

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT
725 FRONT STREET, SUITE 300
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
PHONE: (831) 427-4863
FAX: (831) 427-4877
WEB: WWW.COASTAL.CA.GOV



Th17a

Prepared September 7, 2021 for September 9, 2021 Hearing

To: Commissioners and Interested Persons

From: Susan Craig, Central Coast District Manager
Ryan Moroney, Central Coast District Manager

**Subject: Additional hearing materials for Th17a
CDP Number 3-15-0144-A5 (San Lorenzo River Culvert)**

This package includes additional materials related to the above-referenced hearing item as follows:

Additional correspondence received in the time since the staff report was distributed

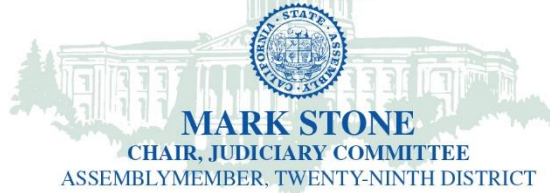
COMMITTEES

BANKING AND FINANCE
BUDGET
BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 5 ON
PUBLIC SAFETY
HUMAN SERVICES
NATURAL RESOURCES

SELECT COMMITTEES

CHAIR, COASTAL PROTECTION AND
ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES
VICE CHAIR, JOINT COMMITTEE ON
FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Assembly California Legislature



MARK STONE
CHAIR, JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, TWENTY-NINTH DISTRICT

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0029
(916) 319-2029
FAX (916) 319-2129

DISTRICT OFFICES
701 OCEAN STREET, ROOM 318B
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
(831) 425-1503
FAX (813) 425-2570

99 PACIFIC STREET, SUITE 575G
MONTEREY, CA 93940
(831) 649-2832
FAX (831) 649-2935

August 31, 2021

The Honorable Chair and Commissioners
California Coastal Commission
455 Market Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Agenda Item Th17a - Permit Amendment No. 3-15-0144-A5 (San Lorenzo River Culvert, Santa Cruz)

Dear Chair Padilla and Commissioners:

I am writing to express my support for the City of Santa Cruz's (City) San Lorenzo River Culvert Project permit amendment, which will allow the City to implement a long-planned culvert project to support the health of the river and its unique, delicate ecosystem.

The San Lorenzo River is habitat for many threatened and endangered fish species – steelhead trout, coho salmon, and tidewater goby among them – and is a critical component in recovery efforts for these dwindling fish populations. This watershed also plays host to an abundant array of waterfowl and other birds, both migratory and year-round residents.

For over twenty years, the City has worked to find solutions to managing the lower river and lagoon in sustaining the habitat's fish and wildlife, while also addressing localized flooding, water quality issues, and public safety threats. In 2014, the City, state, and federal resource agencies agreed upon a set of short and long-term lagoon management alternatives. In 2015, the preferred alternative was approved, resulting in the City's "San Lorenzo River Lagoon Interim Management Program (IMP)". A biological assessment and MND were completed. Permits were issued to the City in 2015 and 2016 for the IMP from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the California Coastal Commission in consultation with NOAA Fisheries and USFW. These permits allowed for lagoon management activities (breaching, sand management) as well as installation of a water level control culvert device.

The project will improve and enhance habitat conditions by providing a stable, lower-salinity, closed lagoon habitat during low inflow months of summer and early fall for rearing of steelhead. Additionally, as part of the grant conditions, the City will also provide an additional 0.5 cfs of cool, freshwater flow into the lagoon via a dedicated instream flow from Pogonip and Redwood Creeks. This tributary provides some of the coldest water in the lagoon. These projects have been identified in restoration plans completed for the watershed and reflect key priorities of state and federal fisheries agencies for the San Lorenzo River for steelhead and coho salmon.

In 2017, I introduced Assembly Bill 436, which, in the absence of Federal Corps funding, allowed for partial State funding for the completion of the final phase of the San Lorenzo River Flood Control project via the State Flood Control Subventions Program (SFCSP). Design and engineering fees of this culvert project were included in the allowable SFCSP partial reimbursement. On two occasions, I have personally observed the City's low-flow breaches of the lagoon, which are a part of the authorizations in the CDP amendment before you. I believe the City's experienced-based advances in both breaching methodology and the performance results of the culvert project can become an important model for lagoon management techniques facing similar challenges up and down the coast of California. To that end, the approval of the CDP amendment is crucial.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me at (831) 425-1503 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Stone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Mark Stone
Assemblymember, 29th District



MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

809 Center Street, Room 10, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • (831) 420-5020 • Fax: (831) 420-5011 • citycouncil@cityofsantacruz.com

September 1, 2021

Mr. Jack Ainsworth
Executive Director
California Coastal Commission
455 Market Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94105

RE: City of Santa Cruz Permit Amendment No. 3-15-0144-A5 (San Lorenzo Culvert, Santa Cruz)

Dear Mr. Ainsworth:

I am writing on behalf of the City of Santa Cruz (City) to express support for the City's requested Coastal Development Permit (CDP) Amendment for the San Lorenzo Culvert Project. I have personally been involved in this important habitat conservation, flooding, and public safety project since 2013. This project concept has been unanimously supported by our City Council at many junctures as early as 2013.

