



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Lassen
National
Forest

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File Code: 2530-3

Date: January 31, 2006

Seilca Potter
Acting Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board, Executive Office
1001 I St., 24th floor
Sacramento, CA 95814



303 (d) Deadline:
1/31/06

Dear Ms. Potter:

This letter is in response to the proposed 303(d) listing of the Susan River for mercury impairment. The Lassen National Forest has concerns about listing this waterbody as impaired at this time. Through discussions with several staff members, it is apparent that there is no clear source for the mercury that was detected in the two fish tissue samples. There are very few historic mining sites within the watershed. The basin geology consists of basalt and rhyolite, lacking the mercury or gold producing ores often associated with mercury-impaired waterbodies.

Additionally, the sample size for this determination seems too small to warrant listing. With only four samples taken over two years, and the two positive samples being from 1999, it seems like several things could have caused this exceedence. For one, atmospheric deposition of mercury has been linked to other mercury detections in the area (Eagle Lake Trout). Also, the California Department of Fish and Game stocks the Susan River with fish from hatcheries. Without knowing if those fish were native to the Susan River or if they were transplants from a watershed with higher mercury loads, it cannot be determined that the Susan River watershed is the source of the pollutant.

Given the limited sample size of fish, the lack of obvious local mercury sources, and the negative impact such a listing could have on recreational uses of the Lassen National Forest and surrounding areas, we do not support the listing based on current information.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Forest Hydrologist Scott Tangenberg at (530) 252-6670, or at the address noted above.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jack Walton for
LAURIE TIPPIN
Forest Supervisor

