



MIDDLE CREEK RESTORATION COALITION

Dedicated to the Restoration of the Middle Creek Wetlands

P.O. Box 1402
Kelseyville, CA 95451
www.middlecreekrestoration.org

April 17, 2017

Governor Edmund G. Brown
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Funding for the Middle Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project in Lake County

Dear Governor Brown,

We ask you to encourage the State Department of Water Resource (DWR), through its Flood Protection Corridor Program (FPCP), to grant \$15.2 million to the County of Lake to complete property acquisition for the *Middle Creek Flood Damage Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration Project* (Project).

Through the FPCP, DWR has made grants in the past, but an additional \$15.2 million is needed to purchase the remainder of the property so the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can finish the Project.

We are private citizens who reside in Lake County. We care deeply about Clear Lake. Based on scientific research, we know the Project will bestow immeasurable benefits to the health of Clear Lake and to the people who live and visit here. To give voice to the widespread public support for the project, we founded the Middle Creek Restoration Coalition (MCRC). Our mission is to actively encourage public officials to give this project priority until it is completed.

The Project will deliberately breach failing levees on Middle Creek and restore 1650 acres of historic wetlands at the north end of Clear Lake. This winter, Clear Lake rose to its highest flood levels in 19 years and flood waters overtopped the levees. The uncontrolled failure of the levees is a real and present danger to lives and property.

A completed Project is the single most effective action that can be taken to improve the quality of the water in Clear Lake. According to scientific research, restored historic wetlands in the Project area will capture nutrient-laden sediments that currently flow into Clear Lake and cause rampant growth of invasive aquatic plants and uncontrollable "blooms" of cyanobacteria, commonly called blue green algae. The Project also will restore wildlife habitat, improve breeding and rearing conditions for the threatened Clear Lake hitch, a native fish, and provide significant recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to Clear Lake.

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We ask for your help to procure from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Flood Protection Corridor Program (FPCP) a grant of \$15.2 million for the County of Lake to purchase the last 800 acres of private property that remain within the Project boundaries. The County is the lead agency for the Project and, pursuant to an agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the County must acquire title to all property within the Project boundary. Once that is done, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can do its part to complete the Project.

The County purchased the first 850 acres with grants from DWR through FPCP. The County now requests additional grants from DWR to fund the remaining purchases.

In June 2015, you eliminated a \$1,000,000 allocation for the restoration of Clear Lake contained in AB 93 sponsored by now Senator Bill Dodd, in part, because, "there are existing grant programs that are available and appropriate to support the restoration of Clear Lake. I am directing my Administration to provide technical assistance to Lake County to assist them in identifying and applying for ecosystem restoration and drinking water grant funding. "

In harmony with that ruling, we ask for your assistance to obtain an additional \$15.2 million from the Department of Water Resources Flood Protection Corridor Program for the County of Lake and the Project.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Valerie Nixon

Harry Lyons, PhD

Victoria Brandon

Peter Windrem

We offer the following information in support of our request:

Who are we?

As noted at the outset of this letter, we are private citizens who reside in Lake County. We care deeply about Clear Lake. Our mission is to actively encourage public officials to double their efforts to finish the Project.

Here is more about us:

- Valerie Nixon is the President of the Lake County Land Trust that owns the Rodman Preserve located in close proximity to the Middle Creek Project. Ms. Nixon is retired from the California Parks Department as a Ranger at Clear Lake State Park for many years.
- Victoria Brandon is the Chair of the Redwood Chapter of the Sierra Club. Ms. Brandon has long been a champion for the restoration of wetlands on the shores of Clear Lake.
- Dr. Harry Lyons, PhD is an oceanographer and expert on the ecology of Clear Lake. Dr. Lyons recently retired as Professor of Biology at Woodland Community College in the City of Clearlake.
- Peter Windrem is the Chair of the Chi Council for the Clear Lake hitch, an organization dedicated to the preservation of the Clear Lake hitch, a native fish classified as a threatened species by the California Fish and Game Commission. Mr. Windrem is a retired Lake County attorney who specializes in the preservation of land and natural resources for the public benefit.

This is our personal contact information:

Valerie Nixon



Harry Lyons, PhD



Victoria Brandon



Peter Windrem



What are the benefits of the Middle Creek Project?

The first benefit is to remove the threat of harm to persons, structures and property in the event the levees fail during a severe flood. The benefit is realized when the County completes its purchase of all private property within the Project area and all the people living there are relocated. Because of severe storms this winter, Clear Lake is now the highest in 19 years. Flood waters have overtopped a portion of the levees. There is an ongoing clear and present danger of levee failure.

The second benefit is to capture the sediments presently transported by Middle Creek and Scotts Creek, its main tributary, to the main body of Clear Lake during winter storms. Almost fifty percent (50%) of the water, sediment, and phosphorus that enters Clear Lake will pass through the Project area. The sediments carry with them phosphates that stimulate the excessive growth of algae in Clear Lake. With the wetlands restored, the sediments will be captured before entering Clear Lake which will dramatically reduce the production of algae that diminishes the quality of the water and attractiveness of Clear Lake to its visitors and residents.

The third benefit is to provide habitat for the numerous species of fish, birds and animals that live in wetlands. The Project's 1400 acres of restored wetland will almost double the surviving 1780 acres around Clear Lake and bring back about 20% of the 7520 acres lost to development over the past decades. The Clear Lake hitch, a native fish classified as a threatened species by the California Fish and Game Commission, will benefit significantly by restoration of its essential habitat.

The fourth benefit of restored wetlands is to boost tourism in Lake County. Wetlands are attractive for birders, boaters and sightseeing lovers of nature. Tourists from all over the world come to Lake County to experience its natural beauty. That beauty is enhanced by wetlands that support abundant wildlife and help restore Clear Lake to its natural state.

How has the cost of \$15.2 million been determined?

The cost of \$15.2 million needed to acquire the remaining private property in the Project has been determined by the joint efforts of the County of Lake Water Resources Department and the California Department of Water Resources Division of Flood Management. The amount is based on appraisals and the amounts paid to date to purchase properties within the Project boundaries.

How much has been spent on the Project to date?

To date, \$12.7 million has been expended for engineering, studies and property acquisition. It was estimated by the Army Corps of Engineers, in 2004, that the total cost to complete

the Project would be \$43 million. Adjusting for inflation, increased engineering and construction costs and related improvements, to complete the Project will cost an estimated \$50 million of which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will pay 65% or approximate \$32 million.

Where can one get more information?

From the County of Lake:

Extensive information about the Project is posted on the website of County of Lake at *Water Resources Department, Department Programs, Middle Creek Restoration Project*.

Will Evans is the County of Lake official in charge of the Project. He can be contacted at:

William H. Evans, MPA
Water Resources Program Coordinator
County of Lake, Department of Water Resources
255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453
707-263-2344
Will.Evans@lakecountyca.gov

From the California Department of Water Resources:

The FPCP program is explained on the website for the *California Department of Water Resources, Flood & Safety, Flood Management, Flood Projects, Statewide Grants, Flood Protection Corridor*.

The FPCP program is administered by Mr. Patrick Luzuriaga who can be contacted at:

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