TO:

Siskiyou County:
Brandon Criss, Ed Valenzuela, Michael Kobseff, Lisa Nixon, Ray Haupt, Jason Ledbetter

Mount Shasta Parks and Recreation District:
Renee Casterline, Brandy Caporaso, Ken Brummel-Smith, Leslie Rush, Bruce Johnston, Shannon Shaw

Mount Shasta Trail Association:
John Harch, John Schuyler, Debbie Derby, Barry Price, Mike Hupp, Lynda Hardy, John Thomson, Paul Schwartz, Glenn Harvey

Ecological Landscape Architecture:
Tom Hesseldenz

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center, I would like to express our support for the following ideas for Lake Siskiyou presented to us at our August board meeting by Tom Hesseldenz. These are ideas that are currently being considered by the Mount Shasta Recreation and Parks District as part of its master plan update, and potentially also to be considered by the County later this fall and beyond as the County conducts additional planning for the future of this tremendous recreational and economic resource.

- **Lake Siskiyou Trail:** We strongly support the completion of the main trail around the lake, including a permanent bridge above the Delta and a shoreline route through the Campground. We also support improvement of secondary trails, including the roadside trail through the Campground and the Spini Point Loop Trail, and replacement of user trails with designed trails along the portion of Cold Creek across the road from Holiday Subdivision.

- **New Campground Concessionaire:** Given the long history of problems with the current Campground concessionaire, and in particular their refusal to allow the Shoreline and Roadside Trails to be completed through the Campground, we whole-heartedly support non-renewal of the current lease and recruitment of a new concessionaire. We also support the possibility of the Mount Shasta Recreation and Parks District taking over Campground management, along with management of trails and other recreational resources at the Lake. In the latter case, it would be timely to designate the Lake as a County park.

- **Roads and Parking:** We support the paving of North Shore Road to eliminate major dust problems, installation of a K-rail barrier above the cliff along Wagon Creek Arm for safety reasons, re-establishment of the seasonal road from North Shore Road to South Fork Road (about a mile upriver from the Lake) for as an emergency evacuation route, enlargement of the Cable Beach parking area to
reduce parking on W.A. Barr Road and Castle Lake Road, and long-planned improvements to the Spini Point, North Shore Meadow, and Delta parking areas.

- **Seasonal Gravel Quarrying:** Associated with the seasonal emergency evacuation route across the South Fork, we conceptually support seasonal gravel removal at that location, with processing occurring offsite, as a means of slowing down infilling of the Lake with sediment while not conflicting with the public's recreational use of the Delta area. Some of this material could be placed into the river downstream from Box Canyon Dam to replenish spawning gravels lost following construction of the Dam.

- **Keeping the Lake Full:** We support modification of the hydro FERC license to require only run-of-river releases during low-flow conditions rather than the current minimum flow requirement, so that the Lake can be kept full during the dry season, as it used to be prior to the hydro retrofit. This will restore riparian vegetation around the lakeshore, reduce bank erosion, improve bird and fish habitat, and greatly improve the visual quality and recreational experiences at the Lake. Fishery health can be maintained below the Dam by cold water releases and spawning gravel augmentation. We also support keeping the Lake full in the wet season, rather than the current 5-foot drawdown, since the drawdown does not provide the hoped-for flood control benefits to Dunsmuir due to the Lake being too small. Eliminating the winter drawdown will also enable river channel maintenance flows to occur (important to cleaning spawning gravels and moving large woody debris). These flows are defined as 1-2-year high-flow events, and they are currently prevented by the drawdown.

- **Ongoing Fuels Reduction and Meadow Maintenance:** We support and applaud the County for its ongoing fuels reduction work around the Lake. We also support periodic removal of small encroaching conifers into meadow areas to maintain the meadows. Problems to date have occurred when (1) too much fuels reduction was done along the loop trail by Cable Beach where the Lake itself provides a fuel break; (2) trees along the Lake Siskiyou Trail were removed during Spini Meadow restoration that should have been left for shade and framing views; and (3) many more trees were marked but not yet cut along the rest of the North Shore portion of the Trail. Fortunately, regarding the third problem, the County agreed to black out markings on the trees that should be kept along the trail. These and other related problems can be avoided in the future by including on the project team somebody with recreational design experience, and by conducting public outreach prior to project implementation.

- **NTMP:** The County's use of a Non-industrial Timber Management Plan makes sense for managing fuels and removing hazard trees around the Lake. We understand that this provides an important tool for the County to not only pay for the fuels and hazard tree work but also make supplemental income for the County, but we encourage the County to focus on ecological health and diversity of forest stands and associated recreational values as the primary goals for use of the NTMP.
**Dogs and Horses:** We understand that people want to run their dogs off-leash, but use levels are high around the lake, and users need to either have electronic collars on their dogs or use conventional leashes. Also, due to high use levels, horseback riding on the Lake Siskiyou Trail should not be allowed. The Initial Study for the Trail indicated that they would be prohibited per the County’s desire to avoid safety problems, yet in recent years horses are often seen along the North Shore portion of the Trail. According to the Mount Shasta Trail Association, a solution was agreed upon with horseback riding groups at the time of initial Trail approval (1999) that riding would be focused on unpaved roads and the Sisson-Callahan Trail above the Lake, with the possibility of developing a horseback riding trailhead facility between the Campground and Delta with shared use of the proposed permanent trail bridge above the Delta for access to those riding areas.

**Patrolling:** We encourage seasonal patrolling via bicycle or e-bike along the Lake Siskiyou Trail, rather than simply relying on patrolling by boat and car. This will help greatly in resolving problems with dogs, horses, and illegal camping, campfires, and littering by transients.

**Funding Sources:** We understand that the approaching expiration of the current hydro agreement with Pacific Power will result in a substantial drop in revenue generated at the Lake. We support the exploration of various other ways to increase Lake-generated revenue, including increased hydro production resulting from keeping the Lake full, daily/annual parking fees, Campground improvements and year-round Campground use, having a not-for-profit entity such as the Rec District take over the Campground, and generating income and/or usable aggregate products to the County from seasonal gravel quarrying, along with continued income generated through prudent forest management. We also realize that there will be additional economic benefits to the County, concessionaires, and local communities derived from completion and year-round use of the Lake Siskiyou Trail.

**CEQA:** The key to all of the above is for the County to complete a planning process with full community involvement, including well-designed project components, a thorough and well-conducted CEQA process, and a well-written CEQA document. The Ecology Center has at times found itself relying on appeals and lawsuits when the CEQA review process has been inadequate. We would enthusiastically welcome the opportunity at Lake Siskiyou to be proactive with the County to plan and support approval of the various ways in which the Lake can be improved and better managed for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,

Richard Lucas, President of the Board
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center