

# MONTEREY COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** 10/12/2020

**To:** Office of Supervisor Mary L. Adams, District 5

**From:** Shandy Carroll, Management Analyst III, RMA *Shandy Carroll*

**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

The following is the October 2020 monthly update regarding projects in Carmel Lagoon and River. for your office to share with 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** – October 15<sup>th</sup> is typically considered the beginning of the rainy season and the start of the sandbar management activities for Carmel Lagoon. In October staff will begin monitoring weather and ocean conditions, conduct surveys of the sandbar and lagoon elevations, and begin staging sandbags for deployment. A strategy session is scheduled 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.

The annual community flood management meeting will be held October 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm on Zoom to inform on sandbar management practices and Lagoon flood control practices. The annual community meeting will include information on the hydrology and biology of Carmel River Lagoon and Beach. A notice advertising this meeting is attached.

**Temporary Flood Management** – Properties adjacent to the lagoon have received communication from the County with information about sandbag flood control. Temporary sandbag walls are expected to be constructed October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**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 here:

**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. All studies will be provided to the Technical Advisory Committee for peer review.

**Technical Advisory Committee** – The County has contacted potential technical advisory committee 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, 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.

**Community and SRPS Stakeholder Advisory Outreach** – The annual community Flood management meeting scheduled for October 19<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will include preparations for this coming winter and will also provide a project update and timeline to inform the community on planned next steps. 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 County met with stakeholder Agencies the second week in October to discuss various agency needs from the project.

## **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)** The NEPA Lead Agency had been U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) but because their funding expired and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is considering the project, there has been some complications with respect to who is the lead agency and the timing of the NEPA determination. Staff have requested that the USFWS issue

a Finding of No Significance (‘FONSI’) based on the combined CEQA/NEPA document that the County approved for the CRFREE project as soon as possible to prevent further delays of the project. County staff are working in coordination with Supervisor Adam’s office and Congressman Panetta’s office to help facilitate resolution on this matter. 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. Based on continuing discussions, Caltrans may be able to approve the NEPA document for their right-of-way and complete the Final Project Report, while USFWS decides whether to move forward with issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

**Pending CEQA 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 met with CAWD in August to discuss the terms of the agreement.

*Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District’s (MPRPD)* – The County and its consultant team finalized a technical memo addressing questions from MPRPD and the Palo Corona private land in-holder regarding Riverfield well that is owned by MPRPD under agreement with the landowner. The memo addressed construction logistics and potential impacts of the CRFREE Project. A meeting with the County, MPRPD and private party has been scheduled in October to discuss this matter.

*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 in Fall 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, 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 for the CALOES/FEMA Grant submitted in 2019. The County is working with CalTrans to update a letter to FEMA regarding the duplication of programs eligible for highway funding.

In September Monterey County was invited to apply to the Department of Water Resources Coastal Watershed Flood Risk Reduction Program grant for CRFREE. We will submit a full application 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.