

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 1, 2022

SANTA MARGARITA RIVER FISH PASSAGE BARRIER REMOVAL PROJECT

Project No. 16-045-02
Project Manager: Sam Jenniches

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$530,000 to California Trout Inc. to implement the Santa Margarita River Bridge Replacement and Fish Passage Barrier Removal Project, consisting of removing a box culvert river crossing and replacing it with a bridge that allows fish passage at Sandia Creek Drive in San Diego County, and adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act.

LOCATION: Confluence of Sandia Creek and Santa Margarita River, Fallbrook, San Diego County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Sandia Creek Drive Bridge Replacement/Fish Passage Project](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

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

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed five hundred and thirty thousand dollars (\$530,000) to California Trout Inc. (“the grantee”) to implement the Santa Margarita River Bridge Replacement and Fish Passage Barrier Removal Project, consisting of removing a box culvert river crossing and replacing it with a bridge that allows fish passage at Sandia Creek Drive in San Diego County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding and Proposition 1 as the source of that funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project.

Prior to commencing the project, the grantee shall enter into and record an agreement pursuant to Public Resources Code 31116(d) sufficient to protect the public interest in the improvements.

Findings:

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

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 5.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding coastal and marine resources protection.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. California Trout, Inc. is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.
4. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the Sandia Creek Drive Bridge Replacement/Fish Passage Project Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted by the County of San Diego on February 11, 2022 pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4. The Conservancy finds that the proposed project as designed and mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects to a less-than-significant level, and that there is no substantial evidence based on the record as a whole that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 Cal. Code Regulations Section 15382.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize up to \$530,000 to California Trout Inc. to implement the Santa Margarita River Bridge Replacement and Fish Passage Barrier Removal Project (project) in San Diego County. The project consists of removal of a box culvert river crossing, restoration of habitat at the removal site, and replacement with a new steel bridge that allows fish passage. The box culvert river crossing is known as the Sandia Creek Drive bridge; it crosses the Santa Margarita River where the river passes through the Santa Margarita

Trail Preserve, land owned and managed by The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC). The Sandia Creek Drive bridge is a fish passage barrier. Its removal and replacement with a new bridge will allow passage of endangered steelhead to protected upstream spawning and rearing habitat in a high priority steelhead recovery river as designated in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Federal Recovery Plan and leverage previous downstream fish passage enhancement on Camp Pendleton.

The Sandia Creek Drive bridge is a full barrier to passage for the endangered Southern California steelhead trout in all conditions as well as a safety hazard to local residents during heavy rains. Fire and flood are regular occurrences in the vicinity of the project site. In 2017, the Lilac Fire burned for ten days and destroyed 157 structures. During the fire, a total of over 100,000 residents were required or advised to evacuate. The Sandia Creek Drive bridge was inadequate for the necessary emergency vehicle response and community evacuation, requiring supplies to be airlifted. In addition, the San Diego County Floodplain Management Plan (2007) cites this location as one of the County's flood hotspots. Flooding restricts access for nearby residents of Fallbrook and De Luz, and commuters from San Diego and Riverside Counties.

The Santa Margarita River Bridge Replacement and Fish Passage Barrier Removal Project will correct both the barrier to fish passage and the safety hazards. This project will replace an aging low-flow concrete box culvert river crossing that is a fish passage barrier on the Santa Margarita River with a new steel bridge that spans 615 feet and has three piers. The new bridge will be constructed about 160 feet downstream of the existing bridge. The project will also restore approximately one acre of habitat at the former bridge site, once removed. The project includes preparation of a long-term monitoring and management plan for the restored area and new bridge. CalTrout will work with TWC so that the plan can be integrated into the management plan for TWC's Santa Margarita River Trail Preserve.

Community engagement has been a significant part of the project. Conference calls, meetings and site visits were conducted with stakeholders including Fallbrook Trails Council, Fallbrook Community Planning Group (which reports projects to San Diego County), and the Fallbrook Community Forum. Newspaper articles were published by CalTrout and Trout Unlimited in the Fallbrook newspaper in 2018 and 2019 describing the project to residents -- highlighting the positive impact to community, flood attenuation, endangered species, and recreation opportunities. Frequent public outreach was conducted in Fallbrook and Temecula at schools and local events.

