

MKDA Organized to Fight Mineral King Development by Jim Barton

In 1965, due to threatening statements from the Forest Service, Milton Savage and Ross Sellars called two meetings that led to the establishment of the Mineral King District Association. These meetings, on July 17 and August 14, were at the Savage cabin.

An organizing board selected in July included John Willard, Murt Dula, Richard Becker, Alvin Meyer, Bill Mann, Bill Barton, Ross Sellars, and Milton Savage. At the second meeting, an acting board of directors was agreed upon, comprised of Dula, Sellars, Meyer, Willard, and Savage, with president Savage, secretary-treasurer Sellars, and recording secretary Carol Savage.

The first annual meeting was on August 21, 1966, at the Savage cabin. The ante for annual dues was set at \$5 with possibility of further assessment agreed to.

Forest Service threats and action to phase out recreation permits were already an ongoing procedure in several national forests. So MKDA decided to affiliate with the National Forest Recreation Association. The president of NFRA attended this meeting and described how they had sidetracked the termination of permits and leases elsewhere. This partnership proved to be a definite asset and was continued until Mineral King became part of Sequoia National Park.

Assistance from the Sierra Club came some years later. However, there was already (in 1966) a lot of power arrayed against us and in favor of the proposed ski and summer resort.

This intensified when Disney entered the scene (stage right), including the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, U.S. Senator George Murphy, several chambers of commerce, labor unions, construction associations, and the Tulare County Board of Supervisors.

Don Hillman, chairman of Tulare County Board of Supervisors, made the following rather remarkable statement quoted in a Visalia Times-Delta article on August 19, 1969:

"I am convinced more than ever that the Disney development should go there. It needs to be done for the sake of conservation," he stated.

"I am not impressed by what men have done up there, nor can I see where the beauty of the area has been enhanced. The streams are on the verge of being polluted by poor sewage facilities and there are inadequate controls for cabins,

trash and parking. The area has little future unless there is a well-funded project developer who can serve more people with managed recreation.

“Right now the only future that valley has is for the little developer. Ironically, practically all that area is public land. It doesn’t seem right that those few people should have exclusive use when thousands could benefit,” said Hillman.

In 1971 the permits issued by the Park Service will expire on the homes now situated in Mineral King. Silver City, although on private land, faces condemnation by the government if the Disney project proceeds because it is on the main access route.

The progress status of Mineral King is still in the hands of the courts, which have already delayed construction by two years, according to some estimates.

Hillman, who had not visited the contested scenic property for many years, admitted he will tackle the current situation with renewed conviction and more public relations. He said he will contact forestry service and Sierra Club representatives “to establish a better rapport” in the county’s attempt to “Save Mineral King.”

Back in 1966, our USFS district ranger had stated, almost gleefully, that "you guys won't be here next year." Well, there have been many next years, and we are still here and those "guys" are not!