

## Memorandum

Date: November 3, 2014

To: Sonke Mastrup  
Executive Director  
Fish and Game Commission

From: Charlton H. Bonham  
Director



Subject: **Agenda Item for the December 3, 2014 Fish and Game Commission Meeting: Recommendations for designation of new Wild Trout Waters by the Department of Fish and Wildlife for 2014, as required by Fish and Game Code, Section 1727(b).**

Fish and Game Code, Section 1727(b), requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) to prepare a list of no less than 25 miles of stream or stream segment and at least one lake deemed suitable for designation as wild trout waters and to submit this list to the Commission. To comply with these requirements, the Department proposes the following waters:

*Pauley Creek from the confluence with the Downie River upstream to the headwaters (Sierra County).* This proposed designation incorporates 15 miles of stream habitat, the majority of which are located on public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Tahoe National Forest. Pauley Creek contains a self-sustaining population of coastal rainbow trout within their native drainage and is a fast-action fishery (> 2 fish per hour) located within a semi-remote scenic canyon. Nearby Lavezolla Creek is currently designated as a Wild Trout Water and the addition of Pauley Creek contributes to a watershed-level approach for wild trout management.

*Caples Creek from the confluence with the Silver Fork American River upstream to Caples Lake Dam (El Dorado and Alpine counties).* This proposed designation would include approximately 11 miles of stream habitat within the USFS El Dorado National Forest and provides anglers an opportunity to catch three species of trout (rainbow, brown, and brook). The Heritage and Wild Trout Program (HWTP) has conducted numerous fisheries and habitat assessments in Caples Creek since 2005 including electrofish, snorkel, and angling methodologies. The El Dorado Chapter of Trout Unlimited in concert with the HWTP has provided additional angler data and is in support of this designation.

*Putah Creek from Lake Solano upstream to Monticello Dam on Lake Berryessa (Solano and Yolo counties).* This proposed designation includes approximately five miles of stream habitat. Putah Creek supports a popular trophy-trout ( $\geq$  18 inches) coastal rainbow trout fishery and is within close proximity to both the Sacramento and

San Francisco metropolitan areas. A road along the northern side of the creek provides easy road-side access. The Putah Creek State Wildlife Area (public land) is located along the southern shore. The HWTP has been conducting fisheries and habitat assessments in Putah Creek since 2008 including electrofish, snorkel, and angling assessments; age and growth studies, a research study using radio telemetry to track trout movement, and numerous habitat restoration projects. Local clubs and volunteers have been highly supportive of these efforts and Wild Trout Designation, in particular, Putah Creek Trout.

*Lake Solano (Solano and Yolo counties).* The Lake Solano proposal is in concert with the Putah Creek proposal as they are both hydrologically and biologically connected. A recent trout movement study by the HWTP has documented this link by tracking coastal rainbow trout movement between the lake and creek, for which both provide important habitat components for various life history stages for wild trout. In particular, trophy-sized trout were captured and observed in the lake and it likely provides deeper water habitat and forage opportunities for high growth rates. Lake Solano encompasses approximately 69 surface acres.

*Truckee River from the confluence with Gray Creek downstream to the Nevada state line (Nevada and Sierra counties).* This proposal will amend designation of the Truckee River by extending it eight miles downstream. It will provide continuity with the existing designation and management of this fishery.

*Milton Reservoir (Nevada and Sierra counties).* The HWTP has been conducting angler assessments in Milton Reservoir for over 12 years and in 2012, conducted a population-level assessment using mark-recapture techniques. It is predominantly a wild brown trout fishery with a lesser population of rainbow trout. Milton Reservoir is approximately 27 surface acres in size and is located within the Middle Yuba River watershed.

*Gerle Creek Divide Reservoir (El Dorado County).* The HWTP has been evaluating this fishery for Wild Trout Designation since 2013. The reservoir encompasses 37 surface acres and maintains a self-sustaining brown trout fishery. The reservoir is popular among anglers interested in a challenging experience catching brown trout that may exceed 18 inches.

*Manzanita Lake (Shasta County).* This water was previously designated a Catch-and-Release fishery by the Fish and Game Commission and has been monitored by the HWTP since the early 1980s. Located in Lassen Volcanic National Park, it is a popular recreational area for thousands of visitors each year and provides a wild trout fishery for brown, brook, and rainbow trouts including the opportunity to catch trophy-sized trout. Manzanita Lake encompasses approximately 47 surface acres. The Department proposed this water in 2013 but was waiting for further collaboration

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from the National Park Service; support from the Lassen Volcanic National Park has since been granted.

The recommended streams and lakes meet existing criteria to satisfy the requirements for designation as Wild Trout Waters and no changes in angling regulations are necessary at this time. According to Fish and Game Code, Section 1727(c), the Commission may remove any stream or lake previously designated as a wild trout fishery from the program at any time. If a water is removed from the program, an equivalent amount of stream mileage or an equivalent size lake shall be added to the wild trout program.

The Department proposes to remove the wild trout designation for Martis Creek Reservoir (Placer and Nevada counties). This fishery historically and currently is managed through supplemental planting of fingerling and sub-catchable trout (allowed under Commission Wild Trout Policy). In an effort to avoid conflict with existing fishery management and to better align with the intent of wild trout designation, the Department recommends the removal of Martis Creek Reservoir from the Wild Trout program. This does not translate into a lack of interest in the fishery by the Department, rather a request to provide greater flexibility for adaptive management which may include put-and-take for increased harvest-related angling opportunities near the town of Truckee.

If the Commission approves to designate Lake Solano, the requirement to add an equivalent size lake will be satisfied. In addition, this proposal to designate Milton Reservoir, if approved, will provide anglers with an additional wild trout lake fishery nearby to Martis Creek Reservoir.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Stafford Lehr, Chief, Fisheries Branch at (916) 445-3181 or at [stafford.lehr@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:stafford.lehr@wildlife.ca.gov).

Attachment

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