Tribal outreach was initiated by Conservancy staff during the design phase when staff sent tribal consultation letters to 21 tribes in October 2016. These tribal consultation letters resulted in further coordination with tribes, which continued through the design stage of the project. Tribal outreach for the implementation phase was initiated on September 28, 2022 when Conservancy staff sent consultation letters to 32 tribes. See "Selection Criteria, #3" below for more information.

Trout Unlimited's South Coast Chapter submitted a proposal to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Fisheries Restoration Grant Program in March 2015 for fish passage design to 65% level and was awarded \$166,000 in February 2016. Subsequently, Trout Unlimited invited CalTrout to manage the project and lead it forward. The Conservancy

awarded a grant in 2017 for \$442,000 to provide match funds for the design phase of the project and initial permitting. The Conservancy later awarded \$671,000 toward draft 90% plans and 100% final design and permitting was funded by CDFW and completed in fall of 2021.

Site Description: The project is located where Sandia Creek Drive crosses the Santa Margarita River, about two miles north of Fallbrook in northern San Diego County. The Sandia Creek Drive bridge is approximately 150 feet southwest of the intersection of Rock Mountain Drive and Sandia Creek Drive. The project site is nineteen miles inland from the ocean, seven miles from U.S. Marine Corps Base – Camp Pendleton, and adjacent to the Santa Margarita Trail Preserve which is owned and managed by The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC). Over a dozen vegetation types are on the property, providing habitat for a variety of wildlife species. These vegetation communities include southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, southern riparian woodland, southern coast live oak riparian forest, southern willow scrub, southern riparian scrub, coast live oak and other mixed woodlands and chaparral. The project impact area for the construction and demolition involved in the entire project is approximately 15 acres.

TWC owns and manages the site and surrounding area as parkland with a popular trail network. The County of San Diego has a 68 foot right-of-way for both the existing Sandia Creek Drive culvert and the future replacement bridge and will be responsible for all road and bridge function and maintenance upon completion. CalTrout will be responsible for revegetation and a 10-year monitoring plan for the project. TWC will continue to manage public access at its Santa Margarita Trail Preserve.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: CalTrout is a 51-year-old non-profit with seven regional offices around the state where expert staff work at the grass roots level to identify and resolve natural resource issues for fish and people. From a portfolio of over 50 current grants, CalTrout has completed two major bridge replacement projects in recent years, restoring fish passage to 28 miles of prime habitat. The County of San Diego Department of Planning and Development Services is the CEQA lead for the bridge replacement project and the County of San Diego Department of Public Works will be responsible for bridge function and maintenance.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

Selection Criteria

1. Extent to which the project helps the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.

See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Strategic Plan" section below.

2. Project is a good investment of state resources.

The proposed project will eliminate the sole remaining fish passage barrier on the Santa Margarita River to provide unimpeded passage from the ocean to the headwaters in the Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve. This project will open steelhead access to 12 miles upstream to

good spawning and rearing habitat, will restore more than one acre of riparian habitat at the project site, will reduce flood risk for residents, and will increase safety and access for over 100,000 people that visit the Santa Margarita Trail Reserve annually, as well as more than 1,800 cars per day that use the crossing.

The proposed project implements the California Water Action Plan and addresses a Key Challenge cited: Declining native fish species and loss of wildlife habitat. The objectives in this action plan include aggressive ecosystem restoration and other steps that will restore fish populations and benefit wildlife. This project specifically addresses Action #4: Protect and restore degraded stream and meadow ecosystems to assist in natural water management and improved habitat. The project will also address Action #8: Increase flood protection, by offering a multi-benefit solution protecting public life and property from flood impacts; improving safety for trail users; providing back-country emergency response during strong storms and fire events; alleviating traffic congestion and reducing carbon footprint in highly used commuter corridor; increasing access of disadvantaged communities to trail system; and, enhancing the quality of riparian habitat and critical migration corridor.

The proposed project is consistent with the Southern California Steelhead Recovery Plan (NMFS, 2012) and the Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan (CDFW, 1996). The Santa Margarita watershed is identified as a priority watershed for steelhead recovery in both plans.

3. Project includes a serious effort to engage tribes. Examples of tribal engagement include good faith, documented efforts to work with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated to the project area.

