



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Paavo Ogren, Director

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February 24, 2012

Jerry Snow
DWR, USRP
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

Subject: Letter of Support for Corbett Canyon Floodplain and Stream Restoration
Project, Arroyo Grande, California

Dear Mr. Snow:

The purpose of this letter is to express support for the Corbett Canyon Floodplain and Stream Restoration Project, which is included in DWR's draft funding recommendations for the Urban Stream Restoration Program. This project was submitted for consideration by the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD).

The proposed Corbett Canyon Floodplain and Stream Restoration Project has the potential to capture suspended sediment through floodplain restoration and accompanying sediment detention, and thereby reduce sedimentation in the downstream flood control channel, as well as improve aquatic habitat and floodplain conditions. Since much of this captured sediment would otherwise be deposited in the Arroyo Grande Creek flood control channel, the proposed Corbett Canyon Floodplain Restoration Project has the potential to result in significant long-term savings in channel maintenance costs. Furthermore, the project was recommended in the 2006 Swanson Hydrology & Geomorphology Study which analyzed 18 different locations where sediment load could be effectively reduced. Therefore, the San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department encourages your final recommendation for awarding grant funds to the CSLRCD for the Corbett Canyon Floodplain and Stream Restoration Project.

The San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department, under the auspices of the San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District ("District"), is responsible for maintenance of the Arroyo Grande Creek flood control channel, which is located in the lower reach of the creek, ranging from the discharge point at the Pacific Ocean and extending approximately three miles upstream. Funding for the District's maintenance activities comes solely through limited taxes assessed upon those properties within the 20 year floodplain of the facility which comprises Zone 1/1A, a flood control zone of benefit. Zone 1/1A includes critical farmlands as well as densely developed lower income portions of the communities of Oceano and Arroyo Grande which are vulnerable to flooding from the creek channel. Recurring sediment deposition

presents one of the primary challenges to maintaining adequate flood capacity in the channel, in combination with increasing maintenance costs and strict environmental protections for three federally-listed aquatic species present in Arroyo Grande Creek that limit the ability to conduct maintenance activities.

Although the flood control channel was designed in the 1950's to contain the runoff from a 50-year storm event, its current capacity is estimated at only 2,500 cfs, or a 4.6-year storm event, as determined in the 2006 "Arroyo Grande Creek Erosion, Sedimentation and Flooding Alternatives Study" by Swanson Hydrology & Geomorphology. The 2006 Swanson Hydrology & Geomorphology Study evaluated ten options to reduce flooding, manage sediment, and improve habitat conditions in the Arroyo Grande Creek Channel. The alternatives were developed in cooperation with the community, the CSLRCD and the District. The District has recently been awarded \$2.8M in funding from the Proposition 1E Stormwater Flood Management Grant Program to implement Alternative 3a which will greatly enhance the flood protection to Zone 1/1A, providing 10-year flood protection. The Alternative 3a project will improve the flow characteristics of the Arroyo Grande Creek by reducing channel roughness through vegetation thinning and removal, and would enhance geomorphic function by removing accumulated sediment, establishing a primary low-flow channel, and creating secondary overflow channels to improve flood conveyance and sediment transport. The project will also increase channel capacity with a moderate levee raise of approximately 1 to 3 feet.

The Corbett Canyon Floodplain and Stream Restoration will aid in the long term success of the Arroyo Grande Creek Channel Alternative 3a project. After completion of the Alternative 3a project, due to the highly erosive nature of soils in the Arroyo Grande Creek watershed, and the location of the District's flood control facility at the terminal end of the watershed, it is anticipated that a portion of the limited Zone 1/1A funds will need to be expended on a regular basis towards maintenance of the achieved flood protection and removal of accumulated sediment. Any upstream projects that can be implemented to reduce rates of stream sedimentation, or that can contribute to capture of suspended sediment, will reduce long-term channel maintenance costs and improve flood protection to Zone 1/1A.

If you would like to discuss this further or have specific questions regarding the operation and maintenance of the Arroyo Grande Creek Flood Control Channel, please contact Dean Benedix, Utilities Division Manager, at (805) 781-5267 or dbenedix@co.slo.ca.us.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



PAAVO OGREN
Director

File: CF 340.68.01 Zone 1/1A - Arroyo Grande Channel Restoration Funding Sources