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Assembly California Legislature



ROBERT RIVAS
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, THIRTIETH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
AGRICULTURE
APPROPRIATIONS
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
RULES

February 19, 2020

Respected Members of the Ocean Protection Council
California Energy Commission
Art Rosenfeld Hearing Room
1516 9th Street, Sacramento

c/o: Project Manager Marina Cazorla

RE: Support for Agenda Item #8 - Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Proposition 1 Funds for the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Planning Project for Lower Watsonville Slough

As the Assemblymember representing the 30th Assembly District, which includes Watsonville Slough, I unequivocally support the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Planning Project and urge the Council to disburse the Proposition 1 funding.

The proposal includes crucial initial feasibility analysis and design for a Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Project in the Pajaro River Lagoon/Lower Watsonville Slough. The purpose of the project is to design a mostly nature based infrastructure project that re-establishes and enhances wetland and tidal marsh habitat while providing flood risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and recreational opportunities to economically-disadvantaged community residents.

Project activities would investigate and identify a plan that reasonably maximizes ecosystem restoration benefits, is technically feasible, and preserves environmental and cultural values at Watsonville Slough. Project benefits include habitat restoration and creation, flood risk reduction, water quality improvement, groundwater sustainability, carbon sequestration and recreational access for disadvantaged communities.

The proposed project is a model of a multi-benefit project that incorporates local climate resiliency and adaptation, improved water quality, recreational opportunities for low-income community, and habitat improvements. Ultimately, the project would protect critical infrastructure from flooding and sea level rise while also implementing innovative techniques for flood risk reduction and habitat restoration while providing a disadvantaged community with recreational opportunities.

I support the collaborative multi-agency approach that Pajaro Storm Drain Maintenance District, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, City of Watsonville, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and Pajaro Dunes Association have all taken to address this issue.

Thank you for the consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "R. Rivas", with a stylized "R" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

ROBERT RIVAS
Assemblymember, 30th District





City of Watsonville

"A Community of Opportunities"

March 14, 2019

Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Zone No. 7
701 Ocean St., Room 410
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Attn: Mark Strudley, Flood Control Division Manager

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for Ocean Protection Council Grant Proposal for Coastal Ecosystem Resilience Project for Lower Watsonville Slough

Dear Mr. Strudley,

Thank you for leading the effort to implement a multi-benefit project within the lower Pajaro River Watershed. The proposed project will have positive impacts for the City of Watsonville residents and surrounding communities. Additionally, it will help resolve issues of flooding critical City-owned infrastructure located within the project footprint.

The City of Watsonville is a State of California recognized Disadvantaged Community with a per capita income of approximately \$18,000. The City strives to offer free recreational opportunities throughout the community and often partners with Watsonville Wetlands Watch to create environmentally focused programs that connect residents with the freshwater Sloughs. Another unique opportunity we have for public engagement is through City staff led Nature Center walks on the weekends. We see approximately 50-100 people throughout the month that want to learn more about the surrounding habitat and water quality.

Lower Watsonville Slough is located just outside of City boundaries, off of West Beach St. in Watsonville, CA. There are significant public access barriers in the Lower Watsonville Slough due to agricultural operations and private easements. Additionally, the City owns, operates and maintains two sewer system pump stations, the gravity fed wastewater surge chamber, one drinking water well and a drinking water booster station within the proposed project footprint. This project would alleviate seasonal flooding of these critical City facilities, as well as providing additional recreational opportunities for the community.

The City is pleased to support the County of Santa Cruz's proposed project in Lower Watsonville Slough. If you should need any further information, please do not hesitate in contacting Jackie McCloud, Sr. Utilities Engineer at (831) 768-3172.

Sincerely,

Steve Palmisano
Director of Public Works and Utilities

PAJARO DUNES NORTH ASSOCIATION, INC.

101 SHELL ROAD, WATSONVILLE, CA 95076-9665

(831) 761-7752 • FAX (831) 761-6285



March 15, 2019

TO: Deborah Halberstadt, Executive Director
California Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

CC: Mark Strudley, Ph.D.
Flood Control Division Manager
Santa Cruz County Department of Public Works
Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Zone
No. 7

FROM: Jeff Raimundo
President, Pajaro Dunes North Association

Dear Deborah and Mark,

I am writing on behalf of the approximately 600 homeowners at Pajaro Dunes. Thank you for sharing the draft of the Zone No. 7 grant application to the Ocean Protection Council. The community has for many years depended on the breaching of the sandbar that forms at the mouth of the Pajaro River to prevent flooding and maintain access to Pajaro Dunes. We have discussed and studied alternatives to breaching, but have not found an adequate substitute. We believe that designing a mostly nature-based infrastructure project could be an effective and environmentally sound substitute for the breaching.

The Pajaro Dunes Community Affairs Committee; Jeff Raimundo, the President of the Pajaro Dunes North Association; and Robert Scranton, the President of the Pajaro Dunes Association have reviewed this grant proposal to the Ocean Protection Council. We all enthusiastically endorse the proposal. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support the application.



