

MEMORANDUM

PLACER COUNTY AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors
FROM: Joshua P. Huntsinger, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer
DATE: November 8, 2011

SUBJECT: LETTER OF OPPOSITION TO THE SOUTH SUTTER WATER DISTRICT REGARDING THEIR PROPOSED GARDEN BAR RESERVOIR

ACTION REQUESTED: Adopt a resolution authorizing the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to sign a letter to the South Sutter Water District stating Placer County's opposition to construction of a dam on the Bear River at Garden Bar.

BACKGROUND: Western Placer County's northern boundary is formed by the Bear River. This waterway is currently impounded in three locations including the Rollins Lake Reservoir located to the northeast of HWY 174, Combie Lake Reservoir located to the east of HWY 49, and Camp Far West Reservoir located to the east of the town of Sheridan.

The South Sutter Water District, along with their consultant, RMC Water and Environment, is currently exploring the possibility of constructing a new reservoir on the Bear River, which would be located at Garden Bar, between HWY 49 and Camp Far West Reservoir.

To date, the South Sutter Water District has completed a preliminary study which was funded in part by five out-of-county partners. This study outlined several different models, which would create a new reservoir with a capacity of up to 400,000 acre-feet.

On September 28, 2011, the Placer County Fish and Game Commission heard a presentation from RMC Water and Environment regarding the proposed Garden Bar Reservoir. At the end of the presentation, the commission directed county staff to work with the Commission Chairman to draft a letter of opposition to the proposal. The draft letter was presented to the Commission on October 26, 2011, and approved unanimously. In summary, the Commission made their recommendation based on the following:

The Garden Bar Reservoir as proposed in the preliminary study conducted by South Sutter Water District would have the following negative impacts to Placer County:

- Flood an estimated 1,500 – 2,000 acres in the Bear River Canyon including large portions of the Placer County Land Trust's Garden Bar Preserve and Harvego Bear River Preserve;
- Flood important historical Native American sites, the Emigrant Trail crossing at Garden Bar, and ranching and recreation lands;

- Block significant wildlife corridors through the largest remaining contiguous blue oak woodland in Placer County and disrupt habitats for over 300 species of fish and wildlife;
- Disrupt the watershed level conservation that is proposed by the Placer County Conservation Plan for the Bear River, and;
- Provide little or no recreation or water supply benefits to Placer County residents.

The letter to the Placer County Board of Supervisors requests that your Board take an official position of opposition to the South Sutter Water District's proposal for a Reservoir on the Bear River at Garden Bar.

ENVIRONMENTAL: This activity does not qualify as a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

FISCAL IMPACT: This activity will result in no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt a resolution authorizing the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to sign a letter to the South Sutter Water District stating Placer County's opposition to construction of a dam on the Bear River at Garden Bar.

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Letter for Chairman
3. Request letter from Placer County Fish and Game Commission dated October 26, 2011

Before the Board of Supervisors County of Placer, State of California

In the matter of:
A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TO SIGN A LETTER TO THE
SOUTH SUTTER WATER DISTRICT
STATING PLACER COUNTY'S OPPOSITION
TO CONSTRUCTION OF A DAM
ON THE BEAR RIVER AT GARDEN BAR

Resol. No.: _____

Ord. No.: _____

First Reading: _____

The following RESOLUTION was duly passed by the Board of Supervisors
of the County of Placer at a regular meeting held November 8, 2011.

by the following vote on roll call:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Signed and approved by me after its passage.

Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attest:
Clerk of said Board

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF PLACER,
STATE OF CALIFORNIA, that this Board authorizes and directs the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to
sign a letter to the South Sutter Water District stating Placer County's opposition to construction of a dam on the
Bear River at Garden Bar.

County of Placer Board of Supervisors

175 FULWEILER AVENUE
AUBURN, CALIFORNIA 95603
530/889-4010 • FAX: 530/889-4009
PLACER CO. TOLL FREE # 800-488-4308

JACK DURAN
District 1

ROBERT M. WEYGANDT
District 2

JIM HOLMES
District 3

KIRK UHLER
District 4

JENNIFER MONTGOMERY
District 5



November 8, 2011

Bradley Arnold
General Manager
South Sutter Water District
2464 Pacific Avenue
Trowbridge, CA 95659

RE: Proposed Garden Bar Reservoir

Dear Mr. Arnold,

The Placer County Board of Supervisors values the abundant natural resources found in Placer County and encourages their continued use. Among these abundant resources is the water supply provided by the Bear and American River watersheds and conveyed to Placer County's residents, businesses, and farms by the Nevada Irrigation District, Placer County Water Agency, South Sutter Water District, and San Juan Water District.

Although California's water supply was sufficient this year due to above-average rainfall, this Board is keenly aware of the continued need to improve and expand the state's water infrastructure in order to meet California's needs both now and in the future.

However, the Placer County Board of Supervisors has several concerns with the proposed reservoir on the Bear River at Garden Bar.

