
COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 21, 2024

**CARMEL RIVER FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AUGMENTATION**

Project No. 08-036-02
Project Manager: Trish Chapman

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$3,000,000 to the County of Monterey to augment the Conservancy grant, previously authorized on February 3, 2022 and augmented on June 1, 2023, to construct the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project in Monterey County.

LOCATION: Lower Carmel River, Monterey County (Exhibit 1)

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [February 3, 2022 Staff Recommendation](#)

Exhibit 3: [June 1, 2023 Staff Recommendation](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an additional three million dollars (\$3,000,000) to the County of Monterey to augment the grant previously authorized by the Conservancy on February 3, 2022 and augmented on June 1, 2023, for a total authorized amount of nine million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$9,250,000) to construct the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project (“project”) in Monterey County, subject to the conditions of the February 3, 2022, authorization.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

*CARMEL RIVER FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT
AUGMENTATION*

1. The proposed authorization remains consistent with Chapter 5.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code regarding Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources.
2. The proposed project remains consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$3,000,000 to augment the Conservancy grant previously authorized to the County of Monterey (“County”) for a new total grant amount of up to \$9,250,000 to construct the Carmel River Floodplain Environmental Enhancement Project (“Carmel River FREE” or “project”). The original grant amount was authorized by the Conservancy on February 3, 2022 (Exhibit 2) and augmented on June 1, 2023 (Exhibit 3). As described in Exhibit 2, the project will restore floodplain function on the south bank of the Carmel River just east of Highway 1. The project will result in 92 acres of restored floodplain habitat, reduced flooding in urban areas north of the river, enhanced groundwater recharge, and reconnection of the south bank floodplain on either side of Highway 1. Public access is also incorporated into the restoration design. The start of construction was delayed to 2025 due to an extended permitting consultation between two agencies. The issues raised in the consultation have now been resolved, but the delay has led to an increase in the estimated construction cost. As a result staff is recommending additional funding to help address this cost increase.

Other than the increase in project costs, there are no other changes to the project as described in the February 3, 2022, staff recommendation.

Site Description: See Exhibit 2.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: See Exhibit 2.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, as described in the February 3, 2022, staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy (proposed authorization)	\$3,000,000
Coastal Conservancy (original authorization + augmentation)	\$6,250,000
Wildlife Conservation Board (\$4,000,0000 pending)	\$6,267,644
Department of Water Resources (DWR) Urban Streams	\$900,000

*CARMEL RIVER FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT
AUGMENTATION*

DWR Integrated Water Management Grant (pending)	\$898,451
DWR CA Budget Surplus Funds	\$2,000,000
DWR Flood Corridor	\$3,923,255
DWR Coastal Flood	\$5,147,149
FEMA/CalOES Hazard Mitigation (Pending)	\$29,577,805
Big Sur Land Trust Stewardship Fund	\$2,000,000
Project Total	\$59,964,304

Conservancy funding for the proposed project is anticipated to come from a Fiscal Year 2023-24 appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy “urgent sea level rise adaptation and coastal resilience needs using nature-based solutions or other strategies” (Budget Act of 2023, Chapter 12 of Statutes of 2023 (SB 101) as amended by Chapter 38, Statutes of 2023 (AB 102)). The coastal resilience funds are available for the purposes set forth in Section 52 of Chapter 258 of the Statutes of 2021, which sets forth a detailed description of the purposes of the coastal resilience funds, including projects that build resilience for coastal communities and restore and increase the resilience of coastal ecosystems to climate change impacts. The project is consistent with this funding because it will restore a portion of the river’s southern floodplain, increase riparian and wetland habitat, and decrease impacts of flooding to developed areas on the north bank of the river. These improvements will increase community and ecosystem resilience to the climate change impacts from increased storm intensities and sea level rise induced flooding.

As listed above, the County will be providing more than \$50 million from other sources to leverage Conservancy funds, including over \$31 million from non-state sources.

Unless specifically identified as “Required Match,” the other sources of funding and in-kind contributions described above are estimates. The Conservancy does not typically require matching funds or in-kind services, nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders or of in-kind services. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete a project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation as described in the February 3, 2022, staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S [2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy’s 2023-2027 Strategic Plan as described in the June 1, 2023, staff recommendation (Exhibit 3).

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN/STATE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN:

The proposed project remains consistent with the Local Watershed Management Plan/State Water Quality Control Plan as described in the February 3, 2022, staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

In its February 3, 2022, authorization, the Conservancy adopted findings pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project elements have not changed since the February 3, 2022, authorization, and there have been no changed circumstances or new information that triggers the requirement for additional documentation under CEQA. Therefore, no further review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act is required.