

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 27, 2005

GARRAPATA CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION

File No. 03-091
Project Manager: Trish Chapman

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 to the Garrapata Creek Watershed Council for implementation of a watershed restoration project, Big Sur, Monterey County.

LOCATION: Big Sur, Monterey County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Watershed Restoration

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location and Watershed Map

Exhibit 2: Mitigated Negative Declaration

Exhibit 3: Watershed photos

Exhibit 4: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Section 31220 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to the Garrapata Creek Watershed Council (GCWC) for construction of a fish passage project in the Garrapata Creek watershed in Big Sur, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to commencement of construction and to disbursement of any Conservancy funds for construction, GCWC shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:
 - a. A detailed work program, project budget and timeline.
 - b. The names and qualifications of any contractors or subcontractors that GCWC intends to employ to construct the project.
 - c. Evidence that all applicable permits and approvals for the project have been obtained.

- d. An executed and recorded agreement consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31116(c) to protect the public investment in the project.
2. The GCWC shall implement the mitigation measures applicable to its project and as found in the Department of Fish and Game's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, Appendix B of Exhibit 4 attached to the accompanying staff recommendation.
3. Conservancy funding shall be acknowledged by erecting and maintaining a sign in the project area, which has been reviewed and approved by the Executive Officer of the Conservancy."

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

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

1. The proposed project is consistent with Public Resources Code 31220 regarding watershed restoration.
2. The proposed project is consistent with County of Monterey's Local Coastal Program (LCP) which calls for the protection and enhancement of environmentally sensitive habitats, including riparian corridors.
3. The Conservancy has independently reviewed the Negative Declaration prepared and adopted on June 16, 2004 by the Department of Fish and Game, attached as Exhibit 2, and finds that there is no substantial evidence that the projects will have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15382.
4. There is no evidence before the Conservancy that the project will have a potentially adverse effect either individually or cumulatively, on wildlife resources as defined under California Fish and Game Code Section 711.2.
5. The Conservancy has on the basis of substantial evidence rebutted the presumption of adverse effect contained in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 753.5(d) regarding the potential for adverse effect on wildlife resources as defined under California Fish and Game Code Section 711.2.
6. The proposed project is consistent with the guidelines and criteria in the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted on January 24, 2001.
7. The Garrapata Creek Watershed Council is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The proposed project would provide a grant to the Garrapata Creek Watershed Council to implement the Garrapata Creek Watershed Restoration Project. The grant would be matched by

funds from the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Fisheries Restoration Program. The Garrapata Creek watershed encompasses approximately 10.7 square miles along the Big Sur coast.

Steelhead trout have been found in the lower reaches of the Garrapata Creek. CDFG survey reports indicate that sedimentation of decomposed granite was a pollution problem throughout much of the stream in the early 1990s, with filling of pools and cementing spawning gravels. Overall, sedimentation due to logging and improper road grading was identified as the primary factor limiting steelhead production in the Garrapata Creek drainage (see photos in Exhibit 3). In addition, excess sedimentation has exacerbated some of the natural fish passage barriers formed by large woody debris in the creeks. Recent studies have found that the highest erosion rates are found in the Joshua Creek sub-watershed. The majority of excess sediment is caused by erosion of dirt roads in the watershed.

The proposed project would close and decommission 1.5 miles of abandoned roads and would modify 12.4 miles of maintained roads to significantly reduce erosion rates. The project will implement the recommendations of the *Garrapata Creek Road Assessment and Erosion Control Plan*, prepared by GCWC with funding from DFG. This assessment identified treatable sediment sources from roads and driveways and recommended 90 site-specific treatments. These treatments were then prioritized based on the expected erosion volumes, urgency, feasibility, and cost.

In general, roads will be treated to make them more resilient to large storms and flood flows. Potential treatments include: upgrading stream crossings, in particular by upsizing culverts to accommodate the 100-year storm flow; removing unstable sidecast materials from steep slopes; improving road drainage through berm removal, road outslipping or crowning, rolling dip construction, and/or installation of ditch relief culverts. It is estimated that the project will prevent over 24,000 cubic yards of sediment from entering Garrapata Creek and its tributaries.

The Garrapata Creek Watershed Council is comprised of watershed landowners, residents, and land managers. GCWC has undertaken creek cleanup and restoration activities, as well as outreach and education on conservation practices within the watershed. In partnership with Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA), GCWC prepared an assessment of the watershed which led to development of the proposed project. PWA is a consulting firm with extensive experience in watershed restoration and management. The proposed project will be implemented in partnership with PWA. PWA will provide the technical expertise and GCWC will provide the connection to the stakeholders that makes the project possible.

Site Description: Garrapata Creek is a small coastal stream located 10 miles south of Carmel along the Big Sur coast. Garrapata Creek and its two tributaries, Joshua and Wildcat Creeks, flow year round with an estimated flow of approximately 5,000 acre-feet per year. The watershed, which encompasses approximately 10.7 square miles, supports three listed species: South Central Coast ESU steelhead trout (federally threatened), California red-legged frog (federally threatened), and Smith's blue butterfly (federally endangered).

