Avalanche Center
A Public 501c3 Non Profit Organization

CC:

Mike Hupp, Mt. Shasta-McCloud Management Unit District Ranger
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors
Barbara Boxer
Diane Feinstein
Wally Herger
American Avalanche Association
Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue
Shasta County Search and Rescue