Tribal outreach was initiated by Conservancy staff in 2020 during the design phase and CalTrout engaged with the Pechanga Band of Indians during the design phase as a direct result of that outreach. In 2022, CalTrout and the Pechanga Band of Indians produced a virtual walking tour that describes the importance of the Santa Margarita watershed to the Pechanga Band including their creation story and important cultural resources. CalTrout will continue to coordinate with the Pechanga Band throughout project implementation and post-project monitoring.

4. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.

The proposed project will replace a deteriorating box culvert with a 615-foot steel bridge designed to remain passable to vehicles even during 100-year storm events, in accordance with San Diego County and Caltrans specifications. The benefits to steelhead trout will be sustained over the project lifespan as long as habitat conditions support presence of the species. The existing box culvert will no longer be a limiting factor.

The San Diego County Floodplain Management Plan (2007) cites this location as one of the County's flood hotspots. Flooding restricts access for nearby residents of Fallbrook and De Luz, and commuters from San Diego and Riverside Counties. The existing Sandia Creek Drive becomes submerged during heavy rains and blocks an evacuation route and emergency responder routes to nearby metropolitan areas. Residents and commuters face a dangerous decision to cross in swift-water conditions, and the Bonsall Fire Station reports multiple vehicular rescues each year.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The principal goal of the proposed project is to provide passage to endangered South California steelhead to 12 miles of historic spawning and rearing habitat in the Santa Margarita River. Due to its location at the urban-wildland interface in a major San Diego floodplain, it is also a strategic point of intervention to promote coastal resiliency. In addition to fish passage, this multi-benefit project will a) improve trail user experience and safety in the Santa Margarita Trail Preserve; c) protect the public from flood impacts of the existing Sandia Creek Drive bridge which overtops during heavy rainstorms; d) increase quality of riparian habitat for multiple threatened and endangered species; and e) preserve a critical wildlife migration corridor linking the Santa Ana and Palomar mountains.

Additionally, the proposed project provides increased access from areas which have Severely Disadvantaged Community status in Fallbrook and Temecula. The proposed bridge provides increased access to the Preserve trail system and thus will be a key link to usage of the Parkway. A major non-structural component of this project is public outreach and education to members of Disadvantaged Communities. An on-site TWC Ranger will be present to conduct informal and formal workshops and tours. The bridge construction project itself will involve jobs and training for over 180 people of various trades which may further benefit Disadvantaged Communities.

6. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

The project has the support of Senator Brian Jones (38th District), former Senator Joel Anderson (38th District), County of San Diego Planning and Development Services (CEQA Lead), Fallbrook Public Utility District, Regional Director Anthony Spina (National Marine Fisheries Service), and former Governor Jerry Brown. On a local level, the Bonsall Traffic Station, San Diego County Flood Department, San Diego Public Works Department, and the Fallbrook Chamber of Commerce contributed information during development of this proposal and are supportive of the opportunity to resolve current hazardous conditions.

In addition to the community support, this project is supported by the state and federal agencies invested financially and programmatically in its success: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Coastal Conservancy, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. CDFW and the Conservancy have funded the bridge design to date.

Additionally, see the “Project Summary” section above.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$530,000
California Natural Resources Agency	\$5,963,825
California Wildlife Conservation Board	\$1,941,032
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	\$9,614,242
Project Total	\$18,049,099

The expected sources of funding for this authorization are the 2015/16 and 2016/17 fiscal year appropriations to the Conservancy from the “Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014” (Proposition 1, Division 26.7 of the Water Code § 79700 et seq.). Funds appropriated to the Conservancy derive from Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 79730) and may be used “for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state” (Section 79731). Section 79732(a) identifies the specific purposes of Chapter 6, of which the following pertain to this project: remove barriers to fish passage (subsection (a)(6)); and protect and restore coastal watersheds (subsection (a)(10)).

