

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
January 23, 2014

**CARPINTERIA CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION:  
CIRCLE G RANCH FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENTS**

Project No. 12-060-02  
Project Manager: Rachel Couch

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to expand the scope of the Conservancy's February 14, 2013, authorization with respect to the Circle G Ranch on Carpinteria Creek in Santa Barbara County to include procurement of governmental permits necessary to construct fish passage improvements.

**LOCATION:** Carpinteria Creek watershed, Santa Barbara County

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [February 2013 Staff Recommendation \(without exhibits\)](#)

Exhibit 3: [Site Maps](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31220 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby amends its February 14, 2013, authorization to Earth Island Institute for the fish-barrier removal project along Carpinteria Creek to also include authorization to obtain governmental permits necessary to construct the project. This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of any Conservancy funds for this portion of the project, the Earth Island shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a revised work program, project budget and timeline.

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:

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1. The expanded project remains consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
2. The proposed authorization remains consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 5.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding integrated coastal and marine resource protection.
3. The expanded project remains consistent with applicable local watershed management plans and water quality control plans.
4. Earth Island Institute is a nonprofit organization qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and its purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.”

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**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

The proposed authorization would expand the authorized scope of work for the \$90,000 grant to Earth Island Institute (EII) to include securing necessary governmental permits as well as preparing design and engineering plans for the eventual construction of a steelhead passage and habitat project at the Circle G Ranch along Carpinteria Creek. (See Exhibit 2). The project is scheduled to begin construction in late summer of 2014, pending funding from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). To meet this schedule, the grantee must initiate the process to obtain permits from the various local, state and federal permitting agencies in early 2014. Originally, permitting costs were expected to be paid through a grant from DFW. However, a delay in the project design precluded EII from applying for this funding. The approved Conservancy grant will now be used for design, engineering and permitting. Cost-savings for the design and other tasks will ensure there are sufficient funds to complete all the necessary pre-construction activities.

This project serves as the final piece of an ongoing, comprehensive effort to restore and promote steelhead recovery in the Carpinteria Creek watershed. The addition of permitting to the scope of the grant will allow Earth Island to use Conservancy funds to begin the process of obtaining construction permits in anticipation of construction in fall 2014. Grantee does not currently have funds for the permitting phase of the project.

The Carpinteria Creek watershed is one of the largest on Santa Barbara County’s south coast and offers one of the region’s best opportunities for restoring significant runs of endangered southern steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). The upper watershed has perennial water flows and extremely high-quality trout habitat, while the lower creek, unlike most south coast streams, is not channelized and runs freely under full-span bridges at both the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and Highway 101 crossings. Historically, Carpinteria Creek supported plentiful runs of anadromous steelhead, and the upper watershed continues to sustain a population of resident rainbow trout. Because of human modifications to the watershed—primarily the construction of several road crossings —anadromous steelhead now enter the stream in very small numbers. Construction of this fish passage at Circle G will allow the migration steelhead up the creek and into the watershed of about 15 square miles.

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Earth Island Institute and South Coast Habitat Restoration (SCHR), a subsidiary of Earth Island, would undertake the permitting portion project in cooperation with the landowner. Earth Island is a nonprofit organization established under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and has operated successful environmental programs internationally for 30 years. Earth Island/SCHR have managed a number of stream restoration planning and implementation projects in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, including two sites in Carpinteria watershed funded by the Conservancy: Bliss and Cate Fish Passage Improvements (Project No. 02-088). SCHR has removed or modified a total of 13 barriers to steelhead migration in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties and is involved in the planning for removal of over a dozen other fish migration barriers in the region.

**Site Description:** See Exhibit 2.

**Project History:** See Exhibit 2.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy (previously authorized)	\$90,000
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$90,000</b>

The project remains consistent with the funding source as described in the February 14, 2013 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2). No additional funds are necessary to complete this additional phase of the project.

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

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Section 31220, as described in the February 14, 2013 authorization.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives as described in the February 14, 2013 authorization.

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

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines as described in the February 14, 2013 authorization.

**CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The proposed project remains consistent with the Local Coastal Program Policies as described in the February 14, 2013 authorization.

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

The proposed project remains consistent with the Local Watershed Management Plan and State Water Quality Control Plan as described in the February 14, 2013 authorization.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:** The proposed project remains statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Public Resources Code Section § 21102 as it involves feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions not yet approved, adopted or funded. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.