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Jennifer Norris
Field Supervisor
Endangered Species Division
Sacramento Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W 2605
Sacramento, CA 95825

Dear Ms. Norris,

I am requesting formal consultation on the Deer Valley 4WD Trail (19E01) Meadow Restoration and Blue Lakes / Meadow Lake Road (09N01) Maintenance Project being planned on the Amador Ranger District of the Eldorado National Forest. The project proposes to implement the necessary corrective measures to bring Route 09N01 into compliance with Forest Plan Standards and to implement restorative actions to limit resource impacts along Route 19E01. Upon completion of the corrective and restorative actions, this project proposes to re-open (or re-designate) the currently closed sections of Routes 19E01 and 09N01 to allow public motorized vehicle use.

Attached is an initiation package for consultation, including a Biological Assessment for the project. The Biological Assessment finds that implementing the Deer Valley 4WD Trail (19E01) Meadow Restoration and Blue Lakes / Meadow Lake Road (09N01) Maintenance Project and opening these routes for public motor vehicle use;

1) may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) and Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog (SNYLF),

2) may affect and is likely to adversely affect the Yosemite Toad (YOTO), and

3) that the activities are not likely to result in the destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat for the YOTO or SNYLF.

The project will have no effect on other species listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered.

Field surveys within the project area have confirmed the presence of YOTO (likely hybrids) but have not detected the presence of SNYLF. LCT are located in the vicinity of the project area because they are stocked in Upper Blue, Lower Blue, Twin, Meadow, Granite, and Evergreen Lakes. The specific presence of LCT in the stream habitats up and downstream of these lakes and reservoirs is unknown, although general trout presence has been documented. Potential impacts to YOTO in the project area were addressed during the formulation of the proposed actions (Section IV. Description of the Proposed Project in the BA). The re-routing of Route 19E01, stream crossing upgrades, streambank restoration, and road maintenance treatments have been designed in a manner that are not likely to adversely affect LCT, SNYLF, or YOTO. A seasonal closure of Routes 19E01 and 09N01 was designed to reduce the likelihood for motor

vehicle use on these routes to harm the YOTO and their habitat. However, the re-opening of the Routes 19E01 and 09N01, even outside of the proposed seasonal closure period, could result in injury or mortality to individual YOTO. The risk of affecting individuals would be reduced by the proposed seasonal closures and the other proposed actions are expected to benefit YOTO in the long-term by restoring meadow condition and reducing sediment delivery to the streams.

The Biological Assessment describes three different seasonal closure options designed to reduce impacts to the Yosemite Toad. Alternative 3 is the District Ranger's *Preferred Alternative;* we would appreciate Fish and Wildlife Service review of the seasonal closure options described in Alternatives 1 and 4, however, and input if either 1) a potentially shorter closure period (such as described in Alternative 2) would provide acceptable protection for YOTO, or 2) a longer or less variable seasonal closure is needed (such as described in Alternative 4).

If you need further information, please contact Aquatic Biologist, Kathryn Wilkinson, at (209) 532-3617 ext. 452 or Forest Wildlife Biologist, Dawn Lipton, at (530) 621-5218. Thank you in advance for your timely review and assistance with this important ecological restoration project.

Sincerely,

LAURENCE CRABTREE
Forest Supervisor