



State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
Office of the Director  
1416 Ninth Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
www.wildlife.ca.gov

EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor  
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



December 15, 2014

Doreen Farr, Third District Supervisor  
County of Santa Barbara  
Administration Building  
105 East Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Supervisor Farr:

#### FISH STOCKING AT LAKE CACHUMA

Thank you for your letter of November 21, 2014. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) understands the importance of trout stocking at Lake Cachuma to the County of Santa Barbara. The Department appreciates the recreational opportunities the County's stocking activities provide and views these opportunities as important to the region's anglers and the local economy.

In 2007, a court ruling found that the Department's annual decisions on fish stocking are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and ordered the Department to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the program. In January 2010, the Department certified the Hatchery and Stocking Program EIR (Hatchery EIR) and began operating its hatcheries and the rest of its fish stocking program according to the mitigation, monitoring and other requirements set forth in the Hatchery EIR. The Department continues to comply with the requirements set forth in the Hatchery EIR and these requirements apply whether stocked fish are fertile or sterile (triploid).

I am not aware that the Department has concluded the "trout stocking program at Cachuma Lake is in violation of the Department's regulations and policies[,] as you write in your letter. Nor am I aware that the Department has suspended this stocking effort "until the Courts render a decision[,] which is a concern you also expressed in your letter. Instead, the Department has successfully navigated long-running litigation against our overall stocking program through, among other things, the production of this Hatchery EIR and the procedures described below in the next paragraph. As a result of surviving that litigation and complying with CEQA, the Department is methodically completing review to determine waterbody-by-waterbody whether to recommence stocking where appropriate, and, if so, upon what conditions. In that respect, I appreciate your offer in the letter to work together on appropriate mitigation measures to facilitate the resumption of stocking in this lake.

To remain in compliance with CEQA, the requirements in the final EIR include the preparation of a Pre-Stocking Evaluation (PSE) by the Department before stocking either fertile or sterile trout in waters of the state. A PSE must be completed and

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approved for each water body the state stocks or permits to be stocked through the authority of a Private Stocking Permit. The objective of the PSE is to identify potential impacts to sensitive native species that may result from stocking. Trout stocking at Lake Cachuma could impact the federally endangered southern California steelhead and the federally threatened California red-legged frog. Steelhead occur just downstream of Lake Cachuma in the Santa Ynez River, which is considered an important stream for the recovery of the species by the Department and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration.

The Department's fisheries staff is currently preparing the PSE for Lake Cachuma and plans on completing it in January 2015. The Department will notify the County when the review is final. Using this PSE review, my expectation is that the Department and County should plan on discussions in the beginning of 2015 regarding the balancing of ecological, biological, and recreational objectives.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, please contact Edmund Pert, Manager of the South Coast Region at (858) 467-4210 or at [Ed.Pert@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Ed.Pert@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Charlton Bonham  
Director

cc: The Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson  
The State Senate  
State Capital, Room 5080  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Das G. Williams  
The State Assembly  
State Capital, Room 405  
Sacramento, CA 95814

ec: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Dan Yparraguirre, Deputy Director  
Wildlife and Fisheries Division  
[Dan.yparraguirre@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Dan.yparraguirre@wildlife.ca.gov)

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Susan LaGrande, Deputy Director  
Office of Legislative Affairs  
[Susan.lagrande@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Susan.lagrande@wildlife.ca.gov)

Edmund Pert, Manager  
South Coast Region (Region 5)  
[Ed.pert@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Ed.pert@wildlife.ca.gov)

Stafford Lehr, Chief  
Fisheries Branch  
Wildlife and Fisheries Division  
[Stafford.lehr@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Stafford.lehr@wildlife.ca.gov)