



# Big Creek Conservancy

PO Box 202 ~ Fish Camp, California 93623

## Who is leading the Big Creek acquisition effort? What is the Big Creek Conservancy?

The Big Creek Conservancy is a new, non-profit land conservancy based in Fish Camp whose officers are Barry Green, President; Darlene Swenson, Vice-President; and Kirk Helland Sec/Treas. They have partnered with Sierra Foothill Conservancy [www.sierrafoothill.org](http://www.sierrafoothill.org) to raise funds to acquire and restore a section of Big Creek and its watershed just downstream of Hwy 41. There is a 44 acre parcel of interest bordering US Forest Service Land. Big Creek enters Forest Service & Yosemite just downstream.

## Is the developer selling? How much money is required? Does Sierra Foothill Conservancy have funding?

No. The property is in pre-foreclosure as the developer stopped making payments in September. This would be a purchase from the bank, so this is the reason for a short timeframe for our request. We cannot predict precisely how much we need, and, if our numbers were public we could be outbid. The goal is for our email campaign to go viral, touch those who love Fish Camp and Yosemite and raise 2 million dollars. As other sources are sought, local fundraising shows community support needed to attract serious dollars.

## Where exactly is the meadow parcel located? What is the threat to the meadow?

The meadow lies behind and below the Fish Camp Post Office. Cedar Creek travels north here through the site to meet Big Creek. Today, plans are approved at the County for a 400 room, 4 story resort sited in the lower meadow. The developer, PacificUS, must complete several critical studies and permits before construction could begin, but the land use was changed from the original Fish Camp designation in a specific plan approval in 2003. New roads, parking, buildings and cabins would fill the meadow.

## Why is this seen as a threat to the community water system, and the creek?

The water wells for Yosemite Alpine Community Services District and other area residents are located in the meadow. Today, that water is pure and can be pumped, stored and delivered without expensive treatment. Board members volunteer their time to conduct inspections and annual tests required by the state, and residents enjoy pure mountain spring water at very low cost – a throwback to days when our natural resources supported us. However, YACSD was sued by the developer of the meadow to remove some water rights of the people. The development itself places leach fields on the upper elevations of the meadow, above the wells. YACSD has had to bear litigation and attorneys fees to defend the ratepayers well and easement rights.

## Tell me more about the meadow.

Big Creek's original course was filled and Cedar Creek was channelized in the 1970's before wetlands regulations were in force. Wetland acreage documented there in 1988 was reduced severely in 1999 wetland delineation reports, perhaps due to ongoing "maintenance" filed with Department of Fish and Game by the land owner at the time. Wetlands act as filters to clean water.

## Why did the County require additional flood studies in November 2010?

Locals saw the meadow flood in January 1997. A recent flood study conducted for the Fish Camp Property Owners Association showed some conflicts between the 1997 flood area and the proposed resort. The report shows this is a local flood storage area where waters rise and slow before turning northeast for the Yosemite border. The fills of the 70's and the resort fills proposed might increase flood levels and scour for nearby properties, so additional engineering was required by the County .

## What are Conservancy plans for the meadow parcels?

Grants would be sought from the Department of Water Resources to restore what nature gave us here – to protect the community from elevated flood levels by removing fills from the original channel depicted on aerial photographs from 1970. The oak riparian community seen there on the banks would be restored. Further, channelization of Cedar Creek would also be removed, and fill in historic wetland areas removed. The functioning ecosystem responsible for our pristine mountain water would be renewed. The Conservancy would preserve commercial use along Highway 41. The Community Services District would expand their easements or purchase the wetland meadow, and a conservation easement would be recorded to protect this valuable resource for water.

## Who supports this effort?

We have majority support in Fish Camp, but will need more than we can raise locally. We ask that you pass on our request to enlist family and friends from out of the area to help us. With their help, we'll employ our wonderful free market to purchase and protect an important natural component of what makes Big Creek clean, and keeps clean water flowing into Yosemite National Park.

*"In every walk with Nature one receives far more than he seeks" ~ John Muir*