

# MONTEREY COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** November 6, 2020

**To:** 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, Assistant Director of RMA  
Melanie Beretti, RMA Property Administration/Special Programs Manager

The following is the November 2020 update regarding projects in Carmel Lagoon and River for the District 5 office to share with constituents interested in lower Carmel River and Lagoon projects.

### **1. Carmel Lagoon Ecosystem Protective Barrier (EPB), Scenic Road Protection structure (SRPS) and Interim Sandbar Management Plan (IMSP) Project:**

**Interim (Seasonal) Sandbar Management** – In October staff began monitoring weather and ocean conditions and began staging sandbags for winter temporary sandbag wall deployment. A strategy session was held in October with regulatory agencies and homeowners adjacent to the Lagoon to develop a plan, depending on the rain and wave forecasts, to excavate pilot channels to reduce flooding risks. In November Public Works staff will conduct surveys of the sandbar and lagoon elevations to ensure a pilot channel can be build should the lagoon height rise. Permits to manage the sandbar have been applied for from the California Coastal Commission, US Army Corp of Engineers, National Marine Fisheries Program (NOAA), Central Coast Regional Water Quality Board and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The annual community flood management meeting was held October 19, 2020 at 5:30 pm on Zoom to inform on sandbar management practices and Lagoon flood control practices. The annual community meeting included information on the hydrology and biology of Carmel River Lagoon and Beach.

**Temporary Flood Management** – Properties adjacent to the lagoon have received communication from the County with information about sandbag flood control. Temporary sandbag wall construction began October 26, 2020 and will be complete by the end of November 2020.

**California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)** – The 2016 Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Carmel Lagoon Ecosystem Protective Barrier (EPB), Scenic Road Protection structure

(SRPS) and Interim Sandbar Management Plan (IMSP) Project is located at the below link: <https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-i-z/resource-management-agency-rma-/planning/current-major-projects/Carmel-Lagoon-Ecosystem-Protective-Barrier-and-Scenic-Road-> A recirculated DEIR reflecting responses to comments received in 2018 is expected to be released for public comment in late-2021.

**Technical Studies** – In response to comments received on the DEIR, three primary technical studies are currently being prepared:

- 1) Impacts of different SRPS wall options on the beach morphology - The study of the impacts of wall options on the beach include an assessment of wave energy and transport potential for a range of beach widths, simulating the natural progression from summer/fall (when beach is widest and waves are smallest), to winter/spring (when the beach is narrowest, and the waves are large) and assuming beach build-up potential.
- 2) Natural stream alignment and location of a breach - The study of the natural stream alignment and location of the breach includes a review of aerial photo history, flow records, and wave conditions. The impact of the lagoon conditions on juvenile steelhead will also be examined.
- 3) Sediment transport analysis - The sediment transport study is analyzing flow data and a multi-year simulation of waves and flows with various beach profile shapes, elevations, and widths

Following the technical studies, the existing preliminary SRPS 30% design described in the draft EIR will be updated to reflect the new information. The design will include the location, dimensions, type of wall, and will consider sea level rise and identify adaptive measures. A visual rendering of preliminary designs will be released with the re-circulated DEIR. All studies will be provided to the Technical Advisory Committee for peer review.

**Technical Advisory Committee** – The County has contacted potential technical advisory committee (TAC) members, and four have accepted. TAC members to date include Dr. Mara Orescanin from the Naval Post Graduate School, Dr. Doug Smith of Cal. State University at Monterey Bay, and Larry Hampson, retired, of Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, and Jeff Hagar of Hagar Environmental Consulting. The TAC will meet to review the initial draft technical studies once preliminary data has been collected, and their feedback will be shared with Agency and Stakeholder advisors. The first TAC meeting is expected in November.

**Community and SRPS Stakeholder Advisory Outreach** – The annual community Flood management meeting held October 19, 2020 called for interest in joining the Community Stakeholder Committee. Representatives of interested community organizations and stakeholders will be invited to join a Stakeholder Committee that will meet quarterly to review technical studies disseminated from the TAC. The first Community Stakeholder meeting is expected in 2021, to review the TAC’s review of the technical studies.

## **2. Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (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)** In October CRFREE consultants submitted the Project Report to Caltrans. This document will facilitate Caltrans approving the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) NEPA document for their right-of-way and complete the Final Project

Report. The US Department of Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) notified the County they intend to publish the FONSI for public review in November.

**Pending Project Approval** – 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. The County and CAWD will meet in November to discuss a draft agreement.
- *Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District’s (MPRPD)* – The County and its consultant team finalized a technical memo addressing questions from MRPD and the Palo Corona private land in-holder regarding Riverfield well that is owned by MRPD under agreement with the landowner. The memo addressed construction logistics and potential impacts of the CRFREE Project. A meeting with the County, MRPD and private party occurred in October to discuss this matter and the parties anticipate coming to agreement on this matter by the end of 2020.
- *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 activities 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 and present the draft MOU to the respective partners’ governing bodies and the Board of Supervisors for approval. Staff anticipates completing the draft MOU by the end of 2020.

**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** – At the beginning of October 2020, the County met with California Department of Emergency Services (CalOES/FEMA) and Caltrans to discuss a concern FEMA raised about possible duplication of Federal programs related to the SR1 Causeway portion of the CRFREE project for the CALOES/FEMA Grant submitted in 2019. The County collaborated with CalTrans, sending a letter to FEMA at the end of October clarifying technical points regarding the potential duplication of programs impacting the eligibility of the CRFREE project for highway funding.

In September 2020 Monterey County was invited to apply to the Department of Water Resources Coastal Watershed Flood Risk Reduction Program grant for CRFREE. A full application will be submitted in November asking for \$5,147,149 of funding to support project management costs, as well as construction costs and the cost of elevating State Historical structures.