

Butte County Federal/State Land Use Coordinating Committee

September 30, 2020 3:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86436514152?pwd=Nmt0Slp3TUVESE4UXIKdCsyNXZCdz09>

Meeting ID: 864 3651 4152

Passcode: 301081

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,86436514152# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location: 1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Meeting Agenda

- 1) Self-Introductions (committee members and public) Invited guest: Thad Walker, BCRC
- 2) Approval of Minutes for 2020 meetings: August 18, 2020
- 3) Update on Poe Recreation Trail – Board letter dated 9-29-20 and Motion to Intervene filed by American Whitewater and California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
- 4) Yellow Creek Meadow Restoration and West Shore Lake Almanor Projects – Letters of Support for LNF
- 5) Discussion of Butte County Resource Conservation District Butte Creek House Meadow Restoration Planning Grant Application and request for Letter of Support. (WCB Prop 1 planning grant) The grant submission deadline is October 1, 2020. Approximate grant amount is \$175,000 (TBD)

Project Summary:

The Butte Creek House Meadow Restoration Project builds on collaborations between diverse partners to address meadows and forest health needs in the critical Butte Creek Watershed that supports one of only three Central Valley streams that continues to harbor a self-sustaining population of spring-run Chinook salmon. In collaboration with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife we propose to develop/permit/ and complete environmental/ compliance for the 320 acres Butte Creek House Ecological Reserve, and integrate the hydrologic restoration with forest health. Future expected benefits from implementing the projects include increases in the availability and quality of water in Butte Creek; increased resiliency to climate change, wildfires, and drought; improved habitat to aid recovery of the listed species (e.g. sandhill crane and willow flycatcher, cascade frog, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, spotted owl, and northern goshawk), and numerous other species; and increased carbon storage. Expected benefits are the result of restoring functional ecological flows. Requested funds will develop hydrologic restoration designs and permits to meet regulatory requirements, and complete CEQA compliance.

Past management and fire exclusion have altered forest structure, successional processes, and meadow health throughout the Butte Creek headwaters. Fire suppression has increased forest density, shifted forest composition towards more shade-tolerant species, and led to the accumulation of hazardous fuels. Meadows have been degraded through past management practices, such as hydromodification, overgrazing, willow eradication, and beaver extirpation. This has resulted in channel incision lowering the water table, impairing ecological function, and reducing the benefits of healthy meadows. To address these problems, our project will promote enhanced streamflow and resilient forests through forest health treatments while simultaneously restoring meadow systems to enhance the landscape function and ecological flows. We propose to develop a CEQA document that will: 1) restore the

hydrological functioning of 110 acres of meadow 2) treat 210 acres of forest health in Butte Creek House Meadow.

The meadow restoration and thinning proposed in this project is part of a larger effort to restore the Upper Butte Creek watershed, which will enhance stream flows and involve upland forest treatments for hazardous fuels reduction through removal of merchantable and non-merchantable timber, treat natural surface roads/ trail to limit hydrologic connectivity, provide natural resource educational opportunities, and enhance recreation. This project is part of larger collaborative efforts between Butte County Resource Conservation District, Jonesville Cabin Owners Inc. Plumas National Forest- Almanor Ranger District, Friends of Butte Creek, Butte County Government, Northern California Regional Landtrust, Chico Velo Cycling Club, and other partners

Overview of Grant requirements and parameters

California voters approved the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1) to provide funding to implement the three objectives of the California Water Action Plan, which are: more reliable water supplies, the restoration of important species and habitat, and a more resilient and sustainably managed water resources system that can better withstand inevitable and unforeseen pressures in the coming decades.

Proposition 1 authorized the Legislature to appropriate \$200 million to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to fund projects that result in enhanced stream flows (i.e., a change in the amount, timing, and/or quality of water flowing down a stream, or a portion of a stream, to benefit fish and wildlife). WCB distributes these funds on a competitive basis through the Stream Flow Enhancement Program (Program).

The Program funds projects that enhance stream flows and are consistent with the objectives and actions outlined in the California Water Action Plan, with the primary focus on enhancing flow in streams that support anadromous fish; support special-status, threatened, endangered, or at-risk species; or provide resilience to climate change. The goals of the Program are to:

- Support projects that lead to meaningful increases in the availability and quality of water in streams, particularly by protecting and restoring functional ecological flows for streams identified as a priority for fish and wildlife.
- Support projects that work to remove key barriers to securing enhanced flows for nature (e.g., by making it easier to change the timing of flows as needed, or streamlining processes for long-term transfers of water for stream flow).
- Support projects that allocate resources for infrastructure (e.g., gauges) for evaluating stream flow conditions and stream responses to enhancement efforts.

The process, procedures, and criteria through which WCB administers the Program are described in the Program Guidelines and Proposal Solicitation Notices.

Project Examples

Examples of project types (should not be viewed as exhaustive lists of eligible project types):

- Water Transactions (e.g., changes to a stream's hydrograph through lease, transfer, or seasonal exchange of water)
- Acquisition of water from willing sellers – permanent and long-term (not less than 20 years) dedications for the purpose of instream flow
- Habitat restoration projects (e.g., weed eradication, wet meadow restoration, restoration of entrenched streams, upper watershed restoration or forest thinning) that reshape stream hydrograph.
- Planning studies requiring CEQA compliance, permitting, and engineering for specific projects
- Studies to evaluate instream flow needs, identify priority streams and watersheds, or evaluate habitat suitability and temperature needs
- Water efficiency generally – Irrigation efficiency and water infrastructure improvements (e.g., diversion, conveyance, and on-farm projects) that save water and enable reshaping of the stream hydrograph

- Reconnecting flood flows with restored flood plains
- Capital outlay projects that allow reservoir operations both at existing and new storage sites

ACTION REQUESTED: Approve, modify or deny request for letter issued by the Coordinating Committee in support of the BCRCO Grant Application (draft letter attached)



**BUTTE COUNTY FEDERAL/STATE LAND USE
COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**7 COUNTY CENTER DRIVE
OROVILLE, CA 95965**

September 30, 2020

John Donnelly
Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Board

Dear John Donnelly,

The Butte County Federal/State Land Use Coordinating Committee (Committee) is writing to support Butte County Resource Conservation District's (BCRCD) application for 2020 Stream Flow Enhancement Program grant to complete meadow restoration planning and CEQA for the Butte Creek House Ecological Reserve. The Committee is charged with advising the Board of Supervisors on current public lands management issues, and functions under the Brown Act for public meetings.

The Butte Creek House Ecological Reserve is a 320-acre property that contains a degraded wet-meadow and brook trout fishery that lies at the headwaters of Butte Creek. This meadow also helps support one of only three Central Valley Streams containing a self-sustaining population of spring-run Chinook Salmon. Additionally, the Butte Creek House Ecological Reserve also provides habitat for listed species (sandhill crane, willow flycatcher, cascade frog, Sierra-Nevada yellow legged frog, spotted owl, and northern goshawk).

Restoration of this meadow will improve aquatic and terrestrial habitat for native species that depend on meadow habitat. Other meadow restoration projects have demonstrated that a restored meadow can result in an increase in water storage capacity, reduced water temperatures in summer, higher dissolved oxygen levels, reduced erosion and sediment delivery, and increased carbon storage.

In conclusion, the Committee strongly supports the efforts of BCRCD to seek funding for meadow restoration for Butte Creek House Ecological Reserve.

Sincerely,

cc: Butte County Board of Supervisors
Butte County Forest Advisory Committee
Butte County Resource Conservation District