

**SHASTA RESOURCES COUNCIL**

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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## **BLM Sued to Reverse Area 51 Land Exchange**

Shasta Resources Council (SRC), Shasta Coalition for the Preservation of Public Land (Coalition) and Sacramento River Preservation Trust (Trust) filed suit in Federal Court March 24, challenging the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Area 51 land exchange. The 216-acre federal parcel (Area 51) in Shasta County was traded for an isolated 566-acre private parcel in Trinity County. The Shasta community has long prized Area 51 for its recreational, natural resource and historic values.

“Many years prior to this exchange, community organizations worked to acquire Area 51 as a natural park for continued public benefit” said Susan Weale, Chair of the Coalition. “The trail system was constructed and well-used by the public over decades,” she added. “Besides having recreation value, the trails also increased connectivity and public safety by providing separation from vehicles for bicyclists and pedestrians on Redding’s west side,” said Randall Hauser, Chair of the SRC and a professional planner. Much of the upper Salt Creek watershed, designated critical habitat for Central Valley steelhead by NOAA Fisheries, is within Area 51. “Preservation would allow a continuous corridor from Salt Creek’s mouth at the Sacramento River to its headwaters above Area 51, and retain spawning habitat for Chinook salmon, steelhead and rainbow trout,” said Weale. Community acquisition proposals included purchase at full appraised value, partnerships, and transfer to another public agency. “BLM conduct and policies make local public acquisition of federal land for natural open space impossible. They flatly rejected every proposal and attempt at dialogue made by the community,” said Hauser. This disregard for the community is exemplified in a statement made by Steve Anderson, Redding BLM Field Manager, at a public meeting that “I do not return phone calls, respond to letters or meet with people who want to change my mind.” “Unfortunately, this lawsuit is the only way to restore this asset to community stewardship”, said Weale.

The lawsuit claims BLM violated environmental laws by failing to adequately analyze impacts on fisheries, recreation, and infrastructure, and failed to properly consider public preservation alternatives. The lawsuit also claims BLM acted capriciously in violation of federal law, and failed to give full consideration to the needs of the local community.

For more information on Area 51, visit [www.shastaresources.org](http://www.shastaresources.org).