



SAN DIEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

4891 Pacific Highway, Suite 112 • San Diego CA 92110 • 619/682-7200

February 10, 2003

Ms. Gina Castro
Engineering and Environmental Services Departments
City of San Diego
9601 Ridgehaven Court, Suite 210
San Diego, CA 92116

SUBJECT: Letter of support for a Flood Corridor Protection Program Grant application by the City of San Diego to remove fill material from the Brown Property in the Tijuana River Valley

Dear Ms. Castro,

The San Diego Audubon Society strongly supports the grant application of the City of San Diego to remove fill material from the Brown Property in the Tijuana River Valley. Our chapter has had a long term interest in the protection and enhancement of the Tijuana River Valley and Estuary. We have participated in the City/County Tijuana River Valley Flood Damage Task Force since its beginning after the floods in 1993. The removal of this fill was one of the major priorities identified by the Task Force to reduce flood risk in the Valley. This fill material is a major impediment to flow of the Tijuana River near Hollister Street. This fill is generally thought to be a major cause of the damage resulting from the 1993 flood. The longer it remains in place, the higher the likelihood of future flood damage in the valley.

This fill is a major and unnatural obstruction to floodwaters. The removal of this material will help open the river and reduce the potential for flooding upstream. It will also allow major flood flows to spread out more, thereby lowering water velocities downstream. This reduction in flow velocities will tend to reduce erosion damage to downstream infrastructure, property, and riparian habitat.

Reducing this erosion will reduce sedimentation damage to the riparian and estuary habitats downstream. That downstream riparian habitat supports least Bell's vireos. The farther-downstream estuary habitat supports light footed clapper rails and Belding's savannah sparrows. All three of these species are at risk of becoming extinct. These areas are core habitat areas identified for the protection and recovery of endangered species in our region by local, State, and Federal Agencies.

This project will also reduce the risk of flood damage to several major habitat restoration projects of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, California State Parks, and the California Coastal Conservancy. As such the project will substantially benefit an area several hundred times the footprint of the actual project. The project will also enhance flood-tolerant riparian habitat within its footprint by restoring suitable hydrology and removing invasives.

San Diego Audubon would like to participate in the planning, design, implementation of the project. We look forward to the completion of this important project. In case of questions or follow-up, the undersigned can be reached at 619-224-4591 or peugh@cox.net.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James A. Peugh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James A. Peugh
Coastal and Wetlands Conservation Chair