

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

OROVILLE FIELD DIVISION
460 GLEN DRIVE
OROVILLE, CA 95966



October 10, 2011

Jim Thorup
Assistant Scoutmaster Troop 2
Chico CA

RE: Support Document for Boy Scout Troop 2, Christmas Tree Project

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) operates the Oroville Project, which includes Lake Oroville, the Thermalito Diversion Pool, Forebay, and Afterbay. In 1993, DWR amended its Recreation Plan at the Oroville Project which included the implementation of projects including recreational fishery improvements such as coldwater fish stocking and warm water fish habitat enhancement.

DWR has conducted a variety of fish habitat enhancement projects at Lake Oroville since 1994, the most significant being the installation of brush piles, or brush shelters, made from Christmas trees collected by the Boy Scouts. Until DWR gets the FERC license, this is the only Black Bass habitat project being done on Lake Oroville. These brush piles are located within the fluctuation zone in protected coves, to provide micro cover for juvenile warm water fish such as largemouth bass, spotted bass, channel catfish, bluegill, and green sunfish. This type of habitat also increases the surface area for the attachment of periphyton (that slimy material that forms on submerged objects), which is one of the components forming the basis of the food chain at the lake. An increase in this form of cover has been found to increased biological productivity, which can lead to larger fish.

DWR estimates that the structures built from Christmas trees will last for at least 15 years. Many of the structures we constructed in the 1990's are still in place and can be seen when the lake surface levels are lower in the winter at such locations as the Miners Ranch Saddle Dam area, and the boat launch at the Oroville dam. Over the years, DWR has constructed over 550 brush shelters at Lake Oroville, using more than 20,000 Christmas trees collected from Chico, Oroville, and Paradise. The vast majority of these trees were collected from Chico by Troop 2 of the Chico Boy Scouts. The trees are transported to the lake by Recology, the local refuse company, which donates trucks and labor to this cause.

The value of the project is very high because of the lack of natural habitat in the fluctuation zone at Lake Oroville. Without the help of Troop 2, it is unlikely that DWR would be able to continue the Christmas tree project. The combined effort of DWR, Recology, and the Boy Scout Troop 2, is an excellent example of local community working together to benefit the fisheries of Lake Oroville.

On behalf of the DWR, would like to thank the members of Troop 2 for their continuing efforts towards this most valuable project for Lake Oroville. Thanks to the thousands of hours of service that your Scout Troop has invested over the years, the fisheries at Lake Oroville has been one of the premier Black Bass lakes in California.

Congratulations, job well done.

Julie Brown, Staff Environmental Scientist
California Department of Water Resources
Oroville Division
460 Glen Drive
Oroville, CA 95966