



October 13, 2005

Doug Bosco, Chair
State Coastal Conservancy
Attention: Michael Bowen
1330 Broadway, 11th Floor
Oakland, California 94612

Re: Montgomery Woods Expansion Project

Dear Chairman Bosco,

I am writing to make you aware that the Mendocino Land Trust supports the Save-the-Redwoods League's project to acquire and transfer to the California Department of Parks and Recreation approximately 1,240 acres of land as an expansion to Montgomery Woods State Reserve, about ten miles west of Ukiah.

The Mendocino Land Trust has an ongoing land conservation interest in the Big River watershed. In July 2001, the Mendocino Land Trust acquired 7,334 acres in the estuary portion of the Big River watershed and conveyed the property to CDPR. In 2003, the Mendocino Land Trust completed the *Mendocino County Coastal Conservation Plan* – funded by and subsequently adopted by the California State Coastal Conservancy as an adjunct to the Conservancy's own strategic plan. The Big River watershed was identified as a "high priority conservation area" in the MCCCCP.

The proposed acquisitions by Save-the-Redwoods League will expand the protected land base in the critical headwaters of Big River – a watershed rated by the California Department of Fish and Game as a high priority for coho salmon restoration, management potential, and extinction risk.

The proposed acquisitions will also complement work in the estuarine portion of Big River. The Mendocino Land Trust continues to partner with California State Parks to restore and manage one of California's most significant coastal estuaries. In March 2005, the Mendocino Land Trust completed the Big River Preliminary Plan, again funded by the Conservancy, in an effort to jumpstart management activities. Expanding protection in the upper watershed will build on this: fostering comprehensive protection from estuary to headwaters.

In addition, the proposed project will expand recreational opportunities at Montgomery Woods State Reserve and help the public experience natural connections across the

landscape. By journeying from Montgomery Woods State Reserve to the mouth of Big River people will trace the journey that salmon take as they return from the cool inland canyons to the ocean.

The purchased land will help protect more than 5,000 acres of wildlife habitat and important connections throughout this habitat, because it is adjacent to Montgomery Woods, BLM land, and a private ranch protected through a conservation easement.

This watershed is experiencing significant development pressure from the Ukiah valley, with large ranches being broken up for residential use. In fact, the Mendocino Land Trust has worked with Save-the-Redwoods League to conserve the significant old growth redwoods and a second growth grove on Ridgewood Ranch and is securing state and federal funding to afford protection to 4,500 acres subject to development pressure. The project affords a special opportunity to avert this threat and secure a significant land base for protection in this key coastal watershed.

On behalf of the Mendocino Land Trust, I encourage the State Coastal Conservancy to support this project.

If I can be of any assistance to the Board, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



James Bernard
Executive Director

cc. Kate Anderton, Save-the-Redwoods League