

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
June 5, 2008

**DUTCH BILL CREEK FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT**

File No. 08-046-01  
Project Manager: Deborah Hirst

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$494,500 to the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District to restore fish passage to 3.4 miles of Dutch Bill Creek, enhance riparian habitat and improve public access across Dutch Bill Creek at Camp Meeker.

**LOCATION:** Sonoma County

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Resource Enhancement

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**EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Dutch Bill Creek Site Maps](#)
  - Exhibit 2: [Camp Meeker Dam Removal and Bridge Design](#)
  - Exhibit 3: [Market Street Culvert and Fish Passage Design](#)
  - Exhibit 4: [Department of Fish and Game Mitigated Negative Declaration](#)
  - Exhibit 5: [Project Letters](#)
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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$494,500 to the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District to restore fish passage to approximately 3.4 miles of Dutch Bill Creek, enhance riparian habitat and improve public access across Dutch Bill Creek at Camp Meeker, subject to the conditions that:

1. The GRRCD shall submit for the review and approval of the Conservancy’s Executive Officer a work program, including a final budget, and the names of all contractors that the GRRCD intends to use to complete the project; and
2. The GRRCD shall provide evidence that all necessary permits have been obtained;
3. In carrying out the project, the GRRCD shall comply with all applicable mitigation and monitoring measures of the project that are included in the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Appendix B attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4, and with

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all mitigation, monitoring and other measures that are required by permit or approval for this project;

4. Conservancy funding shall be acknowledged by erecting and maintaining a sign on the property, the design and location of which to be approved by the Executive Officer.”

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 authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Section 31251 *et seq.*), regarding enhancement of coastal resources.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The project area has been identified in the certified Local Coastal Program of the County of Sonoma as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems.
4. The Conservancy has independently reviewed the Department of Fish and Game’s programmatic Mitigated Negative Declaration, attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4, and finds that the project, as mitigated, avoids, reduces or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations Sections 15074 and 15382.”

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### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

The proposed authorization will enable the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (GRRCD) to restore fish passage to 3.4 miles (17,950 feet) of Dutch Bill Creek by removing the dam at Camp Meeker and retrofitting the culvert at Market Street in Occidental, in western Sonoma County. The project will also improve public access across the creek by installing an 80-foot pedestrian bridge at Camp Meeker. The proposed project will effectively remove the last two remaining fish barriers on the mainstem of Dutch Bill Creek. The Camp Meeker Dam and the culvert under Market Street are identified as Sonoma County’s Numbers 2 and 5 priority barriers to fish passage in the *Russian River Stream Crossing Inventory and Fish Passage Evaluation* (Ross Taylor and Associates, 2003). Dutch Bill Creek is one of only five remaining streams in the Russian River system where wild juvenile coho are known to exist for each year of the species’ three year reproduction life cycle. The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) identifies Dutch Bill Creek, within the Guerneville Hydrologic Subarea, as having the highest possible rank for restoration and management potential in the Central California Coast Coho Evolutionarily Significant Units in the *Recovery Strategy for California Coho Salmon* (DFG, 2004).

The proposed project will support the combined efforts of the Camp Meeker Recreation and Park District (CMRPD) and the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (GRRCD) to cooperatively address the barriers created by the Camp Meeker Dam and the culvert at Market Street in the community of Camp Meeker. The project will implement fish passage

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improvement designs completed through separate grants to GRRCD and CMRPD made by the Department of Fish and Game and the National Marine Fisheries Service. The project will address priorities identified in the Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan and the *Recovery Strategy for California Coho Salmon*.

The proposed project will completely remove the Camp Meeker Dam and the adjacent concrete apron (Exhibit 2). The dam was constructed in the 1950s to create a seasonal swimming hole and beach area for the local community. The upstream channel will be regraded to form a meander and more natural grade change. The project will include bank stabilization and installation of new habitat structures such as woody debris and rock boulders. The newly formed stream will be restored using the natural transport of spawning gravel to downstream reaches. Plans for revegetation will include seeding, mulching and use of erosion-control fabric. An 80-foot pedestrian, pre-fabricated, steel bridge will be installed in the same location as the dam. The new bridge will connect to the existing foot path and maintain pedestrian passage over Dutch Bill Creek. This is the primary pedestrian path for the community of Camp Meeker that connects the post office and community center on the east bank with the majority of residences located on the west bank of Dutch Bill Creek.

