



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, South Carolina 29405-2413

October 28, 2020

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council
California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Crowfoot:

NOAA's Office for Coastal Management supports the proposal from the Elkhorn Slough Foundation: Elkhorn Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration: Phase III as submitted to the California Ocean Protection Council's Coastal Resilience Solicitation.

This multi-faceted proposal is ambitious, but our partnership work with the team at Elkhorn Slough gives me confidence the project will succeed. My office is the federal partner for the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, giving my organization a long history with the reserve and the foundation.

The principle investigators for this proposal previously completed an impressive array of science-based, stakeholder-driven restoration projects. The Tidal Wetland Program, a model of collaborative decision-making and planning, provides a good example. This effort brings together a diverse community of stakeholders, and after the projects are completed, the results are shared locally, state-wide, and nationally to the other 29 National Estuarine Research Reserves and their partners. The Elkhorn Slough team has given numerous webinars on their restoration work to large audiences, as well as publishing papers in scientific journals. The coastal resilience work they do not only has concrete local impacts, but also reverberates more broadly through the national coastal science and management community.

The proposed project builds on successful marsh restoration work at Hester Marsh by including the restoration of two vital species - native oysters and eelgrass. This proposal also includes a new partnership with the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, bringing Native American perspectives and engagement to coastal restoration.

This project will greatly contribute to coastal resilience of both habitats and people, and lessons learned will be broadly shared. Thank you for this opportunity to express my support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeffrey Payne", is located below the word "Sincerely,".

Jeffrey L. Payne, PhD
Director



State of California – The Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Central Region
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, California 93710
(559) 243-4005
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



October 14, 2020

Justine Kimball
Senior Climate Change Program Manager
Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth street, suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

I am writing to express support for the proposal by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation to the Ocean Protection Council for restoration of coastal ecosystems in the Elkhorn Slough. The Foundation is an important partner in the management of our Elkhorn Slough Ecological Reserve. This multi-faceted proposal intends to restore oysters, eelgrass, tidal marsh and adjacent coastal grasslands at the Elkhorn Slough.

Our federal partner, NOAA's Office for Coastal Management, emphasizes coastal resilience, aligning the mission of this office with this recent solicitation by the Ocean Protection Council. This aligns closely with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's mission to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public.

The team of project Principle Investigators for this proposal has completed an impressive array of science-based, stakeholder-driven restoration projects over the past fifteen years. The Reserve's Tidal Wetland Program is a model of collaborative decision-making and planning, bringing together a diverse community of stakeholders. After projects are completed, the results are not only shared locally, but also nationally to the other 29 National Estuarine Research Reserves and their partners. Over the past year, the Elkhorn Team has given many webinars on their restoration work to large audiences, as well as publishing papers about the restoration science. Their coastal resilience work not only has important local outcomes but also reverberates more broadly through the larger coastal science and management community.

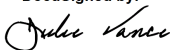
The proposed project builds on successful marsh restoration work at Hester Marsh and expands on this work by including restoration of two other vital foundation species in the estuary; native oysters and eelgrass. This proposal also includes a new partnership with the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, bringing Native American perspectives and engagement to coastal restoration, and providing disadvantaged tribal community members opportunities to engage with their ancestral lands and with the coastal resources used and stewarded by their forefathers.

Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870

Justine Kimball
Senior Climate Change Program Manager
October 14, 2020
Page 2

This project thus will contribute to coastal resilience of our Reserve habitats, attracting increasing numbers of native wildlife and people that enjoy them. Any lessons learned will be broadly shared. Thank you for this opportunity to express our support.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Julie A. Vance
Regional Manager, Central Region

October 14th, 2020

I am writing to express support for the proposal by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation for restoration of estuarine ecosystems in Elkhorn Slough.

California Sea Grant has a strong commitment to science-based coastal management and restoration of the vital ecosystem services that coastal systems provide to surrounding communities. This project is a model of inclusive, collaborative, science-based restoration that we are proud to support.

