

MEMORANDUM

To: Stewardship Council Board of Directors

From: Watershed Planning Committee

Date: September 13, 2017

Re: Recommendation for Findings of No Significant Public Interest Value at the Bear River Planning Unit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bear River planning unit, located in Nevada and Placer counties, consists of 44 legal parcels, comprising approximately 6,763 acres of Watershed Lands. Parcels 852, 867 and 868, totaling approximately 2 acres in size, are being considered for a possible finding of no significant public interest value (NSPIV). The Bear Yuba Land Trust (BYLT) and Placer Land Trust (PLT) have been recommended to hold conservation easements on portions of the Bear River planning Unit. Both Land Trusts have requested to exclude Parcels 852, 867 and 868 from the Bear River planning unit conservation easement because of their small size, geographic dispersion, and lack of natural and cultural resources, recreational values, and scenic/open space values.

The Planning Committee recommends the Board approve the NSPIV finding for parcels 852, 867 and 868, at the Bear River planning unit.

BACKGROUND

The subject parcels at the Bear River planning unit were initially designated as candidate parcels for a NSPIV finding by Stewardship Council staff in 2015, during staff's review of candidate parcels for the entire watershed portfolio. A site visit was made by members of the Stewardship Council staff on May 4, 2017. Stewardship Council staff then began the board approved process of formally evaluating the parcels that is described in the attachment to this memo.

Staff presented the results of its evaluation to the NSPIV work group on June 14, 2017. At that meeting, the work group recommended the NSPIV findings for the three parcels at the Bear River planning unit be brought to the Planning Committee for approval.

At the July 19, 2017 meeting, the Planning Committee conditionally approved a NSPIV finding for the three parcels at the Bear River planning unit. The conditional finding was then released for a 30 day public review and comment period. Notice of the comment period for the proposed NSPIV finding was sent to a wide variety of stakeholders, including landowners within a mile radius of each site, local water agencies, the Placer and Nevada County board of supervisors, and Native American tribes including tribes located in the vicinity of the sites and those identified by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), and were noticed in local newspapers.

Stakeholders who submitted questions during the public comment period did not object to a NSPIV finding once clarification was made on what a finding of NSPIV would mean for the subject parcels and that the finding would not affect their private property.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE

The Planning Committee recommends the Board approve a NSPIV finding for parcels 852, 867 and 868, at the Bear River planning unit. This recommendation is based on the considerations and rationale described below. The background memos attached provide more specific information on each parcel.

Parcel 852

Parcel 852 is very small in size (.06 acres) and is significantly separated from the rest of the lands in the Bear River planning unit. The parcel does not contain, nor does it have the potential for significant habitat, forestry resources, or open space value. The parcel is encumbered by a large communications tower. The parcel is consistently cleared to maintain the tower that is used to reflect communications signals to and from the Drum Powerhouse. The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) currently has no recorded occurrences of special status species on or within a ¼-mile or two miles of Parcel 852. The California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) database and the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) indicates there are no known cultural or historical resources within Parcel 852. Parcel 852 is entirely surrounded by private forested land and is inaccessible to the public. It is not adjacent to any recreational areas and does not contain any recreation potential. There is no significant development concern as a result of the small size of the parcel and its isolated location.

Parcels 867 and 868

Parcels 867 and 868 are small in size, approximately 1 acre each, and are separated by about a mile from the rest of the lands in the Bear River planning unit. Parcels 867 and 868 are entirely encumbered by PG&E's Alta Service Center. The parcels are paved, contain multiple structures, and do not contain any significant habitat, forestry resources, or open space value. The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) currently has no recorded occurrences of special status species on or within a ¼-mile or two miles of Parcels 867 and 868. The California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) database and the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) indicates there are no known cultural or historical resources within Parcels 867 and 868. The parcels are surrounded by a mix of privately owned rural buildings, roads, and forest, are not accessible to the public, and do not contain any recreation potential. There is no significant development concern as the parcel is already developed and will continue to be used as a critical operations service center for PG&E.