

Dear Superintendent Williams,

3 December 2007

I was happy to receive your letter of 28 November, and I am certain the Fort Tejon Historical Association membership and the broader living history community with which I am in contact were encouraged to read your words.

First, I wish to thank you for your prompt response. Second, I am grateful for your explanation with regards to the confusion over dates. An apology was not required, as the error was on our part, not yours. Still, I appreciate the sentiment and wish to make one to you and your staff, for our erroneous conclusion.

Based on our recent correspondence, I look forward as you do to the development and implementation of guidelines that are of value and benefit to all. Most importantly, I appreciate your willingness to listen to our input and consider our concerns when drafting revisions.

Mr. Williams, I must stress the importance of our historically collaborative efforts. I believe at this time you appreciate them as much as I do, but for the sake of clarity, I would like to emphasize the position of the FTTHA in this matter.

As you know, I am the leader for a historical preservation and living history society volunteer association (the FTTHA). Our membership constitutes approximately 400 souls, all told. However, it may be less obvious that I am also, de facto the spokesperson for about another 1,000 additional living historians throughout the state. While they have a range of opinions and may express themselves individually, many have indicated a willingness to coordinate their collective voice through me and look most keenly to the relationship you and I develop as they form their own views on the proposed guidelines.

These 1,400 people are good, upstanding citizens of our state. As mentioned, in my earlier letter, reenactors are frequently teachers, doctors, lawyers, business executives, law enforcement personnel, or trained first-responders. Many are veterans. These are the people most inclined to volunteer their time to educating the public through living history and the cause of historical preservation. They are law-abiding, respectable folk. They also happen to be unrivalled experts when it comes to staging living history demonstrations and the safe use of black powder and historical weaponry. Many of these people are themselves consulted by historians and producers in the entertainment industry and are commonly used in film productions because they are safe, and have the equipment and expertise to accurately portray and illustrate these important episodes of our past.

Finally, these 1,400 enjoy the significant fulfillment that presenting reenactments for the public brings and are strongly motivated to find a way to allow these presentations to continue. Concerns among them about the potential ban on battle reenactments at the state parks has led some to urge me to immediately pursue a confrontational approach, including seeking the intercession of our elected representatives. However, I find such a course to be premature and unwise, and contrary to the spirit of cooperation that we have always enjoyed with the State Parks Administration. I strongly believe that a satisfying consensus can be reached if we work together, and I will do my best to encourage the living history community to collaborate with the State Parks System in the development of these policies.

I do understand, very well, that while the parks exist for public benefit, and we are stakeholders, the care of these facilities and the safety of the visiting public are entrusted to you, the State Parks Administration. The policies adopted are yours to compose and implement and it is with professional goodwill that you have solicited our input. For that we are certainly most grateful.

That said, I truly believe the best result for us both will come from our collaboration. In fact, I hope you will work with my association as closely (if not more so) as you have ever cooperated with your stakeholders before, as our expertise can prove invaluable to your efforts and will ensure your success and a positive outcome for your efforts.

At this time then, I would like to submit a detailed line-by-line review of the 42 proposed guidelines for your consideration. I wish to emphasize those areas where the proposals are perfectly composed, and those areas where alterations can be made to increase safety. I also wish to point out those few items that we feel must be modified more substantially to prevent unacceptable consequences.

Additionally, it is my expectation that the process will; engender give and take, meaning as I make a submission you (or someone else in your organization) may wish to explain the rationale, make a counterpoint, & etc. Certainly it is very possible that your own intent and position isn't fully understood or appreciated. Fortunately, through this interaction we may be able to suggest alternatives that will address all concerns without creating unworkable restrictions.

Mutual understanding, respect, and common courtesy, and communication are crucial at this delicate moment. I must pass further word to my membership as soon as practicable, but have asked them to await your response to this communication before taking any further action. I understand your schedule and the season itself may make a response difficult for some days to come. We will wait as patiently as possible. In the meantime, I will begin a detailed review and be ready to provide comment to you, based on our experience and areas of expertise.

Finally, I would appreciate another opportunity to review and comment on the next draft of the guidelines when completed in the approximately two months you have indicated in your letter.

Sincerely,

Mr. Marshall Neal, President

Fort Tejon Historical Association.