The project itself was unanimously approved by the City Council first in 2014, then again in 2021. In June of 2021, the project was awarded by the City Council to a highly qualified contractor. The project is funded primarily through a generous \$2,215,000 grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board's Streamflow Enhancement Grant Program—a commitment which reflects the importance of this project to the lagoon's biota.

City staff have worked closely with the regulatory agencies over the last six years to bring this shared-interest project to fruition. City staff have specifically worked with Coastal Commission staff to incorporate design and construction specifications intended to address and enthusiastically mitigate extremely important concerns of visual impacts and coastal access to every degree possible.

The San Lorenzo River supports several species of fish and wildlife, including the threatened California Central Coast (CCC) steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), the endangered CCC coho salmon (*O. kistutch*),

Mr. Jack Ainsworth
September 1, 2021
Page 2

and the federally listed endangered tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*). The San Lorenzo River, many of its tributaries, and its estuary/lagoon are identified as critical habitats for those species.

In most years, the sandbar at the mouth of the San Lorenzo River forms during the dry season and impounds a lagoon, or closed estuary. There is a long history of managing the sandbar and lagoon water surface elevation during the dry season to reduce flooding and threats to public safety at a very popular coastal access area. For several decades, the City has worked to find solutions for managing the lower river and its lagoon to protect fish and wildlife, while also addressing flooding, water quality, and public safety issues. Until recently, management actions have been limited to repeated sandbar management or breaching. However, in 2014, the City began collaboratively working with State and Federal resource agencies to develop short- and long-term lagoon management alternatives. By 2015, the agencies agreed upon the San Lorenzo River Lagoon Interim Management Program (IMP) as the preferred alternative to address these various concerns. The IMP includes interim sandbar management activities and, more importantly, the fabrication, installation, and operation of a head-driven culvert to manage the lagoon water surface elevation during periods when the sandbar is closed. Through 2015 and 2016, the City obtained all necessary permits for these activities.

Once installed, the operation of the culvert will improve habitat conditions in the lagoon for listed salmonids and other species by substantially reducing, or eliminating, the need for repeated sandbar breaching during the low-flow season. The reduction, or elimination, of seasonal breaching will allow the water surface elevation to be maintained at a higher and more constant level and allow the water column to gradually convert to brackish or freshwater. Collectively, these conditions are expected to improve water quality through better water column mixing and provide a more stable and productive rearing environment for juvenile salmonids.

The City CDP Amendment is an important step for this nearly decade-long habitat conservation, flooding, and public safety project to become a reality. The City encourages your support of this Amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DM', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Donna Meyers
Mayor



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
777 Sonoma Avenue, Room 325
Santa Rosa, California 95404-4731

August 30, 2021

John Ainsworth
Acting Executive Director
California Coastal Commission
455 Market Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, California 94105

RE: City of Santa Cruz Permit Amendment No. 3-15-0144-A5 (San Lorenzo Culvert, Santa Cruz)

Dear John Ainsworth:

This letter from NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is to express our support for the City of Santa Cruz's (City) requested coastal development permit (permit) amendment for the San Lorenzo River Culvert Project. The San Lorenzo River supports several species of fish and wildlife, including the threatened California Central Coast (CCC) steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and the endangered CCC coho salmon (*O. kistutch*). The San Lorenzo River, many of its tributaries, and its estuary/lagoon are identified as critical habitats for both species.

In most years, the sandbar at the mouth of the San Lorenzo River forms during the dry season and impounds a lagoon, or closed estuary. There is a long history of managing the sandbar and lagoon water surface elevation during the dry season to reduce flooding and threats to public safety at a very popular coastal access area. For several decades, the City has worked to find solutions for managing the lower river and its lagoon to protect fish and wildlife, while also addressing flooding, water quality, and public safety issues. Until recently, management actions have been limited to repeated sandbar management, or breaching. However, in 2014, the City began working with state and federal resource agencies to develop short- and long-term lagoon management alternatives. By 2015, the agencies agreed upon the San Lorenzo River Lagoon Interim Management Program (IMP) as the preferred alternative to address these various concerns. The IMP includes interim sandbar management activities and, more importantly, the fabrication, installation and operation of a head-driven culvert to manage the lagoon water surface elevation during periods when the sandbar is closed. Through 2015 and 2016, the City obtained all necessary permits for these activities.