The Market Street component of the project will restore fish passage at a 1960s-era concrete culvert where Market Street crosses Dutch Bill and intersects with the Bohemian Highway (Exhibit 3). Significant downstream erosion has resulted in an 8 foot drop at the culvert. The velocity of stream fluctuates from flows too high for fish passage in the winter to flows that sheet over the smooth concrete surface at a depth inadequate for fish passage in the summer. The proposed project will retrofit the Market Street culvert with baffles and construct six rock weirs below the culvert to create pools that enable safe fish passage upstream to 3.4 miles of spawning and rearing habitat (Exhibit 3). The increased roughness of the streambed and the more gradual change in elevation will enable more natural functioning of the passage. Improvements to the creek will also include removal of twenty cubic yards of soil blocking the creek at Lakeside Drive and installation of an 18" pipe to direct concentrated flows over the creek bank. The proposed revegetation plan will utilize native plants such as alder, bay laurel, big leaf maple, willow, Oregon ash, and others native to the area to help control future erosion and promote wildlife habitat.

GRRCD will manage the project, document the restoration and hold public workshops to provide information to area residents to raise awareness on the need for habitat protection and enhancement for salmonids in the watershed. GRRCD has successfully completed a number of watershed assessment plans and subsequent resource enhancement projects in the Estero Americano and the Dutch Bill Creek watersheds with Conservancy support. The GRRCD has considerable experience working with state partners and local private property owners in a number of watershed areas including Salmon and Dutch Bill Creeks.

**Site Description:** The community of Camp Meeker is home to approximately 950 residents and receives visitors who come to experience the small town feeling of Occidental and explore the scenic back roads leading out to the Sonoma coast. Dutch Bill Creek originates near the town of Occidental and flows northwest along the Bohemian Highway to join the Russian River near the town of Monte Rio in west Sonoma County. The Creek supports steelhead trout and is one of the last remaining streams in Sonoma County that has all three-year classes of coho salmon. Due to land use practices and development of infrastructure along Dutch Bill Creek, the fisheries habitat has substantially declined over the past century. The majority of land in the watershed is

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owned privately and faces water demand pressures as the area's resident population continues to grow. At the same time, Dutch Bill Creek is recognized as significant habitat for salmonids in the Russian River watershed and is a priority area for coho restoration efforts (*Recovery Strategy* 2004).

**Project History:** Ross Taylor and Associates completed a survey of Russian River fish barriers and ranked the Camp Meeker dam as the Number 2 priority barrier to address for fish passage in Sonoma County due in part to the excessive drop in grade at its lowest weir and the potential to restore access to upstream habitat. The report ranked the Market Street culvert as the Number 5 priority for the county due to the extreme grade change at the culvert outlet that prevents fish migration (*Russian River Stream Crossing Inventory and Fish Passage Evaluation* 2003). The Department of Fish and Game awarded GRRCD a grant to design a fish passage barrier removal project for the Market Street barrier in 2003. Also in 2003, NOAA provided a grant of design funds to CMRPD for dam removal. Working with two separate design firms, GRRCD and CMRPD finalized barrier removal plans. In 2007, GRRCD and CMRPD combined efforts and are pursuing a coordinated implementation to minimize impacts to the environment and effectively eliminate the last two fish passage barriers on Dutch Bill Creek. Both DFG and NOAA Fisheries have allocated additional funds to implement the proposed dam removal and fish passage project. The 2008 DFG Programmatic Negative Declaration includes both barrier removal projects for Fisheries program funding (Exhibit 4). With the proposed support from the Conservancy, GRRCD will coordinate the implementation of the Market Street culvert retrofit, the Camp Meeker Dam removal, the installation of the 80 foot pedestrian bridge and the restoration of natural habitat in Dutch Bill Creek through the Camp Meeker project area.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$494,500
Department of Fish and Game	\$110,000
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	\$195,000
National Association of Counties	\$ 43,000
County of Sonoma	\$ 75,000
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	<u>\$ 25,000</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$942,500</b>

Funds for the proposed project are anticipated to derive from the FY05/06 authorization of Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 50). Proposition 50 funds are appropriated to the Conservancy to restore and protect coastal watersheds through projects undertaken pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Division 21 of the Public Resources Code) to acquire, restore or protect water and land resources (Water Code Section 79570). The proposed project will remove two fish passage barriers on Dutch Bill Creek to restore access to salmonid habitat and improve sediment transport in this Russian River tributary and is thus consistent with the proposed funding source. As required by Proposition 50, the proposed project is consistent with local and regional watershed plans, as described below (Water Code Section 79507).

