

MONTEREY COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Carl P. Holm, AICP, Director



LAND USE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT | PUBLIC WORKS & FACILITIES | PARKS

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MEMORANDUM

Date: 5/5/2020

To: Sarah Hardgrave, Policy Analyst, Office of Supervisor Mary L. Adams, District 5

From: Shandy Carroll, Management Analyst III, RMA

Subject: Update to District 5 regarding Carmel Lagoon and Carmel River projects

cc: Carl P. Holm, AICP, RMA Director
Shawne E. Ellerbee, RMA Deputy of Director of Administrative Services
Melanie Beretti, RMA Property Administration/Special Programs Manager
Shandy Carroll, Special Programs Management Analyst III
Karen Riley-Olms, Special Programs Management Analyst II

The following is an update regarding projects in Carmel Lagoon and River. It is our intention to provide regular updates to your office that you can use for distribution to constituents impacted by the Carmel River and Lagoon.

1. Carmel Lagoon projects:

Seasonal Sandbar Management - Heavy rainfall in March and April have kept the lagoon breach open. As the lagoon opened naturally (our pilot channel was filled due to wave action), the sandbar will be allowed to close naturally.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) - The Monterey County Board of Supervisors approved a contract amendment with the consultants Denise Duffy & Associates(DD&A) in March, allowing for the continuation of environmental review and technical studies that will better inform the project proposed in the final environmental impact report. An implementation schedule will be completed and available in May. Additional funding will be sought to complete the final environmental impact report in 2021.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with State Parks – State Parks provided a draft MOU for consideration that prohibits the County from considering an EPB in exchange for them considering a mid-slope SRPS. While thoughts about the EPB have evolved, pulling it out of the draft EIR would require a complete rewrite and additional money to remove it from consideration. As such, staff feels that a MOU is premature, and we are seeking a letter of good faith willingness for State Parks to work collaboratively with the County and consider a future possible mid-slope SRPS, pending environmental review and project approval. Staff will meet with State Parks in May to discuss.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) & National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) - The 2013 MOU with the USACE and the NMFS expires at the

end of September. This MOU governs the sandbar management practices as the County works collaboratively with the regulatory agencies and stakeholders to implement a long-term solution to reduce the risk of flooding while protecting sensitive habitat. We have reached out to current representatives from each organization to set a time in early May to discuss renewal. A key part of that agreement is timeline for project milestones.

2. Carmel River (CRFREE)

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) - The Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified by the Board of Supervisors in January 2020 (Available at: <https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=87783>)

National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) – There has been a change in Lead Agency for NEPA due to losing funding with USFWS. Staff are trying to orchestrate a smooth transition between USFWS and FEMA to complete NEPA review. This may require involving Congressman Panetta’s office to help facilitate a meeting with the agencies and project team (County, Big Sur Land Trust, DD&A).

Pending Issues – The Board will consider approving the CRFREE Project at a later date, pending resolution of the following:

Carmel Area Wastewater District (CAWD) – The County and CAWD are working to develop an agreement outlining how the agencies will work cooperatively toward the funding and implementation of both the CRFREE Project and CAWD’s Pipeline Undergrounding project. Anticipated next steps are to complete the agreement.

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District’s (MPRPD) – Addressing questions from MPRPD and a private party regarding Riverfield well construction logistics and potential impacts of the CRFREE Project. Anticipated next steps are to meet with the parties to present the County’s position and options for construction in order to reach an agreement.

All Party MOU for Construction Phase – the Current MOU is between the County of Monterey, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, the California State Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Big Sur Land Trust, for the purpose of coordinating planning activity for the proposed Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project. The All-Party MOU is being modified to include the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District and to clarify roles and responsibilities as the project moves from the planning stage into the construction phase. Anticipated next steps are to finish the draft MOU, circulate the draft MOU for comments and revisions, and present the draft MOU to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Construction - The updated implementation schedule anticipates construction will start in the second half of 2022. The Construction phase will last approximately twelve (12) to eighteen (18) months. We will work with BSIM to minimize impacts on their event during construction.

Grant funding - The County was recently notified of a \$300,243 grant award from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). NFWF Grant Award 0318.19.065984 is scheduled for Board of Supervisors’ consideration for approval on May 19, 2020. The County was also awarded \$2.5 million from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 11, 2020 and the WCB issued the County a Notice to Proceed on April 1, 2020. The County of Monterey and Big Sur Land Trust have secured over \$14 million in grant funds toward the Project; approximately \$9.25 million remain active and unspent.