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Assembly California Legislature



PEDRO NAVA
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, THIRTY-FIFTH DISTRICT

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CHAIR, JOINT COMMITTEE ON
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HOMELAND SECURITY

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CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION
COUNCIL

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

August 18, 2008

Doug Bosco, Chair
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, Suite 1330
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: Support for Audubon California's proposal to the CA Coastal Conservancy for a **Lower Santa Ynez River Restoration Feasibility Study**

Dear Mr. Bosco:

I am writing to support funding from the California Coastal Conservancy to Audubon California for preparation of a feasibility study to assess potential restoration actions to enhance the ecological functions of the Lower Santa Ynez River.

The Santa Ynez River and estuary have been identified in the Certified Local Coastal Program of Santa Barbara County as environmentally sensitive habitat areas which should be preserved and restored. The Santa Ynez River Valley and the estuary near Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB) are particularly important bird areas. This area supports one of the most significant and little-studied riparian systems in central California, and one of the two best examples of lowland riparian habitat in Santa Barbara County. It also supports one of the few remaining functional estuaries on the California coastline.

A unique opportunity exists for VAFB and the City of Lompoc to restore a rare coastal ecosystem and improve habitat for declining estuarine dependent species. Furthermore, the Santa Ynez River was historically one of the largest steelhead runs in Southern California. Restoration could increase opportunities for local citizens and tourists to appreciate the river and estuary through fishing, bird watching, environmental education, and other activities.

I urge you to support Audubon California and La Purisima Audubon Society and partners Vandenberg Air Force Base and PRBO Conservation Science in their effort to investigate the potential to restore and enhance the lower Santa Ynez River and estuary in order to enhance willow riparian and tidal marsh habitat. Preparation of a plan will help identify future funding needs and partnerships and identify steps in the first phase of estuary restoration that may help guide long term river restoration efforts.

Sincerely,

Pedro Nava
Assemblymember, 35th District





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
30TH SPACE WING (AFSPC)

5 August 2008

Ms. Beatrice L. Kephart
30 CES/CEV
1028 Iceland Avenue
Vandenberg AFB CA 93437-6010

Doug Bosco, Chair
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, Suite 1330
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Mr. Bosco

Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB) strongly supports a feasibility study regarding "Assessment of Potential Restoration Actions to Enhance the Ecological Functions of the Lower Santa Ynez River," as proposed by Audubon California, La Purisima Audubon and other potential partners.

The feasibility study is intended to:

- a. Investigate the potential to restore the lower Santa Ynez River channel and estuary in order to enhance willow riparian (500 acres) and tidal marsh habitat (250 acres) within the estuary. Their goal is to enhance the ecological value for migratory and wintering shorebirds, endangered species including Southwestern willow flycatcher and southern steelhead trout, and migratory or wintering land and waterbirds;
- b. Prepare a plan for the restoration and enhancement of the lower Santa Ynez River, outlining management objectives, costs, solutions, and long-term monitoring; and
- c. Evaluate, secure funding and partnerships, and initiate a first phase of estuary restoration that may help guide long term river restoration efforts.

At this time, VAFB can only conditionally support the actual river enhancement project until a review of the feasibility study is completed. While VAFB agrees to the need and value of this project, it is not possible to commit Federal funding to the project at this time. Staffing and administrative support from VAFB is available, including providing background data, mapping support and staff attendance at meetings.

Please contact me at (805) 605-7924 or Rhys Evans at (805) 606-4198 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Kephart", is written over the word "Sincerely".

BEATRICE L. KEPHART, YF-02
Chief, Environmental Flight

RECEIVED

AUG 08 2008

COASTAL CONSERVANCY
OAKLAND, CALIF.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

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CENTER FOR BIODIVERSITY AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY, EVOLUTION AND MARINE BIOLOGY
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Doug Bosco, Chair
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, Suite 1330
Oakland, CA 94612

25 August 2008

Re: Support for Audubon California's proposal to the CA Coastal Conservancy for a
Lower Santa Ynez River Restoration Feasibility Study

Dear Mr. Bosco:

I strongly support funding from the California Coastal Conservancy to Audubon California for preparation of a feasibility study to assess potential restoration actions to enhance the ecological functions of the Lower Santa Ynez River.

The Santa Ynez River and estuary have been identified in the Certified Local Coastal Program of Santa Barbara County as environmentally sensitive habitat areas. Audubon California has recognized the lower Santa Ynez River's value to birds by designating portions as Important Bird Areas (IBAs): Vandenberg Air Force Base IBA, and the Santa Ynez River Valley IBA. This area supports one of the most significant and little-studied riparian systems in central California, and one of the two best examples of lowland riparian habitat in Santa Barbara County. Also, the estuary is one of the largest on the California coastline.