CalTrout has secured significant match funding including grants from the following programs: CDFW Fisheries Restoration Grant Program, the National Coastal Resilience Fund, California Natural Resources Agency’s Urban Flood Protection Program, Wildlife Conservation Board Corridor and Fish Passage Program (Prop 68) and CDFW Prop 1.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 5.5, integrated coastal and marine resources protection (Public Resources Code Section 31220). Section 31220 directs the Conservancy to provide grants for coastal watershed and coastal and marine habitat water quality, sediment management, and living marine resources protection and restoration projects. Pursuant to Sections 31220(b)(2), (3) and (6), the Conservancy is authorized to undertake a project or award a grant for a project that protects or restores fish and wildlife habitat within coastal and marine waters and coastal watersheds, that reduces threats to coastal and marine fish and wildlife, and that restores coastal wetlands, riparian areas, floodplains, and other sensitive watershed lands. The proposed project will restore fish habitat, reduce threats to coastal and marine fish and wildlife and restore a riparian area in a coastal watershed. Staff consulted with the State Water Resources Control Board, which confirmed that the project is consistent with Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30915) [Clean Beaches Program] of Division 20.4 of the Public Resources Code [Watershed, Clean Beaches, and Water Quality Act].

Consistent with Section 31220(c) the proposed project includes preparation of a monitoring and evaluation component and is consistent with regional, local or State watershed management and water quality plans or programs, as described in the “Consistency with Local Watershed Management Plan/State Water Quality Control Plan” section, below.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective C**, the proposed project will implement a project that removes a barrier to corridor connectivity for the endangered southern California steelhead trout.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective E**, the proposed project will implement a project that improves fish passage for the endangered southern California steelhead trout.

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective C**, the proposed project will implement a project that reduces the impacts of flooding resulting from the expected increase in intensity of rainfall events in coastal California associated with climate change.

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

The proposed project is consistent with the following objectives of the San Diego Regional Watershed Management Plan's (2013); Objective A in that it employs multiple resource management strategies within a single project to effectively address a variety of issues, such as fish passage, public safety, climate resilience and flood control, and Objective I in that it protects sensitive habitat for endangered, threatened and locally important plant and wildlife species.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is the subject of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Sandia Creek Drive Bridge Replacement/Fish Passage Project (Exhibit 4), which the County of San Diego adopted on February 11, 2022. The IS/MND indicated that the project could have potentially significant effects on the following types of resources: Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, and Tribal Cultural Resources and identifies mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate all the possible significant environmental effects to less than significant.

The potentially significant impacts of the project and associated mitigation measures are summarized below:

Aesthetics:

The proposed project will not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or night-time views in this area. Lighting during evening construction may be needed. However, measure AES-1 will be implemented to reduce the potential for impacts associated with the temporary use of lighting to less than significant. Thus, impacts related to light and glare would be less than significant with this mitigation during construction.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources:

Project implementation will result in direct and temporary impacts to 0.89 acres of Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest, 0.84 acres of Southern Willow Scrub, 0.27 acres of Coast Live Oak Woodland, and 0.28 acres of Eucalyptus Woodland. However, the project will mitigate these impacts at ratios shown in Tables 7 and 8 of the Biological Resources Letter Report. Eucalyptus Woodland does not require mitigation. Therefore, project implementation would not result in the loss or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

Biological Resources:

The site and surrounding area support native vegetation, including Diegan coastal sage scrub, granitic chamise chaparral, scrub oak chaparral, non-native grassland, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, southern willow scrub, and coast live oak woodland habitat. One special status plant species, chaparral sand-verbena (*Abronia villosa var. aurita*), was observed within the study area, but outside the proposed impact area. Special status wildlife species observed within and in the direct vicinity of the study area include Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*), southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*), great blue heron (*Ardea Herodias*), San Diegan tiger whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*), yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auratus*), yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia*), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), orange-throated whiptail (*Aspidoscelis hyperythra*), and southern California legless lizard (*Anniella stebbinsi*). The study area also contains U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) designated Critical Habitat for arroyo toad, least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, and coastal California gnatcatcher.

Direct permanent impacts would occur to 0.75 acres of sensitive vegetation communities, including scrub oak chaparral, non-native grassland, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, southern willow scrub, and coast live oak woodland, as a result of project construction. Direct temporary impacts would occur to 2.44 acres of sensitive vegetation communities, including non-native grassland, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, southern willow scrub, and coast live oak woodland, as result of project construction. Additionally, 0.02 acres of non-vegetated channel would be permanently impacted, and 0.28 acres of non-vegetated channel (0.11 acres) and fresh water (0.17 acres) would be temporarily impacted. Potential short-term indirect impacts to sensitive vegetation communities would primarily result from construction activities, including the generation of fugitive dust, increased human activity during construction, and the introduction of chemical pollutants. Potential long-term indirect impacts to sensitive vegetation communities would be those occurring after construction and would include changes in hydrology resulting from construction, including sedimentation and erosion.

