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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to express my wholehearted support and appreciation for the UC Berkeley Natural Reserve at Sagehen Creek Field Station.

Sagehen does the crucial work of bringing together artists, environmentalists, scholars, as well as various governmental agencies, both state and federal, local politicians, NGOs and scientists under the shared impetus of conservation, learning and research. As a cutting-edge teaching and research facility, its wide-ranging work encompasses the study of forest health, wildfire, groundwater hydrology, wildlife ecology and more. These issues are becoming ever more crucial in this age of climate change. All of this, I believe, marks the Sagehen Creek Field Station as an essential and unique space for an important blend of experimentation and inquiry that is not widely seen or practiced elsewhere.

Unlike many other conservation projects, the station is committed to approaching these issues from an interdisciplinary stance. The work of the Sagehen team places them at the forefront of organizations that are looking to facilitate dialogues between the environmental arts and sciences. These are fields that are all too often polarized, despite having the same ultimate goal of encouraging new lifeways that might do something to mitigate the adverse effects of living on a dying planet. Speaking across these disciplines is thus essential to combatting the crisis at hand. One of the core issues of the climate crisis is an issue of communication. **The problem in engaging the general public is not their lack of awareness of climate science, nor a failure to understand the gravity of its potential impacts. It is, instead, a failure of this information to translate at the level of emotion/sensibility, to make the abstract tangible.** The sense of what may be lost, of what precisely is threatened by climate change, gets buried in a glut of statistics and charts. This crisis of visualization creates not only a disconnect between the perspectives of 'experts' and the rest of us, but it also hampers our ability to see how we might take action. One function of environmental art is to offer and create new routes into/modes of visualizing this crisis, ones that do not derail the possibility of hope. The ongoing art projects at Sagehen engage audiences, within the university and with the local community and the public at large to do just that.

What drives Sagehen's integration of environmental arts into its mission has to do with the efforts of the reserve director and assistant director. Both Jeffrey Brown and Faerthen Felix have generously participated in my documentary film project about water, *Water Makes Us Wet*, by allowing me to interview them. This film went on to premiere at the preeminent exhibition Documenta 14 in Kassel, Germany in 2017 and eventually the film screened at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) NY in 2019. Jeff and Faerthen were also featured in my groundbreaking online Environmental Art class (Art 80E) at UC Santa Cruz speaking about the Reserve and art/science collaborations. Their generosity and enthusiasm for a diverse range of projects is inspiring. They continually encourage artists, students, researchers, and members of the public to work with them. Faerthen has visited UC Santa Cruz to lecture about the field station as well as about the more extensive UC Reserve System. She also lectured to my environmental art students about the art produced at Sagehen. I recently gave a lecture at Sagehen for the Sierra Nevada College MFA students, along with my collaborator Annie Sprinkle and the students were receptive and engaged. Participating in the educational environment there is always a deep, invigorating pleasure. We are very excited to continue working with Sagehen Creek Field Station as part of our art works, research and practice.

I have been conducting my own research at the Sagehen Creek Field Station since 2010, and I have seen the tangible results of Jeff and Faerthen's hard work over the course of that time. As their engagement in art has grown, so has their understanding of the importance of artistic research, and its capacity to bring everyone to the table to understand the dire consequences of climate change. By creatively showing and exploring the beauty and fragility of the world we have now – a world that we are in the process of transforming into a less hospitable place for animals, humans, trees – they succeed in getting artists excited about scientific projects and vice versa. They have created an environment where learning, research and experimentation coalesce almost effortlessly because of their vision backed up by their tireless efforts to hold space for arts research.

The fruit of these efforts has attracted some of the most influential people in the field of environmental art. Newton Harrison, (and his recently deceased wife Helen Mayer Harrison) are two of the originators of contemporary environmental art and have created a 50-year artwork at Sagehen. William Fox, Director of the Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art, is a significant voice in environmental and land art. He is a critical Sagehen partner who has recently been commissioned by the National Academy of Sciences to curate a 2020 Washington DC exhibit on the Sagehen art program. Experimental philosopher and conceptual artist Jonathon Keats is working with Sagehen atmospheric scientists to monitor chemical emissions from the basin's trees that indicate stress. Keats interprets these signals as a vote for or against current management practices, and Sagehen has recruited a local politician to vote with the forest: a smart way to acknowledge how intricately linked the forest is to community health. Norwegian artist Stuart Ian Frost, and Icelandic artist Anna Lindal spent time at Sagehen, learning about the forest issues and responding in their internationally-recognized work. The NYC design firm, stpmj, chose Sagehen for their viral *Invisible Barn* installation. The list of other artists who work at Sagehen is much longer but suffice it to say Jeff and Faerthen are an energetic and welcoming presence who hold space for creative engagements with the environment alongside scientific research.

In closing, the environmental challenges of the 21st century are issues whose urgency demands serious consideration from as many fields and disciplines as possible. The interdisciplinary and intersectional activities that are occurring at Sagehen bring together serious people from many fields, backgrounds, and walks of life. As far as I know, this is unprecedented in the UC Natural Reserve System as well as in most departments and programs across UC. UCSC is launching our own Masters of Fine Arts program in Environmental and Social Practice in 2021, and we plan to interact with the Sagehen Creek Field Station in a similar manner as the Sierra Nevada College works at the field station: to make art and artists that create change

Also, given the right support (grant-writing, fundraising, prospective research and more) this Reserve could gain national and international attention of funders who would support the art/science projects and want to give back to the UC system. Now is the moment to support the kinds of study and initiatives that help us to understand, resist, and learn to work within the material conditions of the current crises of climate change within which we live. This work of education, understanding, collaboration, resistance, response, and environmental interaction is precisely what the directors of Sagehen allow to happen while working within the current depleted conditions in creative ways that open up possibilities for livable futures in the face of unknown change.

If there is anything that I can ever do to support Sagehen Creek Station and help it flourish as a place where art and science can come together to facilitate how we move into the future, please sign me up.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Stephens
Art Department Chair
Founding Director E.A.R.T.H. Lab