Klamath Bird Observatory 🛫

Advancing bird and habitat conservation through science, education, and partnerships

June 2, 2023

Klamath National Forest Salmon/Scott River Ranger District Fort Jones, CA 96032

Re: Red Bank Enhancement Project

To: Natalie Kelly

I am pleased to write this letter on behalf of Klamath Bird Observatory (KBO) in support of the Salmon River Restoration Council's (SRRC's) Red Bank Enhancement Project. KBO advances bird and habitat conservation through science, education, and partnerships. We grew out of initial bird monitoring work with the Klamath National Forest that started in the 1990s, and we continue to engage in the Salmon River restoration projects through an ongoing, 6-year partnership with SRRC. I have spoked with both Sam Cuenca (USFS) and Mel Van Scoyoc (SRRC) regarding the details of this project. We have collected pre-restoration avian monitoring data at the Red Bank site, and plan to collect post-restoration data. These data will be valuable for SRRC and the Forest to either demonstrate benefits of the restoration actions or identify areas of improvement through cycles of adaptive management.

The restoration design described in the Red Bank EA is consistent with recommendations in the California Partners in Flight Riparian Landbird Conservation Plan (RHJV 2004), including goals of vegetation structural diversity, vertical and horizontal heterogeneity, and native plant diversity. Steps taken to minimize disturbance to the shrub layer, replace any native shrubs that must be removed with new plantings, and/or retaining root balls of native plants removed as part of the restoration process for replanting at the site (as described in the EA), as well as adhering to a restoration window outside of the landbird breeding season (i.e., avoiding work between April 15 – July 31), would mitigate any short-term impacts to riparian shrub-nesting birds while working towards long-term benefits.

Riparian ecosystems play a crucial role in the health and diversity of the California landscape. In the western United States, riparian zones make up <1% of the land area, yet they support the most diverse bird communities in arid and semi-arid regions. Many of our historical riparian habitats have been lost or degraded due to human impacts. Their relative rarity, yet high biodiversity, make riparian areas one of the most important habitats for the conservation of birds and other wildlife in the West.

Restoration actions that enhance riparian vegetation and reconnection of the river to its floodplain would have a positive impact on riparian-associated wildlife, including a suite of migratory bird species that are highly associated with or completely dependent on riparian ecosystems. A number of these are listed by Partners in Flight as focal species for conservation and management because of their close association with riparian habitat, and their potential to be negatively affected by threats to riparian



habitat quantity, quality, and connectivity. Species that have undergone a reduction in breeding range in California and that would benefit from riparian restoration include Song Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow Warbler, and the state-endangered Willow Flycatcher, which we have recorded using the Salmon River region as migration stopover habitat.

Sincerely,

Sarah M. Pockwell

Dr. Sarah M. Rockwell Acting Science Director