Over the past years, we have partnered with the Elkhorn Slough Reserve to pilot the use of aquaculture to restore native oyster populations. Together, we provided a proof-of-concept of the power of conservation aquaculture to boost declining oyster populations. This is innovative for California, and we are excited to be pioneering techniques that can in the future be applied to other California estuaries such as Morro Bay or Mugu Lagoon. Our partnership has garnered attention through highlights such as this: <https://caseagrants.ucsd.edu/news/aquaculture-shows-promise-in-restoring-native-california-oysters>

California Sea Grant strongly supports the current proposal to OPC, which builds on past marsh restoration successes, expanding the footprint of marsh restoration, while also integrating an eelgrass and oyster restoration component. This integrated restoration of three foundation species is unprecedented and powerful. We will primarily be contributing to the oyster restoration, through aquaculture expertise, and by sharing lessons learned with the broader California coastal science and management community, but are strongly supportive of the entire restoration project and confident that it will be successfully completed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luke Gardner".

Luke Gardner

Luke Gardner, Ph.D.
Aquaculture Extension Specialist
California Sea Grant
Research Faculty, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
8272 Moss Landing Rd, Moss Landing, CA 95039
<https://caseagrants.ucsd.edu>
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Phone: 831-771-4429



October 26, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, I would like to express strong support by the proposal by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation to restore estuarine ecosystems at Elkhorn Slough.

Native Americans interacted with coastal foundation species including marshes, seagrass beds and oysters for thousands of years. The Elkhorn Slough Foundation and National Estuarine Research Reserve are working to restore these critical habitat-forming species, which have declined over the past 200 years at Elkhorn Slough and all along the coast. We consider this essential work, to repair past damage and enhance climate resilience, for the benefit of the habitats, the species such as fish, birds and sea otters that call them home, and for the people that care about them.

The Amah Mutsun Land Trust is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation established by the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band to serve as a vehicle for Amah Mutsun led research, resource protection, and stewardship. Through the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, the Amah Mutsun are regaining their role as environmental stewards of their ancestral territory, which includes Elkhorn Slough.

We were delighted to be invited as partners on this proposed restoration work. The Amah Mutsun Native Stewardship Corps (a crew of 8 stewards, a field manager, and tribal elder) will partake in the oyster restoration work for 10 days, contributing perspectives on coastal stewardship, and in turn gaining valuable experience with shellfish science and restoration. The Amah Mutsun have been forcefully displaced from their ancestral territory, and projects such as these provide valuable opportunities to get them back on their ancestral lands, relearning cultural legacies while contributing Native American spirituality and perspectives to the broader team. We also will work with a consulting archeologist to develop outreach materials to teach about Native American use and stewardship of these coastal habitats and species prior to European contact.

In summary, we very much hope you support this holistic, multi-faceted proposal which incorporates work and perspectives by Native American stewards as an integral part of restoration of the coastal landscape.

Cordially,

Sara French
Interim Executive Director
Amah Mutsun Land Trust



United States Department of the Interior

U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Pacific Coastal and Marine Science Center
2885 Mission Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

October 28, 2020

Dear Ocean Protection Council:

I am writing to express support for the proposal by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation to restore coastal ecosystems in the Seal Bend region of Elkhorn Slough. This is an ambitious proposal to restore oysters, eelgrass, tidal marsh and adjacent coastal grasslands. Its holistic approach in restoring multiple ecosystem components is unusual and exciting.

The USGS Pacific Coastal and Marine Science Center conducts multidisciplinary research in coastal waters of the western U.S. on a range of topics including coastal and estuarine habitat, coastal change, and coastal resilience. My work focuses on the influence of physical processes on habitat as well as biophysical interactions in estuaries. I have served on the Technical Advisory Committee of the Tidal Wetlands Project for Elkhorn Slough for over a decade, giving me the opportunity to become familiar with the issues facing Elkhorn Slough, the trajectory of ongoing restoration efforts, and Reserve scientists and staff.