PAJARO VALLEY WATER MANAGEMENT AGENCY

36 BRENNAN STREET • WATSONVILLE, CA 95076

TEL: (831) 722-9292 FAX: (831) 722-3139

<https://www.pvwater.org>

March 15, 2019

Deborah Halberstadt, Executive Director
California Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Halberstadt,

As General Manager of the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PV Water), I am writing this letter to express my support for the Pajaro Storm Drain Maintenance District's (District) application for a grant from the Ocean Protection Council Proposition 1 program for its Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Project for the Lower Watsonville Slough (Project). PV Water is a state-chartered water management district formed to efficiently and economically manage existing and supplemental water supplies in the greater coastal Pajaro Valley. As described by the District, the Project will deliver multiple benefits, including water quality and water supply benefits that directly support the PV Water mission to ensure sufficient water supplies for present and future needs.

The Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin is in a critical state of overdraft. To alleviate the overdraft and protect against further seawater intrusion, PV Water has developed water supply projects to offset groundwater pumping, including the Harkins Slough Managed Aquifer Recharge and Recovery Facility (Facility). The Facility allows PV Water to divert, filter, store, and reuse water from Harkins Slough that would otherwise flow to the Monterey Bay. PV Water operates the Santa Cruz County Shell Road Pump Station (Pump Station) to divert the water at the confluence of Harkins Slough and Watsonville Slough. Existing conditions are periodically negatively impacting water quality due to salinity, an effect expected to worsen with projected sea-level rise.

The proposed project could help protect the long-term operation of the Facility by reducing the frequency and extent of up-slough movement of brackish water. The proposed project could provide water quality benefits by increasing hydraulic accommodation space in the lower slough-lagoon system, thereby providing additional room for circulation of brackish water in the lower slough system and protecting the Facility from the water quality impacts of tidal influences. Protecting water quality preserves the beneficial use of this water supply source. PV Water strongly supports the District's request for funding to evaluate project alternatives and analyze the environmental, water quality and water supply benefits delivered by the alternatives. We urge the OPC to support this innovative and forward-thinking multi-benefit project.

Sincerely,



Brian Lockwood
General Manager

cc: Ms. Amy Newell, Chair, PV Water Board of Directors

March 15, 2019

Deborah Halberstadt, Executive Director
California Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Halberstadt,

I am writing on behalf of the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) to express strong support for the County of Santa Cruz's application for the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Project for the Lower Watsonville Slough. Their proposed project presents an incredibly important opportunity to restore ecological health in the lower Watsonville Slough System and the tidal marsh habitats at the confluence of the Pajaro River and the Monterey Bay.

This project builds on decades of partnership between the RCD, the County of Santa Cruz, the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and other landowners in the Watsonville Slough watershed working towards multi-objective conservation planning and implementation of wetland restoration and agricultural land stewardship projects.

If awarded, the RCD will contribute in-kind resources toward the success of this project in support of technical advising, review of plans and designs, and community outreach, and are committed to the long-term success and implementation of this project. We thank you for your consideration of this important effort and urge the OPC to support this innovative and forward-thinking multi-benefit project.

Sincerely,

Lisa Lurie
Executive Director
Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County



Watsonville Wetlands Watch

P.O. Box 1239 • Freedom, CA 95019

www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org

“Dedicated to protecting, restoring and appreciating
the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley”

March 14, 2019

Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Grants Review Committee,

We are writing to express our strong support for the County of Santa Cruz’s application for the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Project for the Lower Watsonville Slough. Their proposed project presents an incredibly important opportunity to restore ecological health in the lower Watsonville Slough System and the tidal marsh habitats at the confluence of the Pajaro River and the Monterey Bay.

The Watsonville Slough System is a highly impacted watershed that supports over 23 different native plants and animals that are threatened, endangered, or species of special concern and over 250 resident and migratory bird species. Our organization has worked since 1991 to protect, restore, and foster the appreciation of these wetlands and their watershed. We have partnered with Santa Cruz County on the creation of the Watsonville Slough System Conservation and Enhancement Plan in 2003 and view them as a critical partner to advancing ecological and multi-benefit goals for the slough system and thus want to express our utmost support for this project.

For the past 10 years our organization has also partnered with the Pajaro Dunes Homeowners Association and Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County to enhance salt marsh and dune habitat in the lower slough system. The proposed project offers an important opportunity to advance this work in a meaningful way. Their project will also reduce impacts to coastal habitat associated with current practices through an innovative approach, support the biodiversity of the slough system and near-shore marsh habitats in adapting to climate change, improve water quality in the Pajaro River lagoon and Monterey Bay, enhance public access to the coast, and create a highly visible coastal wetland demonstration project. We see these as very important objectives and much needed for the lower Watsonville Slough System and Pajaro River lagoon.

If awarded, we will contribute in-kind resources toward the success of this project in support of planning, design, and technical support, and are committed to the long-term success and implementation of this project. We thank you for your consideration of this important effort.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Pilch
Executive Director
Watsonville Wetlands Watch