

**American Rivers • Audubon California • California Trout  
Center for Biological Diversity • Ducks Unlimited • Ecological Farming Association  
Eddy Foundation • Foothill Conservancy • Friends of The Eel River  
Grand Canyon Trust • Karuk Tribe • Klamath Riverkeeper • Lightning Canyon Ranch  
Mattole Salmon Group • Mendocino Land Trust • Natural Heritage Institute  
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center WATER Institute • Paicines Ranch  
Plumas Corporation • Prunuske Chatham, Inc. • Raptors Are The Solution  
River Otter Ecology Project • Russian Riverkeeper  
Sacramento River Preservation Trust • Salmon Protection And Watershed Network  
Save The American River Association • Scott River Watershed Council  
Sierra Club California • Sierra Wildlife Coalition • Smith River Alliance  
Sonoma State University • Streamwise • The Institute for Bird Populations  
The Institute for Historical Ecology • The Nature Conservancy  
The Wildlands Conservancy • Trout Unlimited Tuolumne River Trust  
Turtle Island Restoration Network • Waterways Restoration Institute  
Wild Farm Alliance • Winnemum Wintu Tribe • Worth A Dam**

January 16, 2015

Chuck Bonham, Director  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
1416 9th Street, 12th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Beaver management in California

Dear Director Bonham,

It has come to our attention that the Department of Fish and Wildlife is drafting a white paper about beaver conservation and management. We are encouraged by this news and we write today to respectfully request an opportunity to contribute to this important effort from the knowledge and experience of the signatories of this letter and others.

Across California and other western states, beavers at one time played a keystone role in the hydrology and ecology of aquatic and riparian ecosystems, ranging from Sierra Nevada and other mountain meadows to coastal redwood streams. Through their dam-building activities, beaver shaped the floristic, zoologic, hydrologic and geomorphologic character of these ecosystems. While the full range of benefits associated with beaver presence is still being evaluated, there is growing evidence of their positive contribution to recovery of incised and degraded streams, reconnection of streams to floodplains, elevation of groundwater levels, promotion of riparian and wet meadow vegetation colonization, as well as expansion and diversification of habitat features that support sensitive fish such as ESA listed Coho salmon, bird and

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amphibian species.<sup>1</sup> As a result, aquatic ecosystem restoration projects across the historic range of beaver are increasingly working to both mimic and incorporate beaver actions into restoration designs.

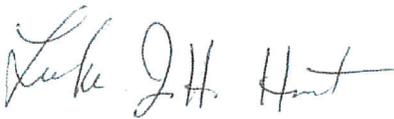
In the past, the dialogue around working with beavers to restore habitat has been constrained by uncertainty about their historic presence and range within California and concerns over the risks associated with beaver reintroduction. Recently, however, more conclusive evidence of their historic presence<sup>2</sup>, recognition of their potential benefits, and strategies for reducing risks have emerged. This has created the opportunity to update and expand management approaches and policy related to beaver and their role in habitat and ecosystem function.

Many landowners, ranchers, agriculturists, hunters, scientists, non-governmental organizations, academics, tribes, and other state and federal agency staff have an interest in managing beaver in California, and have a great deal of experience, knowledge, scholarship, proven solutions as well as concerns to contribute to this important discussion. We believe the Department's beaver paper would greatly benefit from the valuable contributions these interests would offer and could promote a more constructive beaver management environment than in the past. With public awareness around the benefits of beaver rapidly expanding (e.g. see recent *New York Times* article<sup>3</sup>), now is an opportune time for the Department to provide guidance and leadership that enables beavers to expand their role in that recovery.

With this in mind, we suggest creating a multi-agency, multi-stakeholder process based on the highly successful example by which the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources quickly and efficiently developed a beaver management plan with broad support.<sup>4</sup> This process would result in a durable, sound plan, based on collaboration and the best science and will balance beavers' ecosystem services with human needs.

We would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you next month to discuss the potential for such a process and beaver management more broadly. We will follow up next week to see what date would be convenient for you and your staff to meet with us. In the meantime, we wish you a very happy New Year.

Sincerely,



Luke Hunt  
American Rivers



Meghan Hertel  
Audubon California



Jacob Katz  
California Trout

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<sup>1</sup> Pollock et al. 2003, *Hydrologic and Geomorphic Effects of Beaver Dams and Their Influence on Fishes*

<sup>2</sup> Lanman et al. 2012 (<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=67444>) and Lanman et al. 2013 (<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=78258&inline=1>)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/28/science/reversing-course-on-beavers.html?r&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/28/science/reversing-course-on-beavers.html?r&_r=0)

<sup>4</sup> [http://wildlife.utah.gov/furbearer/pdf/beaver\\_plan\\_2010-2020.pdf](http://wildlife.utah.gov/furbearer/pdf/beaver_plan_2010-2020.pdf)

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cc: Sonke Mastrup, Executive Director, Fish and Game Commission  
John Donnelly, Executive Director, Wildlife Conservation Board