CALIFORNIA TROUT

February 4, 2018

Mitch Stogner
Executive Director, North Coast Railroad Authority
419 Talmage Road, Suite M, Ukiah, CA 95482

RE: Woodman Creek Fish Passage Project, Northwestern Pacific Railroad Mile Post 171.49

Dear Director Stogner and NCRA Board of Directors,

I am writing to request that the North Coast Railroad Authority Board of Directors considers allowing CalTrout and our project partners to modify minor aspects of the engineering designs and construction plans for our Woodman Creek Fish Passage Project. Our designs and construction plans were previously reviewed and approved by the Railroad Authority.

As you are aware, in February 2015, the NCRA Board of Directors unanimously approved Resolution No. 2015-01, allowing CalTrout to move forward with the development of final engineering designs, construction plans, and proceed to implementation of the Woodman Creek Fish Barrier Removal Project. I have attached the Resolution to this letter for your convenience. Among the nine stipulations in the Agreement, the resolution directed CalTrout to work with the NCRA consulting engineer Mr. David Anderson during the development of our project engineering designs...

> "...to remove the railroad section and earthen fill prism, restore Woodman Creek to its historic alignment, and provide fish passage into the watershed, in a way that would not preclude future reconstruction of a railroad crossing by the NCRA".

In recent discussions with Director McCowen, I was informed that the NCRA is proposing to "rail-bank" the Eel River Canyon portion of the NWPCo railroad line. With this proposed action, CalTrout and its project team are requesting to make several minor changes to our approved Woodman Creek engineering design and construction plans.

While our project goals remain as originally planned in 2017, and include removal of the railroad embankment that forms a barrier to fish migration, construction of a permanent channel "plug" under the existing bridge, construction of a haul road along 4,400 feet of the railroad alignment, and storage of earthen materials within the railroad alignment, changes in the intended future use of the railroad alignment would preclude the need for several components of our engineering designs for the Woodman Creek project that were included in the designs only to comply with the NCRA resolution. These changes would substantially increases our flexibility to manage the construction project, and would significantly reduce construction costs.

Considering that CalTrout is using public grant program funds to implement the project, **eliminating unnecessary construction tasks ultimately saves taxpayer dollars**. This is an important consideration from our standpoint.

There are three components of the engineering designs which we seek to modify in order to streamline our construction plans and save significant amounts of public funding:

(1) **Engineered Footings for Future Railroad Bridge.** Our final engineering designs required excavation into bedrock below the current railroad alignment where the embankment is to be removed, in order to create footings for a future railroad trestle and bridge crossing over Woodman Creek. Given there is no plan for a railroad bridge in the foreseeable future, we propose to forego constructing one or both of these bedrock footings. According to the NRCA's consulting engineer Mr. David Anderson, constructing one footing might allow more flexible and alternatives for constructing a pedestrian bridge across Woodman Creek in the future. We propose to maintain the option to construct one bridge footing if the bedrock and site configuration, once unearthed, provides a suitable location. This option can be determined in consultation with the railroad engineer during a construction site inspection.

(2) **Treatment of Rails and Ties along Railroad Alignment.** Our construction plan calls for the removal and stockpile of up to 8,200 feet of the steel rails along the 4,100 foot segment of the railroad to be used for site access and a spoils disposal haul road. The purpose of the rail removal and stockpiling was to maintain them in good condition for reuse for future rail construction. A geotextile liner was to be placed on top of the wood ties to enable future rail construction to uncover them. Portions of the rail along our haul road section are already buried by landslides and large boulder debris, and will be left buried in place. Instead of stockpiling for reuse, we propose leaving segments of the rail in place, and/or allowing construction crews to cut the 40 foot rails in half to aid in their removal and transport, resulting in substantial savings in heavy equipment and labor time to access the barrier site for construction and eliminating the existing fish passage barrier. Rail material removed by the construction contractor may also be hauled off-site for its salvage value. The geotextile fabric is unnecessary and would not be used in construction.

(3) **Placement of Fill Material along Railroad Alignment.** Our construction plan designated three "Spoil Sites" for permanent storage of the 44,000 yd^3 of excavated embankment materials: (1) along the 4,100 foot long access route and haul road, (2) at a large clearing at the north end of the access route, and (3) at a remote stockpile area one mile up the hill on the Christensen Ranch. We propose a revised spoil disposal plan that will allow increased storage of excavated fill along the 4,100 feet of haul road between the fish barrier and the temporary staging area, and along the 2,300 feet of existing, low-standard road parallel to the railroad tracks between the temporary staging area and Spoil Area #2. This road segment and the adjacent rail alignment averages over 30 feet wide and can easily accommodate an average fill depth of 5 feet. These dimensions conservatively allow for well over 10,000 yds^3 of spoil disposal along this segment of haul route. Our project team is confident that the fill material proposed for long-term storage at Spoil Area 3 on the Christensen Ranch can instead be stored on the haul road between Woodman Creek and Spoil Area #2, resulting in substantial project cost-savings.

Overall, the modified plan will greatly reduce the time and materials spent to access the site, construct the haul route for end-hauling, excavate the fish barrier site, and properly store the excavated and removed slack water deposits and railroad embankment aggregate at the Project Site. These proposed

changes are relatively minor changes from the perspective of the railroad right of way and future uses either for RAIL or for TRAIL, but add up to considerable cost savings to our project.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience if you have any questions regarding this request. I am hopeful your Board can make a decision to support this request at its' upcoming February 14 Board Meeting. I am available to attend that meeting if needed.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Darren Mierau
North Coast Director
California Trout

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