

Shasta Resources Council

Securing Old Shasta's Future

Randall Hauser, *Chair*
Council Members

Lynn Aase
Mike Anderson
Doug Craig
Bruce Crom
Lang Dayton
Rick Lemler
Marc Pfister
Steve Schroth
Bill Siemer
Gloria Speigle
Susan Weale
Bryan Zollner

January 10, 2006

Board of Supervisors
Shasta County

Subject: Community Acquisition of Federal Land
Old Shasta – Area 51

Members of the Board:

The accompanying document details our current proposal and the history of Community efforts to date. Area 51 is our principal focus. However, the scope of our proposal concept includes a total of about 500 acres that will form a Shasta-West natural park to be enjoyed by many generations to come. It will provide excellent terrain for over ten miles of walking, biking and equestrian trails, easily accessible to Old Shasta and west Redding residents alike. It will also allow for the eventual interconnection of west Redding, Clear Creek, Whiskeytown, and Keswick area trail systems that now exist and are planned. As you will recall, the BLM has proposed trading Area 51 (216 acres) to a speculator who intends subdivision development.

Our funding concept is simple. We intend to sell 10 to 20 percent of the land acquired to cover the purchase and initial improvements that would include comprehensive wildfire fuels reduction and emergency access improvements. The price paid would be fair market value as determined by the BLM's own appraisal. Priority consideration to facilitate such a direct sale may be given to the Community by the BLM pursuant to Section 203(f) of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act.

Community efforts and proposals to acquire Area 51 to date have been either ignored or rebuffed by the BLM. No outreach support or advice has been provided or offered by BLM staff or administrators to assist the Community in realizing its goal. However, extensive effort and time has been expended by the BLM in attempting to realize an exchange with the private speculator. This has included public promotion of the BLM proposal as well as numerous tours of the Area 51 parcel given to local influential officials and conducted personally by the BLM Field Manager, Steve Anderson. Detailed and well-documented concerns submitted by the public during the agency's environmental review process have necessitated extended environmental and legal analysis delaying the process for almost a year thus far. This has been driven wholly by BLM's fear and expectation of a public challenge to the exchange and adequacy of NEPA review. The Field Manager even took it upon himself to surreptitiously and threateningly attempt to obtain an advance commitment to specific zoning from County staff on behalf of their speculator client. This attempt to circumvent the County legislative process was appropriately and deftly checked by the County Resource Management Director (see *More Heavy Hand*). None of this extraordinary conduct and expense incurred by BLM representatives is productive for the public. Support and acceptance of Community acquisition in a manner equitable for the federal government is virtually universal.

At this time, we ask not for funding support from the Board. We ask only for your moral, political and continued staff administrative support. We are not suggesting that you oppose BLM trade or disposal policy. Instead, we ask that the Board (1) inform the BLM that public ownership of Area 51 is preferred by the County, (2) request that consideration of the proposed exchange be suspended, and (3) ask that BLM staff work with the Community to develop and implement a Community acquisition plan.

Respectfully Yours,

Randall Hauser, Chair