March 4, 2014

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LAND DEPT.

Land and Minerals Department
7829 Highway #135
Virginia, MN 55792

Dear Mr. Mark Kailanen,

This letter is regarding the County Prescriptive Easements Hearing February 26th in the Mountain Community Center. The following is an outline of the reasons I object to the prescriptive easement across my private property. (RD-ID-15969)

I've owned this property since 1954. The property previously was owned and operated as a sawmill at the end of The Washuk Truck Trail. The property is located along Washuk Lake Number 1 to the East and a huge swamp to the West consisting of roughly one city block wide of high ground.

Your letter dated January 22, 1914, refers to "forest roads that were built many years ago, some dating back to the 1920's and 1930's. This was the end of the trail. We also had a lease on Washuk Lake Number 2 one-half mile to the South. The trails that lead to the lease on Washuk Lake Number 2 were made by the first generation of hunters out of the "Coombe Shack". The footprint of these trails became more defined as snowmobiles came along in the1960's and even more defined in the 1970's with three-wheelers and then four-wheelers. We hunted out of that shack until the spring of 1974 when it was burned by arsons. That summer we hauled in a 30-foot trailer for deer season.

During the summer of 1970, another party moved a shack to the end of Washuk Lake Number 1. After the first year of activity, that shack was vacant in the fall. We never did meet them nor did they hunt.

The Deer Season 1974 was a wet one…lots of rain and cold. There were eight guys in a small trailer; and the whole time, we were wondering what happened to the people that hauled in the shack in 1970 and then disappeared. At the end of the first week of Deer Season, we found out that no one had a lease or owned that property and acquired the lease. In 1977 the owners of the shack came forward, and we purchased the structure from them and currently lease that site.

In the 1980's a spur road to the west of the Washuk Truck Trail was put in running parallel about ¼- to ½-mile apart. In 1994 a large clear-cut to the south of my property took place from the spur road all the way to Washuk Lake Number 2.

1994 was another wet year, and the logger evidently did not finish his cut in time. Upon checking on my shack, I noticed 4- and 5-foot ruts from the logger and a city-block of more trees gone that was not marked for cutting. Trees were cut right up to the lake, and he was still working out there.

I personally called the Land Commissioner at the time and his reply was that the logger "should have been out of there weeks ago." The logger was immediately shut down leaving bundles and bundles of maples. We had lots of great firewood at the shack for the next 10 years until it all started to rot. Hundreds of maples were left to rot all over the woods. Trails left by the skidders damaged the root systems so badly that a lot of the woods never grew back...making it look like a highway back there.

The fall of that year the Land Commissioner contacted me in regards to the lease I had of Washuk Lake Number 2. I was informed at the time that I had to have a structure on it or I had to give it up. I could build on it but was told there was no easement; therefore I could not drive a vehicle to the site even though the clear-cut came to it from the spur road. We used to drive to it from the Washuk Truck Trail. I didn't want to but I gave up the lease. I wish that I had known that detail 20 years earlier. I would have saved some money.

July of 1995 saw the straight-line winds devastate that area around Washuk Lake Number 2, knocking down all the trees around the lake.

In 1996 the trucks and skidders were back to clean up the damage again using the same skid trails as from the year before. I've watched the size of the lake shrink by one-third of its original size in the last 20 years...more than in the previous 60 years. I feel that this is a very fragile peace of woods that has suffered enough in the past 20 years and can't support the extra ATV traffic and a road through it. There was never ever a road or even a trail (other than the roads/trails that we had for hunting) through those woods...not the 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, or 80's until it was maimed by excess logging in the 90's.

I have picked up garbage on the Washuk Truck Trail all my life...beer cans, oil bottles, tires, candy wrappers and just plain garbage. I cleaned up after the loggers leaving oil filters, hydraulic filters and jugs. Two years ago I picked up the cul-de-sac at the end of the spur road...all kinds of cans and garbage, plus I made a fire to

burn rosebush trimmings from someone's garden and a bunch of cardboard boxes that were tossed out.

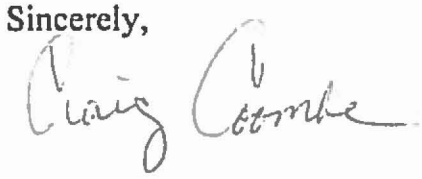
I love the woods and having a priceless piece of property at the end of the Washuk Truck Trail is one of the highlights of my life. Putting a road through the center of my property pretty much renders it useless for hunting. I could wave to all the traffic that cross my property from 4 different deer stands. I feel it would encourage people to trespass, shoot at birds, deer and etc., through that stretch.

Building the grade up for the road could make the natural flow of the spring run-off and rain difficult to naturally make its way to the lake. There is a corduroy spot just before my private property that the swamp flows over also making its way to the lake. Would culverts drain too much of that swamp, which would harm wildlife and the vegetation if we have a hot spring and summer?

The road is a befit to wolf but not the deer. I could give numbers on the deer out there but my records are at the shack. I have the last 40 years logged of deer seen and killed during the season, and trust me, the deer population is down significantly.

I could tell you fifty-five years of stories about my property and hunting out there; but the bottom line is, it's very upsetting to me to see a road come right through my property when there was never, ever been a road before.

Sincerely,



Craig Coombe
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