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Conservancy funds will be leveraged against funds from NOAA, Department of Fish and Game, Sonoma County, the National Association of Counties and Trout Unlimited to complete the project.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270), regarding enhancement of coastal resources.

Sections 31251 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies for the purpose of enhancement of coastal resources that, because of natural or human-induced events or incompatible land uses have suffered loss of natural values. Land use practices and infrastructure created over the past century have negatively impacted fish habitat in the Dutch Bill Creek watershed. The proposed project will remove the last two fish passage barriers on Dutch Bill Creek to restore natural riparian habitat and access to 3.4 miles of the creek for salmonids.

Section 31251.2 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies for the enhancement of watershed resources that lie partially outside the coastal zone. The proposed grant to the GRRCD, a public agency, will improve habitat for anadromous fish which utilize Dutch Bill Creek, a tributary of the Russian River in Sonoma County. The anadromous fish utilizes the Russian River and its tributaries that are both within and outside the coastal zone. Pursuant to this section, GRRCD has requested Conservancy involvement in this project (Exhibit 5) and the Department of Fish and Game approves of the project proposed (Exhibit 5, support letter).

As required in Section 31252, the proposed project is consistent with the Sonoma County Local Coastal Program as described in the "Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies" section below.

Pursuant to Section 31253, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of any coastal resource enhancement project. The GRRCD and its partners are providing a match of 48% for this project. In determining the amount of Conservancy funding for this project, the factors identified in §31253 have been considered and applied, as described in detail below, under the heading "Consistency With Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines."

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective E** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will upgrade public facilities to enhance recreational and access opportunities for visitors and residents at Camp Meeker in western Sonoma County.

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will restore and enhance habitat in the Dutch Bill stream corridor in western Sonoma County.

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Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will restore and enhance a section of Dutch Bill Creek, a Russian River tributary, for anadromous fish passage to inland habitat areas in western Sonoma County.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will remove two priority fish barriers, improve riparian habitat at Camp Meeker and open 3.4 miles of habitat on Dutch Bill Creek in western Sonoma County.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on September 20, 2007, 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 received support from the community and elected officials including Assemblymember Patty Berg and Supervisor Mike Reilly. In addition, Camp Meeker Recreation and Park District, the Department of Fish & Game and NOAA actively support this project. Letters of support are included in Exhibit 5.
4. **Location:** The proposed project will be conducted at Dutch Bill Creek in Camp Meeker located in western Sonoma County.
5. **Need:** Partner agency funding would not be sufficient to realize implementation of the Dutch Bill Creek Dam Removal and Fish Passage project without Conservancy participation.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Dutch Bill Creek project is of state-wide interest due to the importance of Dutch Bill Creek and the Guerneville HSA for the recovery of coho salmon and habitat enhancement for salmonids.
7. **Urgency:** The proposed project will open up 3.4 miles of spawning and rearing habitat which are urgently needed for endangered coho salmon which are still spawning and rearing in Dutch Bill Creek.

#### **Additional Criteria**

8. **Leverage:** Funding for this project from the Conservancy will leverage \$455,000 in matching funds secured by GRRCD, see "Project Financing" above.

