



COUNTY OF LAKE

Board of Supervisors

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February 25, 2025

To Governor Newsom:

On January 31, 2025, you signed Executive Order N-16-25, directing the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, the Natural Resources Agency, and the Environmental Protection Agency to maximize storage of excess flows due to winter storms. The Lake County Board of Supervisors echoes your concern that we store water desperately needed for fire mitigation, agriculture, wildlife, and vital household drinking water.

In consistency with your Executive Order, we have a need to reinforce the potential loss of Scott Dam, the headwaters of the Eel River, would be detrimental to public safety and water supply security in a fire-prone region of our state. Two of the three largest wildfires in California occurred in the Lake Pillsbury area; the water stored behind Scott Dam was pivotal to keeping the fire from moving towards more developed areas. You will recall, 2018's Mendocino Complex was a staggering 459,123 acres and 2020's August Complex, which was lightning-vs. human-caused, consumed 1,032,648 acres.

We are highly concerned that the State of California has shown support for decommissioning Scott Dam, rather than serving in a neutral role and weighing the network of risks. The release of the aforementioned Executive Order presents a contradiction; loss of Scott Dam would markedly reduce storage of water from future winter storms, whereas your Order directs State Agencies to maximize storage of excess flows.

Lake County appreciates the need to protect California's fisheries and the salmon, a federally recognized endangered species. However, effects of the dam on salmon populations can be reduced without placing communities surrounding Lake Pillsbury (*and more populated areas in the region, should a small lightning-caused fire grow due to lack of fire suppression water supply*) in harm's way.

In 2014, Prop 1 was passed dedicating \$2.7 billion to invest in water storage projects. This money is allocated for meritorious projects; many still in development. However, providing money for more storage and expressing the need for more storage in the Executive Order all while supporting removal of 80,000 acre feet impounded by Lake Pillsbury is contradictory.

The Lake County Board of Supervisors requests time to meet with your office to more fully express our concerns surrounding the effects of the proposed Scott Dam decommissioning. This includes concerns regarding fire resilience, wildlife, water availability, economic impact from the loss of property, sales, and Transient Occupancy Taxes, and much more. Lake County has not been heard, and costs to keep Lake County whole in the face of potential future loss of Scott Dam have been minimized and misrepresented by other parties.

In the midst of unprecedented climate change and concern not to duplicate devastation brought to Lake County by the August and Mendocino Complex events (*with the catastrophic losses and*

long-term recovery needs associated with the Palisades and Eaton fires fresh in mind), we are advocating for the needs of Lake County.

Supporting the decommissioning of Scott Dam without far greater investment in mitigating related concerns puts Lake County residents and others in our region at risk. We have full-time residents who live in the Lake Pillsbury area, and we care greatly to protect them, their homes, their businesses, and the value of their property.

California can do better, and we hope you will agree our water needs are just as important as other Counties' water needs. We request to meet with your office to discuss this very important topic at greater length in hopes of finding better options; the current direction is untenable and dangerous.

Promoting water storage and protecting endangered species cannot be a binary choice; there are solutions to save both. PG&E is pitching a plan that offers no real restoration in Lake County or assurance of resources for necessary mitigations. The State of California, through Department of Fish and Wildlife, is a party to an MOU that includes all parties except Lake County, since we are upstream of the proposed Diversion.

If Scott Dam is to be removed, please consider the needs of Lake County, and ensure necessary funds and resources are allocated to provide for public safety and essential water storage, in consistency with broader State priorities and Executive Order N-16-25.

Sincerely,

Eddie "EJ" Crandell, Chair
Lake County Board of Supervisors