A preliminary study conducted by South Sutter Water District showed the following findings which cause concern for our county as a result of the construction of the proposed Garden Bar Reservoir:

- Flood an estimated 1,500 – 2,000 acres in the Bear River Canyon including large portions of the Placer Land Trust's Garden Bar Preserve and Harvego Bear River Preserve; conserved in part with mitigation funds, and should be preserved;
- Flood important historical Native American sites, the Emigrant Trail crossing at Garden Bar, and ranching and recreation lands;
- Block significant wildlife corridors through the largest remaining contiguous blue oak woodland in Placer County and disrupt habitats for over 300 species of fish and wildlife;
- Disrupt the watershed level conservation that is proposed by the Placer County Conservation Plan for the Bear River, and;
- Provide little or no recreation or water supply benefits to Placer County residents.

Bradley Arnold, General Manager
South Sutter Water District
Subject: Proposed Garden Bar Reservoir
November 8, 2011
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The Placer County Board of Supervisors would like to reiterate our support for continued opportunities to improve California's water supply, including those opportunities within Placer County, but respectfully oppose your proposal for a reservoir on the Bear River at Garden Bar in its current form.

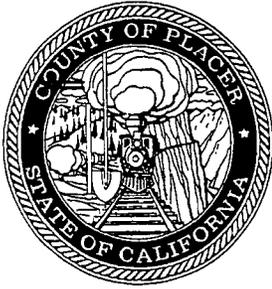
Sincerely,

COUNTY OF PLACER

Robert M. Weygandt, Chairman
Placer County Board of Supervisors

cc: Placer County Board of Supervisors
Thomas M. Miller, CEO
Joshua Huntsinger, Agricultural Commissioner
Peterson Consulting

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COUNTY OF PLACER
FISH & GAME COMMISSION

Ed King
Deputy Agricultural Commissioner
County Contact

FISH & GAME COMMISSION MEMBERS

DISTRICT 1 Don Gould	DISTRICT 2 Mark Fowler
DISTRICT 3 Robert Haswell	DISTRICT 4 Gary Flanagan
DISTRICT 5 Kari Freidig	DISTRICT 5 Ron Salter

DISTRICT 5
Mickey Daniels

11477 E AVENUE
AUBURN, CALIFORNIA 95603
TELEPHONE: (530) 889-7372
FAX: (530) 823-1698
www.placer.ca.gov

September 29, 2011

Robert Weygandt, Chairman
Placer County Board of Supervisors
175 Fulweiler Avenue
Auburn, CA 95603

Dear Chairman Weygandt:

SUBJECT: Garden Bar Dam

During the Fish and Game Commission's September 28, 2011 meeting, the Commission voted unanimously (7 to 0) to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to oppose the South Sutter Water District's consideration of constructing a dam on the Bear River at Garden Bar. It is the Commission's opinion that such a project would yield no discernible benefits to the citizens and fish and wildlife of Placer County.

In brief, a dam and reservoir on the Bear River at Garden Bar would:

- Flood an estimated 1,500 – 2,000 acres in the Bear River Canyon including large portions of the Placer County Land Trust Garden Bar Preserve and Harvego Bear River Preserve;
- Flood important historical Native American sites, the Emigrant Trail crossing at Garden Bar, and ranching and recreation lands;
- Block significant wildlife corridors through the largest remaining contiguous blue oak woodland in Placer County and disrupt habitats for over 300 species of fish and wildlife;
- Disrupt the watershed level conservation that is proposed by the Placer County Conservation Plan for the Bear River, and;
- Provide little or no recreation or water supply benefits to Placer County residents.

The South Sutter Water District (SSWD) hired RMC Water and Environment to conduct a preliminary study of dam construction at Garden Bar. SSWD funded this \$1 million study in a collaborative effort with the City of Napa, City of American Canyon, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, Palmdale Water District and the Castaic Lake Water Agency.

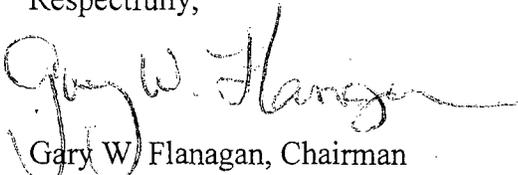
Placer Legacy and the Placer and Nevada County Land Trusts have worked to preserve nearly 6,000 acres in the Garden Bar area. SSWD and its partners would need to invoke the power of eminent domain to acquire portions of these lands for construction of the proposed dam and associated reservoir. Placer Legacy and the land trusts purchased these lands for conservation

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purposes including mitigation for the Bickford Ranch development. It is the Commission's opinion that there is no way to mitigate such a taking because the Garden Bar area has no equivalent in Placer County or elsewhere. There is no replacement for the ecological and cultural values of this unique environment.

In arriving at the unanimous vote to recommend opposition of a dam at Garden Bar, the Commission listened to presentations from Sierra Watch and RMC Water and Environment. The Commission also heard public comment from seventeen Placer and Nevada County residents all of whom expressed opposition to the project.

Respectfully,



Gary W. Flanagan, Chairman
Placer County Fish and Game Commission

- cc: Jack Duran, Supervisor, District 1
Jim Holmes, Supervisor, District 3
Kirk Uhler, Supervisor, District 4
Jennifer Montgomery, Supervisor, District 5
Tom Miller, County Executive Officer