Elkhorn Slough harbors the largest tract of tidal salt marsh in California south of San Francisco Bay. This estuary provides habitat for hundreds of species of plants and animals and is a beloved destination for both locals and visitors to the area. Over the past 150 years, human actions have altered the tidal, freshwater, and sediment processes that are essential to support and sustain Elkhorn Slough, leading to a reduction of over 50% of tidal marsh and eelgrass beds, and near decimation of the native Olympia oyster population in the slough.

The proposed project aims to continue an OPC-funded tidal marsh project (phase III) while adding two key foundation species, eelgrass and the native Olympia oysters. The project proponents have recently demonstrated success with pilot projects for restoration of both these species. The Elkhorn Slough Foundation and the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve are uniquely positioned to implement their proposal, drawing on an established network of expert decision

makers and the experience derived from the adjacent 93-acre wetland restoration. In addition, they have broad community engagement in their projects from stakeholder meetings to public planting days. This proposal notably includes participation of the Amah Mutsun Native Stewards.

This project represents a great opportunity to improve the resilience of a high value native coastal habitat and benefit federally listed and managed species inhabiting Elkhorn Slough. The Elkhorn Slough team has a proven track record in planning and implementing successful restoration projects, and I am confident the proposal will result in a successful project if funded.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my support.

Sincerely,

Jessica Lacy
Research Oceanographer
jlacy@usgs.gov



October 28, 2020

Wade Crowfoot

Secretary for Natural Resources

CA Resources Agency

1416 Ninth St, Suite 1311

Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Crowfoot,

I am writing to express support for the proposal by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation for restoration of tidal marsh and connected uplands in Elkhorn Slough. The CA Conservation Corps Monterey Bay looks forward to working with the Elkhorn Slough Foundation on these types of projects as this meets our mission. The mission of the CCC is "The young women and men of the Corps work hard protecting and restoring California's environment and responding to disasters, becoming stronger workers, citizens and individuals through their service." The Monterey Bay Center has been actively working on this ongoing project for the last several years and hopes that this grant is approved to continue this important work.

Elkhorn Slough harbors the largest tract of tidal salt marsh in California south of San Francisco Bay. This estuary provides habitat for hundreds of species of plants and animals and is a destination point for many residents and visitors to the area. Over the past 150 years, human actions have altered the tidal, freshwater, and sediment processes that are essential to support and sustain Elkhorn Slough, leading to a reduction of over 50% of tidal marsh and eelgrass beds, and near decimation of the native Olympia oyster population in the slough. Adjacent to the estuary, coastal grassland has also been dramatically reduced, converted to agricultural fields and industrial sites.

The proposed project aims to take a holistic approach to restoration, continuing the OPC funded tidal marsh project (phase III) and grassland restoration, while adding two key foundation species, eelgrass and the native Olympia oysters, due to their recent





restoration success with pilot projects of both these species. The Elkhorn Slough Foundation and the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve are uniquely positioned to implement their proposal, drawing on an established network of expert decision makers and the experience derived from the adjacent 93-acre wetland restoration. In addition, they have broad community engagement in their projects from stakeholder meetings to public planting days. This project represents a good opportunity to improve the resilience of a high value native habitat with actions that will benefit federally listed and managed species that call Elkhorn Slough home. Thank you for this opportunity to express my support.

Sincerely,

Janet Wohlgemuth
Conservation Supervisor
CA Conservation Corps- Monterey Bay





November 3, 2020

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to express State Coastal Conservancy support for the proposal by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation for restoration of tidal marsh and connected uplands in Elkhorn Slough. The Coastal Conservancy, a state agency that works to implement resource conservation along the California coast, has enthusiastically supported numerous ecological restoration projects within Elkhorn Slough. The Conservancy supports this worthy project as well and applauds its holistic approach which will safeguard coastal and marine ecosystems in the face of climate change, enhance coastal and marine biodiversity, advance equity, and support ocean health through a sustainable blue economy.

