



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Gallatin National Forest

Big Timber Ranger District
P.O. Box 1130
Big Timber, MT 59011-0196

File Code: 5460
Route To: Bob Dennee

Date: July 5, 2001

Subject: Telephone conversation regarding Sweet Grass access

To: Files

Ralph Cosgriff called me Monday, July 2, 2001 and again on the 3rd in regard to a copy of a letter he got from Page Carroccia Dringman. The letter was addressed to the Big Timber Acting District Ranger (copy attached). Mr. Cosgriff apparently owns several parcels within the Forest boundary in the Sweet Grass Creek drainage. Mr. Cosgriff was rather upset with the letter he had received and stated the Carroccias had gone "too far". The Carroccias are limiting public access across their property, which resulted in a confrontation with a Forest Service employee and a volunteer on or about June 21, 2001. I personally don't know Mr. Cosgriff, but he apparently is elderly. He and his wife acquired the property in question from Mrs. Cosgriff's father C.R. Ward. Mr. Cosgriff asked me many historical type questions that I could not answer, for instance, what happened to the sign at Eagle Park in 1962?

Mr. Cosgriff stated he had proof that the County and Forest Service had maintained portions of the road/trail across his father-in-law's private land in the Sweet Grass Creek drainage within the National Forest. Mr. Cosgriff immediately provided me with some documentation from 1930, 1936, and 1945 (enclosed). I asked who had maintained the roads outside the NFS boundary to the County Road and he stated primarily Lloyd Rein (a downstream neighbor below the Carroccias). We discussed the Northern Pacific deeds to private individuals and how at least some of them reserved public right-of-way through those sections. I asked Mr. Cosgriff if he would be willing to exchange easements across his property for the trail/road for the same from the Forest Service. He stated there was no need since it was a "public road" through both. He went on to state he also had some sort of agreement with the FS from c. 1935 which also provided such access. I've never seen the historic documents he has referenced or provided me. This is not surprising, since this segment of the Gallatin NF was part of the Absaroka NF and administered out of Livingston until 1945.

Mr. Cosgriff also seemed interested in what type of authorizations the Carroccias have on the National Forest. I explained they had an outfitter permit valid for 35 service days and a grazing permit that I really couldn't address due to my limited knowledge of range authorizations. Mr. Cosgriff implied that he thought the Carroccias were using more than the allotted 35 days on the Forest and were using non-system trails across NFS lands and through his property without authorization. He also stated the cows on the Carroccias allotment in NFS section 8 were always on his property.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Cosgriff sound fairly adamant that the Sweet Grass Road is a "public road." I asked if they would be willing to make a statement to that effect, and it sounded like they would. I apologized for asking them to put themselves in that position if necessary, but they felt it was time to clean this up.

Frank Cifala
Resource Assistant

Enclosures: 4 total

cc: Gordon Schofield
Alan Campbell
Bob Dennee
Fred Haas



William Avey

01/11/02 03:16 PM

To: Frank Cifala/R1/USDAFS@FSNOTES

cc:

Subject: Cosgriff

Ralph and Betty Cosgriff stopped by - really nice folks - they got our letter to Page and wanted to know what was going on - I filled them in best I could, that I was new and learning but that we were planning to start talking to Corricia's this fall - we wanted to protect public access, etc. They feel, as you know, very strongly that Sweetgrass Canyon is public access and has been - also told me that there was a public school in Sec 10 and that the WPA built a bridge in section 10 - also that Barbara VC's father built the road in Section 8 under a SUP in the mid-30's and the permit had a condition that the road would be open to the public - they said they would be willing to sign affidavits attesting to what they know about public access in Sweet Grass canyon.