Once installed, the operation of the culvert will improve habitat conditions in the lagoon for listed salmonids and other species by substantially reducing, or eliminating, the need for repeated sandbar breaching during the low flow season. The reduction, or elimination, of seasonal breaching will allow the water surface elevation to be maintained at a higher and more constant level, and allow the water column to gradually convert to brackish or freshwater. Collectively, these conditions are expected to improve water quality through better water column mixing, and provide a more stable and productive rearing environment for juvenile salmonids.

NMFS has previously identified the need to implement projects like the IMP. In our recent recovery plan for CCC steelhead (NMFS 2016), we identified the following as a Priority 1



(highest) recovery action for CCC steelhead in the San Lorenzo River: “*SLR-CCCS-1.1.4.1 – Develop and implement long-term solutions that reduce the need for artificial sand bar breaching and address flooding concerns at adjacent properties.*”

NMFS has worked closely with the City and staff from the various resource agencies to develop this long-planned and widely supported culvert project that is expected to address a host of species and public safety concerns. As a stakeholder in these efforts, NMFS recommends you approve the City’s requested Permit Amendment No. 3-150144-A5. Please direct questions regarding this letter to Joel Casagrande, NMFS Fishery Biologist, at joel.casagrande@noaa.gov, or at (707) 575-6016.

Sincerely,



Amanda Ingham
Central Coast Branch Chief
California Coastal Office

September 3, 2021



COASTAL-WATERSHED.ORG

*Preserving and protecting
our coastal watersheds*

The Honorable Chair and Commissioners
California Coastal Commission
455 Market Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Agenda Item Th17a – Permit Amendment No. 3-15-0144-A5 (San Lorenzo River Culvert, Santa Cruz)

Dear Chair Padilla and Commissioners:

Please accept this letter of support for the City of Santa Cruz's San Lorenzo River Culvert Project permit amendment, which will allow the City to implement a long-planned culvert project to support the health of the river and its unique, delicate ecosystem.

Santa Cruz first became a community because of the benefits provided by the San Lorenzo River. Still today, the San Lorenzo River is home to dozens of species of fish and wildlife, including both threatened and endangered species. For over twenty years the City of Santa Cruz has worked to find solutions to managing the lower San Lorenzo River and lagoon because of its role in sustaining fish and wildlife populations. The San Lorenzo River has been identified as a critical watershed for the recovery of anadromous fish populations in the Central Coast of California. In 2015, the City of Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County Water Resources Department, the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, San Lorenzo Valley Water District, Coastal Watershed Council and CalFIRE established the *San Lorenzo River 2025 Partnership* to implement priority projects for restoring and protecting the San Lorenzo River Watershed through 2025.

This project will improve and enhance habitat conditions by providing a stable, lower-salinity, closed lagoon habitat during low inflow months of summer and early fall for rearing of steelhead. Additionally, as part of the conditions of the Wildlife Conservation Board grant which is primarily funding the project, the City will also provide an additional 0.5 cfs of cool, freshwater flow into the lagoon via dedicated instream flow from tributary Pogonip and Redwood creeks. This tributary provides some of the coldest water in the lagoon. These projects have been identified in restoration plans completed for the watershed and reflect key priorities of state and federal fisheries agencies for the San Lorenzo River for steelhead and coho salmon.

The Coastal Watershed Council supports this project and believes it will improve the health and safety of the San Lorenzo River, the largest watershed in Santa Cruz County. We encourage your Commission to approve the CDP amendment. I am happy to discuss the project in more detail and can be reached at gpepping@coastal-watershed.org or (831) 464-9200. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Greg Pepping
Executive Director
Coastal Watershed Council

Fwd: Public Comment on September 2021 Agenda Item Thursday 17a - Permit Amendment No. 3-15-0144-A5 (San Lorenzo River Culvert, Santa Cruz)

CentralCoast@Coastal <CentralCoast@coastal.ca.gov>

Sun 9/5/2021 7:11 PM

To: Moroney, Ryan@Coastal <Ryan.Moroney@coastal.ca.gov>

From: Brian Scanlon <brianscanlon@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, September 3, 2021 3:58:35 PM

To: CentralCoast@Coastal <CentralCoast@coastal.ca.gov>

Subject: Public Comment on September 2021 Agenda Item Thursday 17a - Permit Amendment No. 3-15-0144-A5 (San Lorenzo River Culvert, Santa Cruz)

The proposed culvert system does nothing to address the issue of recreational breaches of the lagoon, as occurred this summer (May 15 and 16). I witnessed several people actively working to create the channel that resulted in the dangerous release of the lagoon waters and eventual drowning the following day. The Santa Cruz Boardwalk and the City of Santa Cruz have not adequately monitored recreational activity at the lagoon, nor is there adequate signage to inform the public of the importance of the lagoon to fisheries and bird populations. Any solution needs to recognize the responsibility of the Boardwalk and the City of Santa Cruz to protect the lagoon environment for fish and bird populations, not just provide a convenient way to control the waters so as to not inconvenience the public use of the beach.

Brian Scanlon
Felton, CA