The watershed is predominately rural/natural land with light residential development. About half of the land is privately owned with both large ranches and smaller residential parcels. Much of the upper watershed lies within the former Palo Corona Ranch, now owned by the State of California. The watershed has been logged in the past, but there are no logging operations

currently underway or planned. Abandoned roads developed during past land use activities are still a common part of the landscape.

The coastal bluffs and hill slopes support primarily coastal scrub and maritime chaparral communities. The lower riparian corridor hosts a mixed riparian community. Further up the canyons, the riparian vegetation shifts to a redwood and tanoak dominated community with mixed evergreen forests on the north-facing slopes. The watershed is underlain by a highly fractured granitic rock with low landslide susceptibility, but has high erosion potential.

Project History: The Garrapata Creek Watershed Council was formed in 2000 to address concerns about degradation of the creek habitat from siltation, pollution, and non-native invasive plants. DFG had previously identified excessive sedimentation as one of the main factors limiting habitat for steelhead trout within the watershed. In response, the Council partnered with PWA to prepare an erosion assessment and control plan, funded by DFG. The Council has also partnered with the Watershed Institute of California State University at Monterey Bay to prepare a more comprehensive restoration and management plan for the watershed. Background reports on hydrology, geology, and fish passage barriers prepared by the Institute also conclude that there is excess erosion within the watershed and that the resulting sediment loads are exacerbating fish passage obstacles. The proposed project was developed in consultation with DFG to implement the erosion control plan.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$100,000
California Department of Fish and Game	213,011
GCWC (partially in-kind)	<u>76,410</u>
Total Project Cost	\$389,421

The expected source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the “California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund” (Proposition 40). The Proposition 40 funds were appropriated to the Conservancy under the Watershed, Clean Beaches and Water Quality Act (“AB 2534”). AB 2534 added Chapter 5.5 to the Conservancy’s enabling legislation (Public Resources Code Section 31220) and appropriated funds from Proposition 40 to the Conservancy to carry out projects that are described under Section 31220. As discussed below, authorized projects include those that, like the proposed project, serve to reduce contamination of waters within the coastal zone, protect or restore fish and wildlife habitat within coastal watersheds or reduce unnatural erosion and sedimentation of coastal watersheds. Proposition 40 also requires the Conservancy to give priority to grant projects with matching funds (Public Resources Code Section 5096.651). The Department of Fish and Game has approved a grant for this project, and GCWC will provide almost 20% of the project costs in cash and in-kind services. The Conservancy would contribute approximately 26% of the total project funding.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 5.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Section 31220 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding coastal watershed and coastal and marine water quality protection and restoration.

Section 31220(a) requires the Conservancy to consult with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) on development of a grant project funded pursuant to Section 31220 to ensure consistency with Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30915) of Division 20.4 of the Public Resources Code. Consistent with this section, staff has notified the SWRCB of the nature of the project and provided the opportunity for comment, input and review.

Section 31220(b) authorizes the Conservancy to undertake a project or award a grant that does one or more of the following: 1) reduce contamination of waters within the coastal zone; 2) protect fish and wildlife habitat within coastal watersheds and coastal waters; and 3) reduce unnatural erosion and sedimentation of coastal watersheds. The proposed project would meet each of these objectives because it would: reduce unnatural erosion within the watershed thereby reducing excess sediment in the creek waters; and improve fish habitat by reducing water turbidity, minimizing the burial of spawning gravels by fine sediment, and reducing the filling of pools providing critical fish habitat.

Section 31220(c) requires that projects funded pursuant to Section 31220 be consistent with the Integrated Watershed Management Program established pursuant to Section 30947, local watershed management plans, if available, and water quality control plans adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board and regional water quality control boards, and shall include a monitoring and evaluation component. As discussed in detail below under "Consistency With Local Watershed Management Plan/State Water Quality Control Plan," the proposed project is consistent with local and state watershed plans. In addition, the project includes a monitoring and evaluation component as required by the DFG Fisheries Restoration Program.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 5 Objectives A and B**, the proposed project will enhance approximately 15.8 miles of Garrapata Creek and its tributaries by reducing erosion and resulting excess sediment loads in the creek. Approximately 42 acres will be treated.

Consistent with **Goal 6 Objectives A and B**, implementation of the proposed project will improve water quality and anadromous fish habitat within a coastal watershed.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy’s statutory programs and purposes:** See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Support of the public:** The project has broad support among stakeholders in the watershed. 23 landowners have already agreed to participate in the project. DFG strongly supports this project and funded preparation of the project plan.
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of Monterey County.
5. **Need:** The DFG grant for this project was conditioned on GCWC securing the additional funds needed to complete the project. GCWC is a volunteer watershed council which has limited resources. Without the Conservancy’s matching funds, GCWC would not be able to undertake the project.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project is of greater-than-local interest because it will benefit South Central Coast ESU steelhead trout, a federally threatened species.

