

State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND
WILDLIFE
LAND CONVERSION EVALUATION (LCE)
Report
October XX, 2019

Property Name:

Sawmill

Justification for Conversion:

At its meeting on May 18, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) approved the purchase of approximately 120 acres at the end of Sawmill Road in San Bernardino County. The acquisition costs of \$1,800,000 for the property plus \$20,000 for DGS consultation were allocated from the General Fund. The purpose of acquiring this property was to implement portions of the State Budget Act of 1999 which provided \$2,000,000.00 to the WCB for the acquisition and preservation of wildlife habitat and corridor lands in the San Bernardino Mountains. The Sawmill property is included in San Bernardino County Wildlife Corridor #16 and provides important linkage to the major drainages to the north and west.

The property is bordered by private developed lands on the east, private undeveloped lands on the south, and the USFS, San Bernardino National Forest, to the north and west. The property contains the headwaters of the Miller Canyon arm of the Mojave River, and Dart Creek, a tributary of the East Fork of the West Fork of the Mojave. It is made up largely of a Mixed Hardwood Conifer habitat type and is very divergent in both structure and age class. Numerous old growth pines and oaks occur on this site. There is also a significant evergreen oak component. The parcel contains both a large pond and at least one spring.

The property is undeveloped but is subject to informal day use activities from the surrounding community. Activities such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing are common.

At the time of acquisition CDFW was engaged in informal discussions with the USFS to assume management of the parcel through a Memorandum of Understanding. This partnership did not materialize, leaving CDFW responsible for the operational expenses of managing the property.

CAL FIRE operates five facilities less than 15 miles away from the Sawmill property: three fire stations (Running Springs, Sky forest and Crestline), Pilot Rock Conservation Camp, and San Bernardino Unit (BDU) Headquarters. This proximity to the property makes it an ideal location for CAL FIRE personnel to utilize the Sawmill property for training exercises, physical fitness, and resource management. Through

a partnership with CDFW, CAL FIRE has been implementing the Sawmill Fuels Reduction Project consisting of hazardous tree removal, understory thinning, pruning, chipping, pile burning, roadside brushing and road maintenance. The project will reduce the fire risk to adjacent habitable structures and provide fire emergency personnel access to the property. In addition, the project will complement the San Bernardino National Forest’s Grass Valley Fuel Reduction Project that is currently going through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The combined work of CAL FIRE and the Forest Service will complement each other and help reduce the risk to Twin Peaks, Lake Arrowhead and the surrounding mountain communities from wildfire.

Transferring the property to CAL FIRE is an effective way to ensure the property maintains the original acquisition intent of preservation of wildlife habitat and corridor lands in the San Bernardino Mountains land and continues to be maintained for public access, wildlife habitat, and fire prevention. CAL FIRE has been performing vegetation management on the parcel and has numerous facilities and personnel located near the property. CAL FIRE currently manages approximately 71,000 acres across 8 locations as part of its Demonstration State Forest (DSF) Program. These properties are managed for sustainable forestry, research, and recreation. The Sawmill property will be managed as part of this program if transferred to CAL FIRE.

Geographical Location and Description:

The Sawmill property is approximately 1 mile north of Highway 189 at the end of Sawmill Road in Twin Peaks, CA. The property is located on portions of the Lake Arrowhead and Harrison Mountain United States Geological Survey 7.5’quadrangle maps. The property is made up of 3 parcels, which are described as:

APN	Public Land Survey System Description
033910127	NE ¼, NE ¼, Section 24, T02N, R04W, SBBM
034519102	SW ¼, SW ¼, Section 18, SBBM
033401102	NW ¼, NW ¼, Section 19, T02N, R03W, SBBM

Primary Acquisition Purpose and Species/Habitat Values:

WCB acquired the Sawmill property primarily for its wildlife corridor value. The property also contains notable habitat types and qualities of benefit to local wildlife, including, evergreen oaks, a pond and spring, wetland plant indicators, rock outcrops, and downed, large wood. CDFW has managed the property for wildlife habitat conservation and as a public recreational site. Recreational activities include hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing.

The property is comprised of a mixed conifer-oak forest, with intermixed brush, in the San Bernardino mountains. Ponderosa pine, white fir, incense cedar, sugar pine, black oak, and live oak species dominate the stand. Understory shrub species include a

variety of ceanothus, manzanita, and other shrub species. Elevation is approximately 5,600 feet. Topography is relatively flat (<10%) in some areas and up to approximately 30% slope in others. The property contains various archaeological sites including a historic sawmill that was located on the property. The property is located on State Responsibility Area (SRA) between homes within SRA to the south and east and the San Bernardino National Forest to the north and west.

The Sawmill property would continue to be managed for wildlife habitat conservation and public recreation if transferred to CAL FIRE. In addition, it would be managed as a demonstration and research forest. Areas of demonstration and/or research could include but would not be limited to defensible space, insect control, fuels reduction, reforestation, watershed management, silviculture, archaeology, mixed conifer research, and climate change. Adjacent communities would benefit directly from reduced fire risk. Fire prevention information and education events, such as the Forestry Challenge field exercise, could be held onsite. The Sawmill DSF would be the southernmost working DSF and would be the closest to the largest metropolitan area in California. The Sawmill DSF would be a unique opportunity to reach out to a large portion of the State's population and inform them about CAL FIRE's role in fire protection and resource management and possibly result in recruitment efforts as well.

Given their current infrastructure, personnel, and resources near this property, CAL FIRE is in a better position than CDFW to manage this property moving forward.

Management History and Public Use:

CDFW has managed this land as an undesignated parcel since acquisition in 2001. Its primary benefit is for wildlife habitat and informal public recreation such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing. CDFW has developed no facilities on this property and does not have the personnel or equipment to manage the existing road system, fire hazard, and control public recreation.

Date Acquired and Funding Source:

At its meeting on May 18, 2001, the WCB approved the purchase of approximately 120 acres at the end of Sawmill Road in San Bernardino County. The acquisition costs of \$1,800,000 for the property plus \$20,000 for DGS consultation were allocated from the General Fund.

The purpose of acquiring this property was to implement portions of the State Budget Act of 1999 which provided \$2,000,000.00 to the Wildlife Conservation Board for the acquisition and preservation of wildlife habitat and corridor lands in the San Bernardino Mountains. The Sawmill property is included in San Bernardino County Wildlife Corridor #16 and provides important linkage to the major drainages to the north and west.

Present Encumbrances:

Electrical distribution lines run through the property. Existing roads have historically been utilized by utility companies to access electrical and communications infrastructure.

Improvements on Site:

Improvements to the site are limited to existing roads present at the time of acquisition. Trails are user generated and no formal parking or trailheads is provided.

Hazardous Materials:

The property is the site of a historic sawmill that likely operated from the 1850's until about the 1930's. Remnants of this mill remain and no further development of the site occurred.

There are no known hazardous materials associated with this property.

Mineral and Water Rights Retention:

CDFW will not retain any mineral or water rights on this property.

Deed Restrictions, Conditions of Sale, or Reversionary Interest:

There are no deed restrictions, conditions of sale or reversionary interests associated with the property to be transferred to CAL FIRE.

Estimated Value:

Unknown.

Type of Conversion Requested:

Transfer of Interest in Fee Title to CAL FIRE.