

County Contract No.

# TRINITY COUNTY

## Board Item Request Form

Subsequent 1

Department  
Board of Supervisors

Meeting Date : Feb 17, 2016

Contact:

Judy Morris

Phone:

623-1217

Requested Agenda Location:

Requested Action:

Move to discuss and/or take action on a letter to Congressman Huffman and USDA Under Secretary Bonnie and find that the need to take immediate action came to the attention of the Board subsequent to the agenda being posted. The urgency is the letter needs to be signed prior to the next Board meeting.

Authorize the Chairman to sign a letter to Congressman Jared Huffman and USDA Under Secretary Robert Bonnie regarding the consultation timeline for the Trinity County Collaborative Fuelbreak Work Group Fire Kill to Fuelbreaks project.

Fiscal Impact:

No fiscal impact.

Prepared By: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Instructions to the Clerk:

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## BOARD REPORT

Subject: Letter to Congressman Huffman and USDA Under Secretary Bonnie

Date: February 17, 2016

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**ISSUE: Should the Board** authorize the Chairman to sign a letter to Congressman Jared Huffman and USDA Under Secretary Robert Bonnie regarding the consultation timeline for the Trinity County Collaborative Fuelbreak Work Group Fire Kill to Fuelbreaks project?

The Fuelbreak Work Group has been working closely with Forest Service staff in both forests, including Program of Work meetings Feb 5 (Hayfork) and Feb 10 (Weaverville), and a productive conference call with Congressman Huffman on January 22. The group has come to the realization that the coordination with, and reliance on, USFWS and NOAA Fisheries for Endangered Species consultation (Biological Opinions) is the pivotal piece of the NEPA process for the Fire Kill-to-Fuelbreak projects in the short term, and for all of the TCCG projects in the future. The Work Group has come to the conclusion that the current consultation timelines most likely put the Fire Kill-to Fuelbreaks projects on a timeline that makes them uneconomical. Therefore the Work Group believes it is necessary to ask for help through the Board of Supervisors to effect changes in the process.

The facilitation group and the Fuelbreak Work Group realize the TCCG gave the Work Group the authority to do what is needed to move the Fire Kill-to-Fuelbreaks project forward, but this letter also asks for an experimental process for ALL TCCG projects and received the support of the full Collaborative.

Furthermore the committee that drafted the attached letter is concerned that the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers Forests do not have adequate planning capacity to prepare Collaborative-proposed and other Forest projects on a satisfactory schedule. However, committee members weren't able to agree to address that issue in this letter. The prevailing committee sentiment is that, (1.) We don't know enough about the needs, priorities, and inner workings of each Forest to prescribe a confident solution yet; and (2.) It is better to focus our request for help at this time on the single problem of Biological Opinions, where the threat is worse and an appropriate solution is clearer.

Judy Morris  
District 2 Supervisor



# TRINITY COUNTY

## Board of Supervisors

P.O. BOX 1613, WEAVERVILLE, CALIFORNIA 96093-1613  
PHONE (530) 623-1217 FAX (530) 623-8365

February 17, 2016

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
U.S House of Representatives  
317 Third Street, Suite 1  
Eureka, CA 95591

Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary,  
Natural Resources and Environment  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W. Suite 240E  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Representative Huffman and Mr. Bonnie,

Trinity County appreciates the encouragement and assistance you have provided to the Trinity County Collaborative Group. We're pleased that the Collaborative has been able to develop promising, widely-supported forest management proposals, and pleased that the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers Forests have accepted the proposals and are working to implement them. We now ask for your help to navigate a set of bureaucratic perils that threatens to delay or even defeat successful implementation.

As you know, Forest Service proposals cannot proceed to implementation until they've received Biological Opinions from the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service that the effects on endangered species would be acceptable. These BOs can take months to finalize, which can delay projects by a full operating season, which would be quite frustrating for the multi-year projects envisioned. Worse, for fire salvage projects slated for this year and salvage opportunities that will inevitably become desirable after future fires, delays of a season or even a substantial part of a season would render projects economically unviable and thus deficient under the evaluation criteria (ecologically beneficial, economically viable, and socially accepted) that the Collaborative has agreed upon. In addition, delay or defeat of proposed projects would have a harsh effect on the energies of the Collaborative, which has worked hard for three years and needs success, defined in part as "on-the-ground project implementation," in order to maintain its community momentum.

We fully recognize that regulatory agencies must fulfill their responsibilities. However, we've been assured (and the Congressman heard in a January 22 conference call) that the regulatory agencies are working closely at every step with the Forest Service to develop project details during preparation of the Biological Assessments that lead to the BOs. We consider it unreasonable that regulatory agencies should require additional months to form an opinion on

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projects they worked actively to guide and design. We suggest a federal agency “efficiency experiment” in which regulatory agencies are required to render a Biological Opinion within days instead of months on Trinity Collaborative projects which they helped to prepare. We ask for your help in arranging this.

We believe that federal interagency collaboration can and should be at least as effective as the collaboration that disparate local interests have managed to exercise in Trinity County. We’ll be grateful for whatever help you can provide.

Sincerely,

L. Karl Fisher, Chairman  
Trinity County Board of Supervisors

Cc: USFS Chief Tom Tidwell  
USFS Regional Officer Randy Moore  
USFS Regional Officer Barry Gant  
USFS Forest Supervisor Dave Meyer  
USFS Forest Supervisor Merv George  
US Fish and Wildlife Services  
NOAA  
Trinity County Collaborative