



# Lake County Agriculture Advisory Committee

February 2, 2023

## Committee Members

Sharron Zoller  
David Weiss  
Randall Krag  
Bruce Merrilees  
Pat Scully  
Alicia Russell

## Non-Voting Members

Jessica Pyska, County of Lake  
Michael Green, County of Lake  
Katherine Vanderwall, County of Lake

Re: Clear Lake Hitch

Dear Lake County Supervisors:

The Lake County Agriculture Advisory Committee values that the Clear Lake Hitch hold an historically significant place for the indigenous Pomo tribes of the Clear Lake region. The committee respects that the tribes rely on the Hitch, or Chi, for spiritual celebrations and cultural traditions.

The challenges to the very existence of the Hitch are numerous and complex, and include illegal water diversions, stream barriers that impede fish migration, predation by imported invasive fish species, degradation of spawning environment, and other compromises to Hitch habitat. Overcoming those challenges will require the collaboration and cooperation of all parties. It is with this in mind that we offer the following recommendations to be included in the Proclamation under consideration.

**That** the Lake County Water Resources Department develop and implement a plan to release water during the spring of 2023 from the Adobe Creek and/or Highland Springs reservoirs to supplement water flows during periods of frost protection. This plan is intended to mitigate stream-flow depletions that may result from permitted surface water diversions and pumping of shallow creek side sumps or wells along Adobe Creek.

**That** the Lake County Water Resources Department assess the viability of a project(s) that would modify the spillway(s) of Highland Springs and/or Adobe Creek Reservoir(s) allowing for more water to be retained in the reservoirs. This extra water could be released into Adobe Creek at higher rates for longer periods of time during the hatch spawning season.

**That** the California Fish and Game Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service (1) consider whether the establishment of one or more Chi fish hatcheries within the County of Lake is feasible; and (2) review and recommend streambed and shoreline habitat improvement strategies and projects.

**That** the California Fish and Game Commission schedule and conduct at least one meeting within the County of Lake to accept public comment regarding any Chi-related proposals and actions.

**That** the County of Lake County General Counsel, The Lake County Water Resources Department, California Fish and Game Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service all work together to acquire the land (or secure an easement or right-of-way), through purchase or eminent domain, to complete the already-funded fish ladder project on Kelsey Creek at the Main Street bridge in Kelseyville.

**That** the agricultural community welcomes the opportunity to actively participate with other parties in the development of strategies and implementation of measures that will help ensure the survival of the Clear Lake Hitch. The Lake County agricultural community requests inclusion at all Chi-related meetings/committees, local and intergovernmental, that reflects the proportion of local land use and economic activity attributed to agriculture.

Lastly, with respect to the January 24, 2023, Proclamation presented by the Board of Supervisors, we respectfully request that on the Board of Supervisors' list of *Requests*, item #6 be removed.

Thank you for your consideration of the Agriculture Advisory Committee's requests. We look forward to discussing these issues and those of other interested parties at the BOS meeting on February 7, 2023, with the hope of achieving a Proclamation that can pass for the preservation and continued survival of the Clear Lake Hitch.

Sincerely,

 , Committee Chair  
Lake County Agriculture Advisory Committee

Scott De Leon, [Scott.DeLeon@lakecountyca.gov](mailto:Scott.DeLeon@lakecountyca.gov)