



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Director's Office
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EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



November 6, 2017

Michael N. Kobseff, Chairman
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors
PO Box 750
Yreka, CA 96097

Dear Chairman Kobseff:

Subject: Shasta Big Springs Ranch Acquisition

I received your letter dated August 8, 2017, with regard to Siskiyou County's position on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW or department) acquisition of the Shasta Big Springs Ranch. Your letter states that the county will not support CDFW purchase unless three conditions are met, and then your letter describes those demands. The first two were Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and the third was initiating a Safe Harbor process for both the Shasta and Scott Valleys.

Let me begin with a personal thank you. I appreciate having worked with you for several years now. I understand the importance of the department maintaining a good working relationship in the county. I appreciate your acknowledgments that the department is making efforts to improve these dynamics.

We acknowledge and thank the residents of Siskiyou County who have voluntarily worked with CDFW to protect and restore salmon and steelhead. These voluntary actions combined with future efforts will help ensure that the native salmon and steelhead populations will rebuild while maintaining a sustainable farming and ranching way of life in Siskiyou County. I do not want to skip over this aspect of your letter.

The county often criticizes the department. I rarely have a chance to offer context. Please see the list below for a summary of all the voluntary projects and funding from CDFW and the Wildlife Conservation Board, a component of the department that I chair, over the last five years, 2012-2017. While your letter points out that many voluntary efforts go without "regulatory relief," this funding illustrates a substantial investment of public dollars in the county for collaborative approaches to land, water, and species conservation and management. It is likely the many projects represented in the summary totals also resulted in regulatory relief either through more regulatory certainty, public investment for voluntary actions, durable permitting, or all the above.

SISKIYOU COUNTY PROJECTS FUNDED BY WCB AND CDFW FROM 2012 – 2017

•	WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD	
o	Conservation Easements	\$12,345,400
o	Stream Flow Program	\$3,033,603
o	Public Access Program	\$900,000
	TOTAL FUNDING =	\$16,279,003
•	FISHERIES RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM	
o	Planning and Design Projects	\$1,542,322
o	Education and Outreach	\$145,628
o	Fish passage, Restoration	\$5,072,921
o	Water Conservation	\$830,827
o	Monitoring	\$1,395,304
	TOTAL FUNDING =	\$8,987,002
•	PROP 1 CDFW	
o	Salmon River Restoration Planning	\$ 225,340
•	Shasta Valley Wildlife Area	
o	Little Shasta River fish screen	\$299,800
o	Pump and water delivery	\$246,000 – in progress
	TOTAL FUNDING	\$545,800
•	Butte Valley Wildlife Area	
o	Replace trash rack (Duckstamp)	\$40,000 – complete
o	Wetland enhancement (Duckstamp)	\$115,500 – in progress
o	Rehabilitation of pumps (Drought funds)	\$144,000 – complete
o	Water delivery enhancement (Duckstamp)	\$131,000 – complete
o	Pipeline enhancement (Duckstamp)	\$156,000 – in progress
	TOTAL FUNDING	\$586,500

Grand Total \$26,623,645

You ask that CDFW make a tax payment for an alleged property tax arrears of more than \$500,000. For several years, the department has advocated for satisfying what is known as PILT payments. However, Fish and Game Code Section 1504(c) requires a legislative appropriation of funds before CDFW can make payments to counties in lieu of property taxes. As you know, the Budget Act of 2015 provided an appropriation to make these payments associated with properties owned or operated by CDFW as wildlife management areas at the time. This appropriation did not provide funds required to make payments associated with prior year PILT amounts. CDFW now provides \$15,376 annually for those covered lands in Siskiyou County. The Legislature would have to provide additional funds to CDFW to make payments for properties acquired since 2015.

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However, the department is considering your request regarding payments related to the Shasta Big Springs Ranch. I anticipate following up with you in several weeks on this issue.

California Safe Harbor Agreements (SHA) are issued to landowners who are voluntarily managing land or water to benefit endangered, threatened, or candidate species. The CDFW accounts for past, present, and future landowner actions that increase populations, enhance, restore, or maintain habitat, contribute to species recovery, and result in a net conservation benefit. SHA also provides "take" authorization and assurances for covered landowner activities. CDFW is currently involved in SHA discussions with several landowners in the Shasta Valley watershed for Coho Salmon. We are available to assist any landowner who is interested in obtaining a SHA. More information is available at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CESA/Safe-Harbor-Agreements>.

Thank you for your request to initiate SHAs in both Shasta and Scott Valley. I believe that you and the county are aware the department is close to completion of a SHA in the Shasta Valley. Does the county intend to be supportive of that SHA? We have spent considerable time working with a majority of your constituents to get to this result.

To the best of my knowledge, no organized effort in the Scott River watershed has approached my office directly about an interest in developing a SHA for that watershed. I would not discount that possibility, but all interested parties would need to be willing to create an open, inclusive and transparent process. Other important stakeholders include the Karuk Tribe and non-governmental conservation organizations.

Finally, I hope that you and I can continue to bring the county and department closer together on the many issues we share. The department is spending considerable time and resources in Siskiyou County. For example, CDFW works in collaboration with the county sheriff on cannabis regulation and enforcement. Thank you for your letter concerning acquisition of the Shasta Big Springs Ranch.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact our Northern Region Manager Neil Manji at (530) 225-2363 or at Neil.Manji@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Charlton H. Bonham
Director

cc: The Honorable Brian Dahle
California Assembly
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Redding, CA 96002

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