Elkhorn Slough harbors the largest tract of tidal salt marsh in California south of San Francisco Bay. This estuary provides habitat for hundreds of species of plants and animals and is a destination point for many residents and visitors to the area. Over the past 150 years, human actions have altered the tidal, freshwater, and sediment processes that are essential to support and sustain Elkhorn Slough (ES), leading to a reduction of over 50% of tidal marsh and eelgrass beds, and near decimation of the native Olympia oyster population in the slough.

The proposed project aims to take a holistic approach to restoration, continuing the OPC funded tidal marsh project (phase III) while adding two key foundation species, eelgrass and the native Olympia oysters, due to their recent restoration success with pilot projects of both these species. The Elkhorn Slough Foundation and the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve are uniquely positioned to implement their proposal, drawing on an established network of expert decision makers and the experience derived from the adjacent 93-acre wetland restoration. In addition, they have broad community engagement in their projects from stakeholder meetings to public planting days. This project represents a good opportunity to improve the resilience of a high value native habitat with actions that will benefit federally listed and managed species that call Elkhorn Slough home. Thank you for this opportunity to express my support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rachel Couch".

Rachel Couch
Central Coast Project Manager

1515 Clay Street, 10th Floor
Oakland, California 94612-1401
510-286-1015 Fax: 510-286-0470



MONTEREY COUNTY



Monterey County Board of Supervisors

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November 10, 2020

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary of Natural Resources
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council
California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Crowfoot,

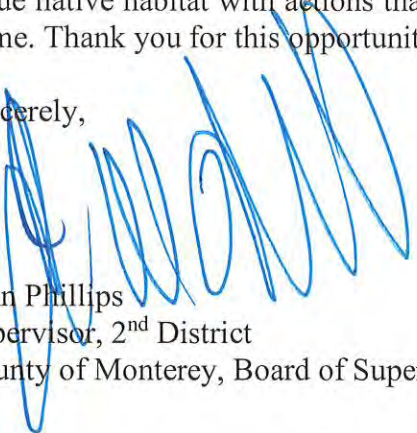
I am writing to express support for the proposal by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation for restoration of tidal marsh and connected uplands in Elkhorn Slough. The Elkhorn Slough, and all of its flora and fauna, is such an important area not just for the beauty it provides the residents of Monterey County but for its far-reaching environmental impacts. As the county Supervisor representing the residents of North Monterey County, I often hear from members of our community how important the Elkhorn Slough is to them and am committed to doing all I can to help preserve this fragile ecosystem.

Elkhorn Slough harbors the largest tract of tidal salt marsh in California south of San Francisco Bay. This estuary provides habitat for hundreds of species of plants and animals and is a destination point for many residents and visitors to the area. Over the past 150 years, human actions have altered the tidal, freshwater, and sediment processes that are essential to support and sustain Elkhorn Slough (ES), leading to a reduction of over 50% of tidal marsh and eelgrass beds, and near decimation of the native Olympia oyster population in the slough.

The proposed project aims to take a holistic approach to restoration, continuing the OPC funded tidal marsh project (phase III) while adding two key foundation species, eelgrass and the native Olympia oysters, due to their recent restoration success with pilot projects of both these species. The Elkhorn Slough Foundation and the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve are uniquely positioned to implement their proposal, drawing on an established network of expert decision makers and the experience derived from the adjacent 93-acre wetland restoration. In addition, they have broad community engagement in their projects from stakeholder meetings to public planting days. This project represents a good opportunity to improve the resilience of a high

value native habitat with actions that will benefit federally listed and managed species that call Elkhorn Slough home. Thank you for this opportunity to express my support.

Sincerely,



John Phillips
Supervisor, 2nd District
County of Monterey, Board of Supervisors