

MONTEREY COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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MEMORANDUM

Date: 6/4/2020

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 Ecosystem Protective Barrier (EPB), Scenic Road Protection structure (SRPS) and Interim Sandbar Management Plan (IMSP) Project:

Interim (Seasonal) Sandbar Management – The sandbar remains open between the lagoon and the ocean. As the lagoon opened naturally (the pilot channel was filled in December due to wave action), the sandbar will be allowed to close naturally. However, as we are under multi-year permits, County could be asked to manually close the sandbar if it appears necessary to retain water levels in the Lagoon.

Temporary Flood Management - Sandbags were removed from private properties and end streets surrounding Carmel Lagoon in the beginning of May.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) - Denise Duffy & Associates (DD&A) were authorized to continue work May 22, 2020 using the funding allocated. An implementation schedule is developed and included with this update. In June, DD&A will contract with subconsultants who will conduct technical studies including: 1) the impacts of different wall options on the beach morphology, 2) natural stream alignment and location of breach, and 3) a sediment transport analysis. These technical studies will begin in summer 2020.

Technical Advisory Committee – DD&A and County staff have compiled a list of potential technical advisory committee members. In June, the County will send an interest letter to solicit interest among the potential committee members to ascertain interest and availability to serve on the TAC. TAC members will be selected by June 30, 2020 and the first TAC meeting is planned in July 2020.

Community and SRPS Stakeholder Outreach – Community meetings will be held in the late summer of 2020 to involve the community in planned next steps. Interested community members will be invited to join a Stakeholder Committee that will meet quarterly to review technical studies disseminated from the Technical Advisory Committee.

State Parks Collaboration – At this time staff are seeking a letter from California State Parks stating the of good faith willingness to work collaboratively with the County to consider a future possible mid-slope SRPS, pending environmental review and project approval. Staff have contacted State Parks to discuss a letter of agreement on next steps and are expecting to meet in June.

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. In May staff met with representatives from USACE and NMFS and verified that the MOU will not be renewed as the County’s sandbar management activities are permitted through the following: 1) USACE Permit 1996-19089S for 5 years 2) NMFS Biological Opinion reference WCR-2013-00009 for 10 years.

2. Carmel River (CRFREE)

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) – The Project Certified Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) is 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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funding expiring and subsequent consideration of funding for the Project by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Staff are working to orchestrate a smooth transition between USFWS and FEMA to complete NEPA review, and are working in coordination with Supervisor Adam’s office and Congressman Panetta’s office to help facilitate a meeting with the agencies and project team (County, Big Sur Land Trust, DD&A). A draft memo summarizing the NEPA policy issue and requesting assistance from the Congressman is under internal County review and will be finalized by early June 2020. Completing the NEPA review for the Project is an important, time sensitive step to enable the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) to complete its review of the Final Project Report.

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) – The County and its consultant team finalized a technical memo addressing questions from MPRPD and a private party regarding Riverfield well construction logistics and potential impacts of the CRFREE Project. A meeting with the parties is planned in June 2020 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 (pending final resolve regarding Riverfield well – see above) 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 respective partners’ governing bodies and the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Construction - The current implementation schedule anticipates construction to begin in the second half of 2022. Construction will last approximately twelve (12) to eighteen (18) months. The Project will work with CalTrans, community members, event organizers and other stakeholders to minimize impacts or disruptions along Highway 1 during construction.

Grant funding – The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWS) Grant Award 0318.19.065984 of a \$300,243 was approved by the Board of Supervisors’ on May 19, 2020.

The Wildlife Conservation Board grant agreement for \$2.5 million was executed on February 12, 2020. The County continues to work with FEMA on the environmental compliance under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) that is required prior to award of FEMA funds. NEPA review is also required for the CAWD pipeline undergrounding project that was included in the application for funding from FEMA. On May 5th, California Coastal Conservancy awarded CAWD \$750,000 for NEPA and CEQA environmental review, permitting, and design for the project.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Carmel Lagoon EPB/SRPS/ISMP Project CEQA Timeline

Attachment 2 – CRFREE Project Timeline