

# **Proposal to Acquire BLM Holdings**

Shasta Resources Council

03-15-05

## Overview

This proposal is being submitted by the Shasta Resources Council (SRC) on behalf of residents of the Salt Creek drainage along with other residents of the Old Shasta community. The intent is for the community to acquire BLM holdings in the Salt Creek drainage and peripheral areas for public purposes by means of a land exchange or through direct purchase, BLM policies permitting.

Funds with which to accomplish this will be derived through formation of a Community Facilities District (CFD), also known as a Mello-Roos District. Boundaries for the district will be designed to correlate with the general distribution of benefit to property owners, which will be determined by the distribution of parcels selected for acquisition. Area 51 will be principal among those we intend to acquire through the CFD on behalf of the community. We are now in the process of mapping the BLM parcels available for disposal. Once that is complete, we will identify those parcels suitable for community acquisition. A copy of our preliminary draft map is attached. The map is a major improvement over what is currently available; however, it will require substantial revision to fully and accurately delineate BLM parcels designated for disposal.

Community uses planned will include light recreation, historical and cultural resource preservation, environmental protection/enhancement, fuels management, and fire access. We are presently in consultation with the Shasta Community Services District regarding ownership and long-term maintenance. CFD capital funding will be used to purchase parcels for the purpose of exchange, as well as undertake improvements including trails enhancement, fuels reduction, and fire access provisions. Further to this, a perpetual CFD funding stream will be established to cover the cost of ongoing maintenance activities managed by the district.

## Next Steps

This proposal will be systematically refined over the next weeks. Once the exchange parcels are fully identified, we will compile a budget and proceed with district formation. This will allow bonds to be sold and purchase monies to be generated with which to conclude the transaction(s). The costs of appraisals and other documentation needed for both CFD formation and satisfaction of BLM's procedural requirements will be paid by the SRC out of funds now being raised in the community. Covenants and other restrictions limiting future uses to public purposes will be applied prior to transfer of the land to a public entity.

### Benefits to the Public

1. Maintenance and enhancement of recreation and cultural facilities, including non-motorized bike, equestrian, pedestrian and interpretive trails, long-established and well-used by the general public on public lands administered by the BLM within the Old Shasta community.
2. Preservation of traditional cultural property protected under Section 106 pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act. Present cultural and recreational uses of Area 51 in particular date back over 50 years.
3. Preservation of historic and prehistoric cultural resources, including ditches and other significant artifacts present on public lands slated for disposal.
4. Protection and maintenance of environmental resources, including wetlands, streams, riparian zones, surface water quality, fisheries and wildlife habitat, as well as rare and endangered species present on public lands slated for disposal.
5. Reduction and permanent ongoing management of wildfire fuels threatening the whole of the Old Shasta community.
6. Incorporation of enhanced fire emergency access roads and corridors to ensure the safety of surrounding Old Shasta residents in the event of wildfire.
7. Public ownership and control of open space in perpetuity, thereby enhancing the general welfare and health of the Old Shasta and surrounding communities.

### Benefits to the BLM and Federal Government

1. Full compensation for lands acquired by the community in accordance with fair market values consistent with BLM disposal policies and commitments.
2. Disposal of most or even possibly all lands in the drainage and elsewhere in the Shasta Community Services District, not just the “cherry-picked” parcels perceived as most profitable and attractive by speculators and developers, such as Area 51.
3. Establishment of a new model for public response to BLM efforts to dispose of land. The CFD model will allow neighbors and surrounding community members to channel energy into a solution beneficial to the federal government as well as the general public. The model avoids costly delays, wasted staff time, unnecessary complications and bitterness caused by challenges from members of the public who are motivated to realize a more equitable outcome, but perceive that no other option is available. Very few concerned property owners are aware of the CFD option and yet the great majority of them would very willingly consent to an assessment for the purpose of fair market acquisition. Opposition arises not so much against the land exchange itself, but against the destruction of values dear to the community that results from development.

### BLM Actions Requested

1. Suspend all further actions that could create a formal government commitment to the other alternative proposed by speculator/land developer Joe Rice prior to adequate and fair articulation, analysis, and consideration of the community

proposal. As indicated earlier, this is a preliminary proposal and its complete formulation will necessarily require time.

2. Formally, incorporate the present SRC community acquisition alternative in the Environmental Assessment (EA) now being prepared by the Redding Field Office. The SRC will be very happy to meet with BLM staff as necessary to facilitate this process as envisioned in the RAC advisory motion.
3. Cooperate with and assist in the efforts of the SRC to identify and qualify parcels suitable for BLM acquisition.
4. Cooperate with and assist the SRC in the identification and characterization of disposal parcels in the drainage. Please initiate this process by annotating the accompanying 24"x30" map as to current ownership and availability. Our mapping committee will be in contact to arrange a meeting with BLM staff at which time any necessary clarifications can be made.
5. Assist the SRC in refining the community acquisition alternative to optimize its utility and viability to the BLM and the general public.
6. Cooperate with key SRC committees to insure a smooth transition of stewardship.

#### About the SRC

We are an all-volunteer organization formed to proactively secure and enhance environmental, historic, and recreational resources in a manner beneficial to the Old Shasta community and general public. Each Council member chairs a separate committee responsible for carrying out specialized tasks as required.

#### SRC Actions

Certain of the SRC committees will be in touch with appropriate BLM staff over the next few weeks to further refine important elements of our plan and verify the viability of our approach as to BLM policies and procedures. Key matters will be:

1. Positive identification and qualitative evaluation of prospective exchange parcels. (Trade Parcel Acquisition Committee headed by builder Rick Lemler.)
2. Determining the status of fuels management funding and activities related to the disposal parcels to be acquired by the community. (Fire Safe Committee headed by firefighter Mike Anderson.)
3. Clarifying certain liability transfer and land use matters related to insuring a smooth transition of ownership and stewardship. (Legal Committee headed by attorney Steve Schroth.)
4. Preserving connectivity at interfaces with those lands to be preserved in federal ownership as determined by the BLM. (Trails Planning Committee chaired by engineer Marc Pfister.)