

Dear Chairwoman Pyska and Supervisors,

I need to add my voice to those who are requesting a halt to the Emergency Hitch Proclamation due to the lack of hard data showing that pumping from wells in The Big Valley and frost protection water demands on Kelsey Creek and Adobe Creek are directly responsible for the threatened status of the hitch.

At our olive farm in the Soda Bay Road area of The Big Valley our well is the only source of water for both irrigation and domestic use. To be told to suspend pumping would be far more than a minor inconvenience. The situation is even more severe for pear orchards and vineyards as spring frosts can ruin a whole year's crop.

Peter Windrem has submitted data to the Board of Supervisors in advance of the 1/24 meeting to show groundwater pumping does not reduce stream flow in Kelsey Creek. I realize one report is not sufficient to settle the matter, but Mr. Windrem's report is enough for the Supervisors to pause and look at the other conditions affecting the survival of Clear Lake Hitch, such as:

- Loss of wetlands
- Non-native fish species that compete for food
- Bass predation and disruption of spawning runs
- Physical barriers to spawning grounds and,
- Degradation of spawning beds.

These conditions were recognized as problems for hitch survival in a paper published over 10 years ago by the Center for Biological Diversity. As part of determining the causes of stream flow loss, the paper recommended carefully evaluating groundwater pumping and water diversions. Has there been a concerted effort to do such an evaluation in the past ten years? The tenor of the letter from the Department of Fish and Wildlife to Scott De Leon suggests not.

Remediation of barriers to spawning such as human-made barriers across spawning streams was recommended as well. Such remediation, the paper pointed out, requires "coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Tribes, tribal organizations, Caltrans, Lake County and private landowners." Have these entities worked together on planning and implementing a remediation plan in the past ten years? The most recent meetings that led to the proposed proclamation did not include farmers at the table. The proclamation does not make mention of ongoing efforts to improve spawning streams or scientific evaluation of the impact of the 1000 wells in The Big Valley on water flow in the creeks used by hitch for spawning.

Has there been enforcement of regulations that prohibit illegal stream diversions? Has the County been managing upstream dams properly to assure water for release to hitch spawning creeks during the dry season? Has the County determined the impact of predation and competition from alien species, such as bass, on hitch populations?

These are questions that should be answered and the results communicated to the public well before considering approval of a proclamation that may well lead to serious economic consequences for farmers in The Big Valley.

Thank you for your consideration,

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