

MONTEREY COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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MEMORANDUM

Date: 9/3/2020

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

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 – In September, County staff will begin preparing for the official start of rainy season (typically October 15th). Annually, staff conduct surveys of the sandbar and lagoon elevations, and begin staging sandbags for deployment. A strategy session will be scheduled with regulatory agencies to develop a plan, depending on the rain and wave forecasts, to excavate pilot channels to reduce flooding risks.

An annual community meeting will be held in October 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 will be published in multiple locations, including this update. We expect all meetings will be virtual.

Temporary Flood Management – Properties adjacent to the lagoon will receive communication from the County in the beginning of October, with information about sandbag flood control.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) – The draft environmental impact report is located here: <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->

Technical Studies – Technical studies were initiated in late August with a kick-off meeting between the County and the technical consultants. Three primary technical studies will be conducted in the Fall of 2020: 1) the impacts of different SRPS wall options on the beach morphology, 2) natural stream alignment and location of a breach, and 3) a sediment transport analysis. The study of the impacts of wall options on the beach will 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. The study of the natural stream alignment and location of the breach will include a review of aerial photo history, flow records, and wave conditions. The impact of the lagoon conditions on juvenile steelhead will also be examined. A sediment transport study will analyze flow data and a multi-year simulation of waves and flows with various beach profile shapes, elevations, and widths. Based on the results of the technical studies a preliminary 30% SRPS mid-slope design will be prepared. 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. The TAC to date is compiled of 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. The first TAC meeting will review technical studies and is planned in September 2020.

Community and SRPS Stakeholder Outreach – Community meetings will be held in the Fall of 2020 to provide a project update and timeline, and to inform the community in 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 is also planning an inter-agency meeting in September 2020 to discuss various agency needs from the project.

State Parks Collaboration – Staff have met with State Parks to discuss ongoing coordination between County and California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) regarding the project. County and State Parks staff are working to identify key issues to be addressed so that State Parks may be able to consider providing the County with an easement to construct and maintain a SRPS mid-slope alternative, pending environmental review and should that be part of the project selected by the County Board of Supervisors.

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 proposed change in Lead Agency for NEPA due to losing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) funding expiring and subsequent consideration of funding for the Project by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which has created some complication with respect to the timing and NEPA Lead. Staff have requested that the USFWS issue the Finding of No Significance (‘FONSI’) to conclude NEPA for the CRFREE project as soon as possible to prevent further delays of the project, and are working in coordination with Supervisor Adam’s office and Congressman Panetta’s office to help facilitate USFWS on this matter. A memo summarizing the NEPA policy issue and requesting assistance from the Congressman was sent

in July. 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. Staff is working with USFWS staff to address this matter.

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. A meeting took place 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 a private party regarding Riverfield well construction logistics and potential impacts of the CRFREE Project. The County and MPRPD met in July 2020 to discuss comments/questions received by the private party and to present the County’s position and options for construction in order to reach an agreement. A meeting with the County, MPRPD and private party is being planned for early September.

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 and present the draft MOU to the respective partners’ governing bodies and the Board of Supervisors for approval. Staff anticipates completing the draft MOU 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 – In August, staff submitted a concept proposal letter to the Department of Water Resource Coastal Watershed Flood Risk Reduction Program (‘Program’) for the Carmel River Flood Plain and Environmental Enhancement Project (CRFREE). In the letter, we stated our interest in applying to the Program for \$5,147,149 of funding to support project management costs, as well as construction costs and the cost of elevating State Historical structures. Should we be invited to apply, a full application is due in Fall 2020.

In June, the County coordinated a response to the California Department of Emergency Services (CalOES/FEMA) regarding concern that there could be a duplication of Federal funds. The response included a letter from Caltrans stating that while the CRFREE project affects the right-of-way for State Highway 1, it is not a Caltrans project, therefore no Federal-Aid Highway funding has been programmed for that work. Letters of support for the project were sent from Supervisor Adams and Congressman Panetta. The County is waiting for a finding from CalOES/FEMA regarding eligibility to receive the funds applied for in the grant.