A unique opportunity exists to identify the restorative actions most likely to ameliorate the effects of a century and a half of disruption to the essential processes that sustain these important coastal ecosystems and, thereby, to improve support for species dependent upon estuarine and riparian habitats. Furthermore, restoration could increase opportunities for local citizens and tourists to appreciate the area through fishing, bird watching, environmental education, and other activities.

We urge your support for Audubon California, La Purisima Audubon Society, Vandenberg Air Force Base, and Point Reyes Bird Observatory Conservation Science in their investigation of the restoration and enhancement of the lower 3.1 miles of the Santa Ynez River to enhance the riparian floodplain and tidal marsh habitat. Preparation of a plan will identify future funding needs and partners and it will identify the first steps of restoration that may guide long term restoration efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Holmgren".

Mark A. Holmgren
Associate Director and Vertebrate Collections Curator

Exhibit 3: Project Letters

PRBO Conservation Science
Vandenberg Field Station
205 North H St. Suite 217
Lompoc, CA 93436
(805) 735-7300
www.prbo.org



prbo

6 August 2008

Doug Bosco, Chair
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, Suite 1330
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Mr. Bosco,

I am writing to endorse the feasibility study entitled, "Assessment of Potential Restoration Actions to Enhance the Ecological Functions of the Lower Santa Ynez River," as proposed by Audubon California and the La Purisima Audubon Society (LPAS). PRBO Conservation Science (PRBO) strongly supports this study because it will pave the way toward restoring vital estuarine habitat in central California. The Lower Santa Ynez River is not only an Audubon designated 'Important Bird Area,' it is also one of the few remaining natural estuaries in California.

PRBO looks forward to continuing our partnership with Audubon California and LPAS to seek additional funding for the feasibility study and a monitoring program to assess the efficacy of any restoration activities. Together, we have secured \$7,800 to initiate a citizen science monitoring program that will investigate shorebird abundances beginning in September 2008. Our goal is to expand this program to include other avian groups such as waterfowl and marsh birds. We have also applied for funding through National Audubon's Together Green Innovative Grant program and we will be applying to the Santa Barbara Foundation and other potential sources.

Founded in 1965 as Point Reyes Bird Observatory, PRBO is a non-profit organization dedicated to wildlife conservation. With over 125 staff and seasonal scientists, PRBO applies bird ecology studies to conserve birds, other wildlife and ecosystems in western North America, the north Pacific Ocean and beyond. PRBO has developed a strong working relationship with Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB) through an expansive seabird project initiated in 1999. VAFB has recognized the importance of the Lower Santa Ynez River project and expressed support for the collaborative efforts of Audubon California, LPAS, and PRBO.

If you have any questions regarding PRBO's support and involvement in this program, please do not hesitate to contact me: (805) 735-7300, drobinette@prbo.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Dan Robinette". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" being particularly prominent.

Dan Robinette
Vandenberg Seabird Program Manager
PRBO, Marine Ecology Division



San Luis Obispo County Office
75 Higuera Street, Suite 200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Tel (805) 544-1767
Fax (805) 544-2209

nature.org/california

August 19, 2008

Doug Bosco, Chair
California Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, Suite 1330
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: Support for Audubon California's proposal to the CA Coastal Conservancy for a Lower Santa Ynez River Restoration Feasibility Study

Dear Mr. Bosco:

The Nature Conservancy strongly supports funding from the California Coastal Conservancy to Audubon California for preparation of a feasibility study to assess potential restoration actions to enhance the ecological functions of the Lower Santa Ynez River.

The Santa Ynez River and estuary have been identified in the Certified Local Coastal Program of Santa Barbara County as environmentally sensitive habitat areas which should be preserved and restored. The Nature Conservancy recognizes the Santa Ynez River as an important freshwater system in our Central Coast Ecoregional Assessment (2006). In particular the plan recognizes the River's role in supporting Southern steelhead runs; intact vibrant estuaries are vitally important in the life history of migratory salmonids, including steelhead.

The proposed project presents a unique opportunity to restore a coastal ecosystem and improve habitat for declining estuarine dependent species. The Nature Conservancy has committed \$10,000 of private funding in support of this scoping effort. Restoration could increase opportunities for local citizens and tourists to appreciate the river and estuary by improving the fishing and birding.

We urge the Coastal Conservancy to support Audubon California and La Purisima Audubon Society and partners Vandenberg Air Force Base and PRBO Conservation Science in their effort to investigate the potential to restore and enhance the lower Santa Ynez River and estuary in order to enhance willow riparian and tidal marsh habitat. Preparation of a plan will help identify future funding needs and partnerships and identify steps in the first phase of estuary restoration that may help guide long term river restoration efforts.

Sincerely,

Thomas H. Maloney
Acting Ecoregional Director, North & Central Coast