To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept my comments regarding the (thermal curtain) proposal effecting Lake Almanor and the North Fork of the Feather River from Lake Almanor to Caribou.

This document is broken into two specific pieces:

1. Effects upon Lake Almanor fishery and Lake Almanor communities
2. Effect upon the North Fork of the Feather River from the Canyon Dam outlet to Caribou.

I have resided at Lake Almanor off and on for over 45 years. In the 1970's when I arrived upon the scene, the town of Chester was a bustling community with significant lumber milling, a railroad spur and a thriving tourist trade primarily centering around Lake Almanor. There was still a mill at Westwood, Greenville and Crescent Mill. Today, the mill at Crescent Mill and Greenville are not in existence. The mill at Chester produces lumber but at a lower level than the 1970's and the railroad spur serving the lumber mill in Chester has been removed. The closing of mills and the reduction of mill production at the Chester site has taken its toll on the economy in and around the Lake Almanor basin. What is left of the economy is largely supported first by tourism and next by US Forest employment. All other business survives primarily because of the two cited entities.

Lake Almanor Country Club, Lake Almanor West, Bailey Creek, Hamilton Branch, and residences along HWY 147 on the east shore of Lake Almanor provide considerable property tax revenue to Plumas County. These homes are primarily second home/ recreational properties whose owners specifically are there as a result of Lake Almanor and would not be there without this lake as the centerpiece. Further, these properties and their owners provide considerable employment within the Lake Almanor basin in food services, construction, maintenance, landscape, tourist businesses, police, and significant government entities within the county. Without these part time residents it is not a stretch to assume that Westwood, Greenville, Prattville and Chester would likely not exist other than with considerable impact upon county and state social services. These communities along with their part time residents provide the tax base that funds much of county government within Plumas County.

Altering Lake Almanor in the manner proposed would clearly have a negative impact upon the economic support this lake provides to the surrounding communities. Altering the water temperature within the context of the proposal can and will affect to a considerable degree (no pun intended) trout and salmon populationa in Lake Almanor. Further, reducing the surface acreage of the lake in June, July, August and September will further discourage tourism as recreational opportunities will be impacted. Less recreation and less fishing will result in reduced revenues to local businesses as well as county government.

Warmer waters will be created at the north end of Lake Almanor bordering the causeway, thus offering Carp and Sacramento Squaw fish a greater range of lake access and a greater negative impact upon trout and salmon due to a reduction of lake surface with increased releases of water from the lake in June, July and August.

Eventually, as the lake degrades so to will property values and property tax revenues

not only in the predominant second home residences but also those of Chester as less jobs will be available and the Chester population degrades further from its present level.

The overwhelming conclusion is that the current proposals confronting Lake Almanor have a 100% negative impact without any upside. Certainly any responsible person or agency would come to this rational conclusion.

2. Effect upon the North Fork of the Feather River from Canyon Dam to Caribou

I take pride in the fact that I am an excellent fisherman. I have spent considerable hours fishing the North Fork of the Feather River from Seneca to Canyon Dam. I haven't fished every mile but I have fished from Seneca up approximately 2 miles. I have fished from Canyon Dam downstream approximately 2 miles and I have taken the difficult hike down into the canyon and fished about one mile of that stretch. Every encounter with these sections of the river provided hours of outstanding fishing. The browns and rainbows were abundant, extremely healthy, and larger fish than many rivers this size. I have logged in my tablet fish ranging in size from two and a half inches up to approximately three pounds. These sections of the river are fairly difficult to access with the exception of from Seneca moving upstream. It is important to note that in all the time I fished these sections of the river over a thirty five year period I came across less than ten fishermen.

I have fished portions of the river from Seneca going upstream toward Butt Lake. Much of this fishery is private with an abundance of mining claims. I have found those sitting on staked claims are not terribly excited about anyone on or near their claims. Nonetheless, I have fished some of these stretches with considerable success. The fish are smaller and the preponderance of those I caught were rainbows with a mixture of brown trout. They ranged in size from about two and a half inches to twelve inches. It was not difficult to catch and release twenty or more fish in a three hour period along this stretch.

I have fished portions of the North Fork of the Feather river from Caribou moving upstream. I have fished this section of the river the least but I have logged successful ventures each time I fished this section. On this section I caught the largest number of stocked rainbows. Further the brown trout were in smaller numbers and the fish were smaller. Nonetheless the fish were abundant and healthy. I fished this section mainly in July and August. Of course, the canyon was somewhat warmer in this lower altitude but the few fish I kept for dinner showed firm meat when I cleaned them. Never did I find fish with the soft/mushy meat one might find in warmer waters. I have encountered a larger number of fishermen along this stretch of the river and I assumed it was because it was stocked and there was ease of access from the road. I might add that I usually prefer to fish stretches absent other fishermen.

I think it is important to note that reducing water temperatures from roughly Seneca to Caribou appears to me as a fisherman to have little benefit. First and foremost because the preponderance of fish in this section are stocked and are caught rather quickly and second because the native rainbows and browns don't appear to be imperiled. As I stated above those fish appeared to be very healthy.

3. Sending surges in order to increase rafting and kayaking opportunities.

While the above are exciting and wonderful experiences for those who partake in the recreation available, one has to seriously wonder whether or not there is an upside to this limited opportunity in relation to the negative impact upon Lake Almanor.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If Lake Almanor did not exist what might we be able to extrapolate from this in relation to the given proposals?

1. During the months of July, August, September and October, most of the river between Chester and Caribou would flow at a much lower cfs than it does now. The ensuing issue would be lower oxygen levels and much higher river temperatures than exist now below both Butt reservoir and Lake Almanor.
2. Trout populations would be limited to stocked rainbows with a preponderance of Sacramento river Squaw fish.
3. There would be little or no summer tourist business outside of Lassen National Park
4. Plumas county would suffer considerably as a result of a declining property tax base
5. Chester would be supported by an economy similar to that of Westwood
6. The entire area would be an economic blight
7. We certainly would not be debating the concept of a thermal curtain

4. THE THERMAL CURTAIN AS A VIABLE OPTION?

In the early part of this century the concept of a “thermal curtain” applied to a lake such as Lake Almanor appeared to be a viable option. What is the application and research telling us now? It appears that the application of a thermal curtain to Lake Almanor as a means of reducing or maintaining current water temperatures is a dubious alternative at best. Current research by some would indicate a less than favorable result with the best case scenario. Given this data does one realistically justify the expense given the likely outcome of an unsuccessful application? Doesn’t it appear that under the best case scenario the overall objective is unlikely to occur?

Summary:

In today’s uncertain world one always has to look at the grief vs. success ratio. What appeared at first blush to be a viable alternative with few downsides now appears to be the opposite.

If we could make a better fishery for six miles of the North Fork of the Feather river at the expense of jobs for residents within the sphere of influence of Lake Almanor, could we with good conscience justify the ends?

The best efforts of man sometimes don’t meet the test of time. Given the overarching negatives presented herein, even the test of time should not be considered as the evidence demonstrates a negative outcome. An outcome that likely won’t benefit the fishery downstream.

I seek the wisdom of Board members and ask each member to do a little soul searching. Do the ends justify the means? I think not and as such ask you to deny further consideration of the proposal(s).

Respectfully,

John W, Rabe
980 Stonewood Rd.
Newcastle, CA 95658 jrabe1@sbcglobal.net 916-543-6374