

Dear Templed Hills Friends and Family,

I was recently contacted by the owners of the Fuller Ranch, an 86 acre ranch about two miles below Templed Hills. The elder Fullers have passed away, leaving the three Fuller siblings to care for the ranch. In recent months, the Fullers have reached out to me regarding the future of their property. In a March meeting I had at “the Fuller place”, the family expressed a desire for the ranch to become part of Templed Hills. The siblings reminisced about their parents’ stories of the Templed Hills wagon traveling up and down Mill Creek to pick up local children attending summer camps and VBS. The elder Fullers were actually frequent campers during the early years of Templed Hills. In fact, our camp was where the young Mr. Fuller met the young lady who would become his wife.

The Fuller Ranch was homesteaded in 1908, almost 20 years before Templed Hills was founded. The lower portion of the fuller property begins where the Yellowstone Bible Camp ends, and extends toward Templed Hills up to the fence line of the Snowbank Forest Service cabin. The entire property borders Mill Creek. Much of the property is to the north of Mill Creek Road, which is fairly steep hillside. However, the pasture area of the property is approximately 50 – 60 acres, which is triple the size of Templed Hills’ present lease.

The property has been appraised at about 3.2 million dollars. The Fullers are not a wealthy family, and are motivated to sell the property. However, they have consistently expressed their desire to have Templed Hills retain the ranch, which is why the “for sale” sign is not up yet. (They are as concerned as I about what could happen to the ranch under new ownership.) They told me they would accept an offer for less than the appraised amount, but just how much less I did not ask. I am compelled to share this information with you for a number of reasons:

1. I want everyone in the Templed Hills family to be aware of the unique and incredible opportunity presented by this potential sale. This property, or any property in such proximity to Templed Hills, will no likely be for sale again in any of our lifetimes.
2. Someone in the Templed Hills family may feel called to donate or raise funds to purchase the property at a significantly reduced rate with the potential of “gifting” it to camp, without the expense of realtor fees.
3. The sale of the Fuller Ranch, when it is officially listed through a broker, will significantly affect the overall environment of Templed Hills. Any number of private individuals, corporations or developers could purchase the property and change the character of the approach to the camp as we know it.
4. Long term options, if Templed Hills did own the property, include: (a) A land swap with the Forest Service for the property on which Templed Hills now sits; (b) Ownership of 86 acres on which to offer more activities and amenities to future campers; (c) Property on which we could relocate (and refurbish) our existing camp buildings; (d) Incalculable, and year-round, income opportunities generated through the ownership of property on “this side” of the Forest Service gate.

As many of you know, Templed Hills is inaccessible by vehicle from mid-December to May. In addition, any improvements (new structures, major repairs, equipment, special events, etc.) on our present property must be formally approved by the Forest Service. This is often a lengthy and uncertain process. Both of these restrictions are the result of running camp operations on leased Forest Service property.

If you have not been following the news, we are in a time of “land acquisition” by the U.S. government. The Bureau of Land Management has recently acquired hundreds of thousands of acres from farmers and other entities that were leasing land, regardless of the lease agreements that were in place. Thirteen million acres across eleven western states are the next target of government acquisition, 2.5 million of which are in Montana. There is no evidence that the Templed Hills property is a target for acquisition by any means. My intention is not to instill fear, but to remind you that our ability to remain on camp property is only as secure as the intent of the U.S. Forest Service to allow us to occupy it.

The Fullers are courteously giving Templed Hills the “first right of refusal” before listing their property for sale. There are many of you who have an intimate connection to Templed Hills. Many of you cherish Templed Hills as it now is; many of you would love to see it become something more. As Executive Director, I have a much shorter history with the camp than most of you reading this letter. I am in no position to consider a decision of such magnitude without first presenting it to everyone who is part of Templed Hills. (Of course, without 2 to 3 million dollars, no one is in such a position...)

With all this information, what do we do now? First, cover the Fuller property in prayer as its future could have lasting implications on our wonderful camp in Paradise Valley. Second, share your vision with me! I challenge each of you to contact me, whether you’re sharing an opinion or offering a bold and radical plan for purchasing the Fuller ranch. Send your idea to sippolito@comcast.net or to PO Box 11731, Bozeman, MT 59719. Please reply by the end of April – timing is essential!

How blessed we are by the chance to dream big dreams!

Sal Ippolito
Executive Director, Templed Hills