

Land Use and the Love Month

By Del Albright

February is a great month. Some call it the “love” month, what with Valentine’s Day and sunshine on the way. Seems to me there’s also a lot of November birthdays out there? But writing for the “love” month gets me a little on my rambly soapbox.

Be that as it may, when it comes to land use and public access, love is not a word we use very often. Love our recreation? Yes, of course. Love those who want our form of recreation dead and buried? I don’t think so. But you know some words struck me funny the other day as I was watching Larry King interview the Rev. Billy Graham. Mr. Graham told Larry that it was possible to love someone but not what they do. Interesting concept, huh?

I suppose we could apply that thinking to land use and recreation. Can we forgive those who trash our reputations (via our means of recreating)? Can we learn to “love” our neighbor when they want us thrown off public land? Do we turn the other cheek when some vocal minority group uses bad science, lots of money, and many brainwashed, partially informed volunteers to advocate and pursue their form of personal self-interest?

And what about some of our own peers? Do we still “love” them for some of their travesties? I just received a report from a very reliable source that some desert recreationists recently stole some ore carts right off the abandoned rail line from an old desert mine in Southern California. Now that takes some effort! Ore carts are made of iron and are very heavy and awkward to move. I was hoping to show those carts to the youngsters that travel the desert with me (and their kids).

Occasionally, our own peers can be some pretty poor examples of our form of recreation too. We’ve all seen snowmobilers, dirt bikers, four wheelers, whatever, doing things that we’d just as soon they didn’t do. Do we forgive them?

Do we forgive special interest radical enviro groups that don’t live up to their own deals? Do we still attempt to compromise with folks that have backstabbed us before?

I’m an optimist in a lot of ways. I still believe we can find peaceful co-existence with some enviro groups; not all, but some. I am willing to compromise where it makes sense; but not just for the sake of compromising. In any disagreement, all sides must be willing to give; or the middle ground is never achieved. On the other hand, I can be a very unforgiving person when someone blatantly breaks the rules or “cheats” me!

Love: it’s an interesting concept with a lot of ramifications. Forgiveness: it’s easy to talk about but very hard to do sometimes. I guess for me it’s not very simple to live up the preachings that usually follow these two words. I try hard; but it’s not easy. My advice to you, if you were looking for any, is to take the world as you see it, and evaluate it on a

case by case basis. Each person/group you deal with is deserving of a fair chance – at least one; but certainly deserving of your personal evaluation and not that of the rumor mill.

Each time you see a peer do something you know is unethical, I suggest you take immediate and direct action to let them know how you feel about it and what the right way should be. Each time you encounter a group that breaks the rules or cheats you, I suggest you deal with it head on and let them know. Am I suggesting that you learn to “love” and “forgive”? Not exactly. I am suggesting that you not just “let” things happen in this world around you. Make something happen. Take a stand and believe in something (to do with your recreation). Have expectations and make them clear to those around you. Get involved in land use and public access as your time allows. Good luck.