

August XX, 2020

Wildlife Conservation Board
PO Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Dear Wildlife Conservation Board Grant Review Committee,

As chairman of the Blue Ribbon Committee for the Rehabilitation of Clear Lake (Committee), I am writing in support of the Lake County Watershed Protection Districts 2023 application for grant funding under the Wildlife Conservation Board Grant Program. These grant funds are well-suited to provide for much needed support of Lake County's efforts to restore and enhance streams and tributaries to Clear Lake, and improve freshwater habitat and flow for the endemic Clear Lake Hitch. Each of the tasks within the proposed project have been identified, by state, local, federal, and tribal, sources as needed projects to improve habitat, management and education and outreach, of the Clear Lake hitch.

The Committee, directed by Assembly Bill 707 (Aguiar-Curry, Ch. 842, 2017) has been given the important charge of making recommendations for rehabilitating Clear Lake, which is critical to Lake County's economy, ecosystem, and heritage. The Committee has identified that water pollution has a significant impact on the water quality of Clear Lake: monitoring and management of Clear Lake tributaries to reduce this pollution is a key component of the Committee's goal. Effective and robust monitoring of major streams such as Middle, Scott's, and Adobe Creeks will be crucial to meeting this goal. These tributaries account for the majority of streamflow into Clear Lake, and account for the drainage for tens of thousands of acres of forested, agricultural, and mixed-use lands throughout the Clear Lake basin.

Lake County Watershed Protection District is partnering with several local tribes and organizations to fulfill the goals of this proposed grant project, several of those entities are also represented on the Blue Ribbon Committee, making this project a perfect fit for successful collaborative efforts as are some of the goals of the committee and the Wildlife Conservation Board grant program.

I support Watershed Protection District's application to seek funds through the Wildlife Conservation Board to organize partners and the overall project (Task 1.0) which totals about \$2.5 million over the grant period and includes two stream systems and multiple sub watersheds. When funds are provided, the District will be able to fully conduct a hydrological assessment of Scott's Creek and Tule Lake (Task 2.0), which are historic sites for hitch spawning and major contributing tributary to Clear Lake water quality. This task also includes a design of two barriers removals or enhancements within the Scotts Creek watershed that will be ready for swift implementation once the grant project is completed.

The proposed grant funds will also complete the much needed and vital Adobe Conjunctive Use Project (Task 3.0), which will provide for long term sustainability of the Adobe Creek and Highlands Creek stream system, a prime spawning ground for Hitch and fry nursery.

For the Adobe Creek Conjunctive Use project to have significant impact, the crossing at Bell Hill must be addressed (Task 4.0) as this culvert crossing has demonstrated to be an especially difficult passage for Hitch going upstream to spawn, and for fry coming down stream as they migrate back to Clear Lake. These grant funds will allow for the proper planning and design needed to replace the culvert to enhance and lift hitch habitat throughout the entire Adobe Creek system.

Additionally, the resulting knowledge, data, and recommendations produced from these combined projects and efforts will add significant value to the aquatic resource research and management being conducted on and around Adobe Creek, Highland Creek, Scotts Creek and Clear Lake by local agencies, tribes, universities, nonprofits, and other organizations in Lake County and beyond.

The District, and their collaborative efforts to pair these planning and implementation projects with community education and outreach (Task 5.0) is essential and demonstrates a holistic approach to better aquatic resource management.

We appreciate your consideration and approval of the submitted grant application for restoring vital hitch habitat within the Adobe, Highland, and Scotts Creek watersheds.

Thank you,

Erik Sklar
Chairman
Blue Ribbon Committee for the Rehabilitation of Clear Lake