

Water Forum

Democratic Central Committee

Of Shasta County

June 17, 2019

Medicine Lake and Water Issues

Andy Fusso - resident of Weed

I will talk about what is happening with two organizations:

- ▶ Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center (protecting Medicine Lake), and
- ▶ Siskiyou Forward Movement PAC (2016 Measure H and current challenges)



Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center



Established 1988, longstanding environmental organization in Mount Shasta and Siskiyou County



Halted large ski/condominium development at Panther Meadows on Mount Shasta, pristine site held sacred by native tribes



Today we continue our work, through numerous programs to preserve, protect and restore our bioregion



We believe in using the best science and facts, speaking with truth and integrity



More information at mountshastaecology.org

Importance of Medicine Lake Aquifer

Feeds the largest spring system in California

- ▶ Major source of spring water for the Upper Sacramento River System
- ▶ Redding is affected: this system is an important part of this area's water source
- ▶ The aquifer is the main source for the Fall River Springs, California's largest spring system
- ▶ Dr. Robert Curry: *"Almost half of the drought period monthly total flows from the Pit River to Shasta Lake are from this remarkable groundwater reservoir"*
- ▶ Geothermal fracking would drill 9000 feet into the ground; this will harm and pollute this important water source

These resources are unlikely to be economically viable without large public subsidies.

Geothermal Fracking - High Risk for California's Water Resources

More details on MSBEC's website mountshastaecology.org (menu: Programs → Medicine Lake)

- ▶ Leases encompass the entire Medicine Lake Caldera, believed to be the groundwater source for Fall River Springs
- ▶ Calpine's claim - that this geothermal resource is separate from regional aquifers - is entirely unproven; it is a dangerous assumption regarding the area's hydrology
- ▶ Needs comprehensive study - we don't understand this fully
- ▶ Similarly, major risks and consequences of fracking are not fully analyzed
- ▶ Hydrofluoric acid to be used is extremely toxic, even at a few parts per million
- ▶ Impacts include accidents, spills, seismic stimulation, flow diversions and direct contamination of waters
- ▶ Existing approval of a single well (the "productive lease") involved no environmental review - proposed geothermal fracking is very high risk!

Protect Medicine Lake Highlands and Aquifer

Timeline:

- ▶ **1970s** - USGS declares the Medicine Lake Highlands as a Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA) after exploratory drilling in the 1960s.
- ▶ **1980s** - BLM awards geothermal leases on 134,000 acres in the KGRA with only minimal environmental review and no consultations with Native Americans.
- ▶ **1997-1999** - USFS and BLM issue EIS's on two 49.9 megawatt geothermal developments – the Fourmile Hill project and Telephone Flat project – disclosing adverse effects on Native American cultural resources but minimizing environmental impacts and ignoring water.
- ▶ **1998** - BLM extends leases for 40 years without consultations with Native Americans or environmental review

Protect Medicine Lake Highlands and Aquifer

Timeline:

- ▶ **1999** - MLH Traditional Cultural District designated by National Register of Historic Places in the Caldera, expanded in 2005 to 113 square miles to include most of the MLHs.
- ▶ **2000-2002** – USFS and BLM issue decisions to approve the Fourmile Hill Project ($\frac{1}{4}$ mile outside the Medicine Lake Caldera) and deny the Telephone Flat Project (within the Caldera). However, Bush administration reverses Telephone Flat decision in 2002.
- ▶ **2002-2010** - Coalition including Ecology Center, Pit River Tribe, Native Coalition, Medicine Lake Citizens - appeals and court cases, culminating in victorious 2006 Ninth Circuit decision that Fourmile Hill lease extensions are invalid.
- ▶ **2010** - Our Telephone Flat lawsuit challenged extensions on 26 remaining leases extended based on a 27th lease being considered a “productive” well - won in District Court.
- ▶ **2016** - BLM appeals the decision.

What's Next



May 2019 – Ninth Circuit Court heard BLM's appeal. Decision expected in next few months.



If we win: 26 lease extensions are abolished and again would require a new EIS review



If we lose: we have a third court action challenging the 27th "productive" lease which if successful would also negate these 26 lease extensions

Other Actions

A Petition to Amend the USFS Forest Plan amendments for Shasta-Trinity, Modoc and Klamath national forests is in process

We advocate stronger protections for the aquifer through this petition

Your letters of support will be needed soon; please sign Ecology Center email list to be notified

Also, we are working toward the addition of volcanic aquifers to the State of California's Bulletin 118 to protect high-level water sources such as the Medicine Lake Highlands and Mount Shasta

This is Our Standing Rock

Huge importance to all of California, including Redding, and of course to native tribes

Geothermal leasing is privatization and a giveaway of public lands.

Our founder Michelle Berditshevsky continues as project lead on the Medicine Lake campaign; we are in for the long fight, as are the tribes and others in our coalition

We are grateful to the Stanford Environmental Law Clinic for extensive legal support, highlighting the importance of this magnificent landscape and aquifer.

We advocate creating a North State Water Preserve for future generations



Siskiyou Forward Movement PAC

Created in 2016 - Ecology Center wanted to respect laws regarding political activity by nonprofit organizations

Gathered signatures and campaigned for Measure H - Groundwater Initiative on June 2016 ballot

Also successfully campaigned twice (in June and November 2016) against sales tax measures to triple the size of the county jail

More information at siskiyouforward.org

Measure H Campaign June 2016

Would have removed the exception in the county's Groundwater Ordinance for water bottling plants which export water outside the county

- ▶ Coalition of groups campaigned for the ordinance - it passed in the south county where water bottling activity takes place but failed countywide
- ▶ Crystal Geysers formed an "Astroturf" (fake grassroots) group Citizens for a Strong Siskiyou Economy, and spent over \$30k funding a website, mailers, etc. for its disinformation campaign, advised by Burson-Marsteller PR firm (Three Mile Island)
- ▶ Filed false campaign finance reports, failing to list payments to LA contractors for sign production and placement among other violations

Fair Political Practices Commission complaint

Filed and approved for full investigation
in March 2017

Astroturf group campaign treasurer was
fined by FPPC in other matters

Still awaiting the conclusion of this
investigation and their decision

We are glad California has this process,
but justice delayed can be justice denied

Political Involvement is Always Important!



SFM was not very active in 2018 but has plans for 2020

- ▶ Fundraising and organizing on behalf of ballot measures and candidates in Siskiyou County
- ▶ We will work with Democrats, community groups and all others “in support of a sustainable local economy, thriving community and responsible environmental stewardship”
- ▶ Seminar for people wanting to run for office
- ▶ Mount Shasta lobbying expenditure disclosure ordinance
- ▶ Fighting influx of big right-wing money seeking to divide the community (too much to explain fully here!)
- ▶ Holding educational and informative campaign events