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**USDA** United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

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Service Lassen  
National  
Forest

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COUNTY OF LASSEN  
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Robert Pyle  
Chairman  
Lassen County Board of Supervisors  
221 S. Roop Street, Suite 4  
Susanville, CA 96130

Dear Chairman Pyle:

Thank you for your letter regarding artificial diversions within Pine Creek watershed, dated December 17, 2010. I appreciate the Board's concern regarding the Pine Creek watershed and the effect of diversions on Pine Creek flow and Eagle Lake water levels. As you know, Lassen National Forest staff has been working for many years with the Pine Creek Coordinated Resource Management Planning Group (CRMP) to identify and resolve key issues related to the Pine Creek watershed. Numerous scientific studies have been conducted in the Pine Creek watershed, and recommendations have been made and implemented on the Lassen National Forest. However, there is still more work needed.

We have a mandate to manage the forest land for multiple uses and resource objectives, striking a sustainable balance that allows us to preserve the Forest's resources for current and future generations. Some of the impoundments in the Pine Creek watershed were designed to improve Pine Creek flows that had been altered as a result of stream bed incision. Other impoundments were implemented to provide for waterfowl habitat. We are currently evaluating the effects of impoundments and railroad obstructions in the watershed and have identified potential opportunities for removal of unnecessary impoundments. We are prepared to remove unnecessary impoundments if the appropriate analysis and public input support the action, and funding is available.

In November, 2010, we presented information to the Board indicating that 73 percent of the variation in Eagle Lake water levels can be explained by changes in precipitation. Since we do not regulate flows into or out of the lake, most of the cause of water level changes in Eagle Lake is beyond our control. The current decline in water levels is primarily driven by multiple years of below average precipitation in the watershed. We have proposed a plan of action that includes evaluating existing information, collecting additional data, and identifying and implementing mitigation strategies, if necessary. It is possible that removal of impoundments or diversions may be identified as a mitigation strategy; however, this is not a foregone conclusion. As understanding of the dynamics of Pine Creek and its watershed increase, the Forest Service will continue to incorporate the best available information into our management of the watershed. We look forward to continuing working with the Board of Supervisors, the Pine Creek CRMP and others in the community on this important issue.

Please feel free to contact Eagle Lake District Ranger Ann Carlson at (530) 252-5810, or myself if you have further questions or comments regarding this issue.

Sincerely,



JERRY BIRD  
Forest Supervisor

cc: The Honorable Tom McClintock, Secretary Tom Vilsack, Ann D. Carlson, Sherry Mitchell-Bruker, Karen S Vandarsall



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