Additional Criteria

7. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
8. **Readiness:** The grantee is securing the last permit for this project and anticipates that work will begin immediately after the 2005-2006 rainy season.
9. **Cooperation:** The proposed project has been developed through the cooperation of the GCWC, DFG, PWA, the County, and CSUMB’s Watershed Institute, with each partner bringing its particular expertise to bear on the project development.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan serves as the Local Coastal Program (LCP) for this portion of Monterey County. The LCP identifies riparian corridors as environmentally sensitive habitat areas. Policy 3.3.1 states that “all practical efforts shall be made to maintain, restore, and if possible, enhance Big Sur’s environmentally sensitive habitats.” The proposed project will enhance the habitat of Garrapata Creek and its two tributaries and therefore is consistent with the LCP.

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

Projects undertaken pursuant to Chapter 5.5 of Public Resources Code Division 21 (Section 31220) must be consistent with local watershed management plans, if available, and with water quality control plans, adopted by the state and regional water boards. The proposed project is consistent with the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coastal Basin adopted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board because the project will facilitate the restoration of fish and wildlife habitat in a coastal watershed thereby furthering the following beneficial use

objectives: cold fresh water habitat, wildlife habitat; rare, threatened or endangered species; migration of aquatic organisms; and spawning, reproduction, and/or early development. A local watershed management and restoration plan for Garrapata Creek is in preparation. Technical reports prepared as background information for this management plan identify excess erosion and sedimentation as one of the key issues impacting the creek.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

In order to implement projects to improve fish spawning and rearing habitats through its statewide Fisheries Restoration Grant Program, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) developed a Programmatic Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for all of its FY 2003-04 funded projects, including the proposed Garrapata Creek Watershed Restoration project. DFG approved the MND on June 16, 2004 and filed a Notice of Determination on July 7, 2004. The Notice of Determination and the MND for this project are included as Exhibit 2.

The project in the Garrapata Creek watershed includes decommissioning abandoned roads and upgrading maintained roads. Road upgrades will consist of a variety of treatments including, but not limited to, replacing old culverts to accommodate a 100 year storm event, installing rolling dips, berm drains, ditch relief culverts, and downspouts; rock road surfacing; and outsloping and insloping road surfaces. The MND prescribed site-specific conditions that must exist or be applied in order to avoid potentially significant negative effects on the environment. Through careful design, scheduling, and monitoring, DFG found that any and all potentially significant impacts associated with the Garrapata Creek project would be avoided or mitigated below a level of significance under CEQA.

Mitigation measures include: timing of work to avoid impacts to biological resources, including restricting work in the vicinity of streams to the period between July 1 and November 1, or the first rainfall; restricting the period for upslope work to roughly the same period, though sediment reduction activities are dependent on soil moisture and may be delayed on some sites until after July 1 to allow soils to dry adequately for equipment access; conducting surveys to determine presence of nesting or breeding birds or terrestrial animals and a further restricting of the construction timing as necessary to avoid impacts; regular removal of trash from the construction site to avoid attracting predators; adherence to work site best management practices to assure equipment and materials do not harm the environment; adherence to policies forbidding the spread or introduction of invasive exotic plants; demarcation of the work area to assure that access routes, staging areas, and the total area of disturbance is kept at a minimum; work site surveys for endangered, rare or threatened plant species prior to any ground-disturbing activities, and institution of protective measures, if necessary, as prescribed under DFG guidelines. If it becomes impossible to implement the project at a work site without potentially significant impacts to rare plants, then activity at that site will be discontinued.

Ground disturbance in the Garrapata Creek watershed is not expected to result in effects to cultural resources and no mitigation measures are included. However, GCWC and DFG will report any previously unknown historic or archaeological remains discovered at a site to the appropriate agencies and will comply with approved avoidance procedures. In order to avoid significant impacts to geology and soils, bare soil will be seeded, mulched and planted as necessary using best management practices and soil will be compacted to the extent necessary to reduce any surface erosion that may occur with the first heavy rainfall. Potential impacts from

release of hazardous materials associated with heavy equipment operation will be avoided through use of standard measures detailed in DFG's adopted Mitigation Measures, Monitoring and Reporting Program. The GCWC and DFG's Contract Manager will inspect the work site before, during, and after completion of the work action to ensure that all necessary mitigation measures to avoid impacts are properly implemented. DFG's adopted Mitigation Measures, Monitoring and Reporting Program for the project is included as Appendix B of Exhibit 2.

Upon its independent review of DFG's MND for the project, staff concurs with the DFG finding and recommends that the Conservancy find that the project does not have a potential for a significant effect on the environment as defined under 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15382, or on wildlife resources, as defined under Fish and Game Code Section 711.2. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Determination for this project.