



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
California State Office
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W1834
Sacramento, CA 95825
www.ca.blm.gov

JAN 13 2006

In Reply Refer to:
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CA910

Honorable Wally Herger
410 Hemsted Drive, Suite 115
Redding, CA 96002

Dear Congressman Herger,

This letter is in response to a recent inquiry by Randall Hauser, Chairman of the Shasta Resources Council (SRC). SRC just submitted a new proposal to acquire several parcels of Bureau of Land Management public lands near Redding, including the parcel commonly known as "Area 51."

BLM is aware of SRC's desire to acquire this land as well as the group's opposition to a pending land exchange that would result in disposal of these lands and acquisition of lands along Clear Creek, a tributary of the Trinity River (Salmon Creek Resources). BLM is currently in the final stages of a lengthy decisionmaking process that began in 2002. Part of that process will be publication of a proposed notice of availability of the decision along with an environmental assessment (EA) analyzing the proposed exchange and several alternatives.

SRC has previously proposed creation of an assessment district to acquire the Area 51 property and in the recent letter to you the group suggests two additional alternatives. The first asks BLM to transfer the public lands to SRC who would subsequently sell 10-20 percent of the federal land parcel for development purposes. SRC would then use those proceeds to purchase the remaining 80-90 percent of the public land. While we understand the intent, there is no statute in Federal law to provide authority to BLM to serve as a holding company in essence, i.e. transfer lands to any entity with the expectation of future compensation via whatever means. All land sales are at fair market value with full cash purchase at the time of the sale.

Mr. Hauser mentions a second proposal which would involve SRC acquiring the Grass Valley Creek parcel and substituting his group as the exchange proponent. Acquisition of the private parcel would be a private matter outside of BLM purview and solely between the two private parties. We are not aware of commitments from either party to negotiate that option.

BLM has consistently agreed to consider all feasible alternatives to the pending land exchange and the discussion and analysis of those alternatives, including a "no action" alternative (meaning not approve the land exchange), will be described in detail in the upcoming EA. Our proposed decision to accompany that EA will provide the public a 45-day public protest period. Anyone still not satisfied with the decision after the State Director responds to their protest has a right of appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

We hope this adequately addresses your concern that your constituents be afforded due consideration involving public lands. We will continue to keep you and the public informed as we progress toward our decision. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Steve Anderson, our Redding Field Manager, at (530) 224-2102.

Sincerely,



Handwritten signature of Mike Pool in black ink, appearing as 'MIKE POOL' with a large flourish.

Mike Pool
State Director



Handwritten initials in black ink, possibly 'MP'.