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9. **Innovation:** The project will redesign a section of Dutch Bill Creek to restore natural meander and normal functioning after removal of a 1950s-era bridge and retrofitting of a 1960s culvert while also maintaining public access with a new pedestrian bridge at Camp Meeker.
10. **Readiness:** The GRRCD is prepared to move forward with the proposed project once funding is secured.
11. **Cooperation:** The GRRCD and CMRPD are collaborating to implement the proposed project and will continue to promote natural resource stewardship with watershed partners and property owners in the west Sonoma County.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Sonoma County Local Coastal Program, certified in 1981 and revised in 1999, specifically Section III Environmental Resources. Consistent with Section III, Recommendation Numbers 9, 10, 12 and 71, the project will enhance a riparian corridor and fish habitat that were degraded by infrastructure constructed in the 1950s and 1960s on Dutch Bill Creek by removing a concrete dam and retrofitting a concrete culvert under Market Street in Camp Meeker. The project will implement necessary stream bank stabilization and riparian improvements consistent with the soil conservation and water quality policies Sonoma County's General Plan Resource Conservation Element (Sections 2.0-2.2 and 3.0). In addition, the project will enhance habitat for salmonids and utilize native plants for revegetation consistent with policies calling for the protection of biotic resources, endangered species and marine fishery resources (Sections 5.1, 5.2 and 6.0-2).

### **COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The public access component of the proposed project is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15301(c) as the walkway is an existing structure will be replaced with installation of the pedestrian bridge following the removal of the dam at Camp Meeker. The project will not expand the use or footprint of the walkway.

The fish passage improvement activities of the proposed project were reviewed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations in the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) prepared by the Department of Fish and Game as part of its 2008 Fisheries Grant Restoration Program. DFG submitted the document to the State Clearing House in May 2008 and approved and adopted the MND June 12, 2008 following the 30-day public review. A Notice of Determination was filed by DFG June 12, 2008.

Conservancy staff has reviewed the document and the findings that the project will not pose a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, to biological resources. The project is designed to improve and restore stream habitat and to provide a long-term benefit to both anadromous salmonids and other fish and wildlife. Site-specific conditions for the project were designed to avoid short-term adverse impacts to rare plants and animals, and

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the mitigation measures described below will ensure that any potentially significant impacts are avoided or mitigated to below a level of significance.

A review of the DFG's current Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) provided a list of species which may be expected to occur in the project area including California red-legged frog, freshwater shrimp and Coho. Archaeology and rare plant surveys will be completed prior to any ground disturbing activities. GRRCD will implement plans for listed aquatic species removal, water diversion and traffic detour.

GRRCD will conduct stream work between June 15 and October 31 and will limit the amount of stream channel dewatered to the fullest extent possible for the project site. A temporary screened water diversion will be installed up stream of the construction area to divert stream flow around the construction site. GRRCD will notify DFG at least 5 days prior to the work and DFG personnel will supervise the implementation of the water diversion plan and oversee the safe removal and relocation of salmonids and other aquatic species from the project area. DFG will inspect the site to ensure turbidity controls measures are in place prior to the start of work. Fish relocation data will be provided to the Department of Fish and Game as specified by the Department. Additional measures to minimize injury and mortality of salmonids during fish relocation and dewatering activities will be implemented as described in Part IX, pages 52 and 53 of the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*.

All habitat improvements, including the construction of rock weirs and large woody debris structures for stream enhancement, will follow techniques described in the Third Edition, January 1998, of the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*, Flosi et al. and the *California Salmonid Stream Restoration Manual, Third Edition, Volume II, Part XI, January 2004*. Engineered plans for the equipment access and instream improvements will be submitted to DFG prior to commencement of the project. GRRCD will implement 1 acre of erosion control measures to mitigate construction impacts and erosion, and restore any stream banks disturbed by equipment access, demolition and construction activities. Complete site plans and prescriptions developed by DFG and GRRCD are available in Yountville.

Engineered plans for the abutment removal will be submitted for review by DFG prior to project commencement. These plans will include details of equipment access, demolition and construction scaled drawings. After dam deconstruction, 2,000 sq. ft. of erosion control, in the form of revegetation seeding, mulching, and erosion control fabric, will be installed in areas that have been disturbed by the project. All bare and/or dirt slopes will be treated with permanent erosion control measures.

Conservancy staff concurs with the Department of Fish and Game's assessment that the project, as mitigated, does not have the potential to have a significant impact on the environment, and recommends that the Conservancy, as a responsible agency under CEQA, also make this finding. Staff will file a notice of determination upon Conservancy approval of the project.