The study area contains approximately 28.60 acres of jurisdictional resources which includes 6.10 acres of USACE/RWQCB jurisdictional non-wetland waters of the United States, 11.75 acres of USACE/RWQCB jurisdictional adjacent wetlands, and 10.75 acres of CDFW jurisdictional riparian area. The proposed project would result in direct permanent impacts to approximately 0.54 acres of jurisdictional resources and direct temporary impacts to 1.79 acres of jurisdictional resources, including CDFW riparian habitat adjacent to jurisdictional waters. These areas are also considered RPO wetlands. However, the project is exempt from the Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) of San Diego County (2007) pursuant to Section 86.604 (5). According to Section 86.604, crossings of wetlands for roads, driveways, or pathways necessary to access adjacent lands, and which are dedicated and improved to the limitations and standards under the County Trails Program, shall be allowed provided criteria (aa) through (ff) are met. Section 86.604 states that if no reasonable use of the sensitive land would be permitted by the RPO regulations, then an encroachment may be allowed to the minimum extent necessary (County 2007). The project meets conditions (aa) through (ff) for the permitted uses of wetlands.

Construction of the new bridge is subject to regulations that minimize tree removal during excavation and compliance with ordinances protecting biological resources. In order to protect the shallow root systems of oak trees, County guidelines require that the project include a minimum 50-foot oak root protection zone between the dripline of the oak tree and the nearest ground disturbance (i.e., grading or trenching). Impacts from ground disturbance and compaction in the oak root protection zone will result in proportional impacts to the oak woodland. Where a project results in ground disturbance or compaction within the oak woodland or oak root protection zone, the impact must be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio with oak woodland habitat. The project will result in permanent direct impacts to 0.23 acres of coast live oak woodland habitat, plus 0.26 acres of the oak root zone. Impacts to these resources will be mitigated through revegetation at a 3:1 ratio. With a 3:1 required mitigation ratio for these impacts, 0.78 acres of the mitigation site will be targeted for 150 oak sapling plantings (approximately 200 oak saplings/acre). Therefore, impacts are less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

The County's adopted Mitigated Negative Declaration describes a suite of 19 mitigation measures that, when implemented, will reduce the biological impacts to less than significant. Those mitigation measures are described in full in pages 2-18 of the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Sandia Creek Drive Bridge Replacement/Fish Passage Project.

Cultural Resources:

Although no archaeological resources have been identified on the project site through review of archaeological records by DUDEK (March 14, 2019), and a field survey by County of San Diego staff archaeologist, Sandra Pentney on August 20, 2021, and December 7, 2021, there is a potential for obscured or subsurface resources that may qualify as historical resources and/or unique archaeological resources pursuant to CEQA to occur. Disturbance of such resources would be considered a potentially significant impact. Therefore the project will be conditioned to monitor all grading and clearing activities for potential cultural resources. Incorporation of mitigation measures CULT#GR-1 through CULT#GR-6 would reduce potential project-related impacts to subsurface archaeological deposits to a less than significant level.

Although unlikely, in the event of unanticipated discovery of human remains, the project contractor would be required to implement mitigation measures CULT#GR-2 and CULT#GR-4, which requires avoidance of all sacred sites, renouncement of the landowner's ownership over all cultural resources, and compliance with PRC Section 5097.98 and Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5. Therefore, with implementation of these measures, potential impacts associated with the disturbance of human remains would be less than significant.

Tribal Cultural Resources:

Tribal consultation indicated concerns about tree or vegetation removals necessary to the project and tribes requested consultation on the revegetation plan to ensure that any oaks, elderberry, willow trees or other species of tribal importance are replenished in the revegetation efforts. Implementation of TCR-1 reduces this impact to a level of less than significance. TCR-1: During preparation of the project's revegetation plan, the County shall request input from the actively consulting Tribes. The County will fully consider tribal

comments on the revegetation plan and work to ensure plants of particular importance to the tribe are included in the plan.

Staff has independently evaluated the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Sandia Creek Drive Bridge Replacement/Fish Passage Project and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) adopted by the County of San Diego on February 11, 2022 and concurs that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the project as mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects to a level of less-than-significant and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by 14 Cal. Code Regs. §15382.

Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Determination.