



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COUNTY MANAGER

File #: 16-117

Board Meeting Date: 5/16/2017

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: John L. Maltbie, County Manager
Subject: Butano Channel Restoration and Resilience Project and Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve resolutions:

- A) In support of a \$4 million funding request to the County's state delegation for the Butano Channel Restoration and Resilience Project; and
- B) In support of a \$2 million funding request to the County's state delegation for the acquisition of a private property at Tunitas Creek Beach.

BACKGROUND:

The Board of Supervisors is seeking State assistance for the implementation of two regionally significant coastal resource projects to protect safe public access and threatened natural resources in the unincorporated South Coast of San Mateo County: 1) Butano Channel Restoration and Resilience Project working with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (SMRCD); and 2) the Tunitas Creek Beach private property acquisition working with the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST).

DISCUSSION:

Butano Channel Restoration and Resilience Project

In its current condition, Butano Creek frequently exceeds its channel capacity and subsequently flows across its floodplain to the east and then overtops Pescadero Creek during low magnitude, frequently occurring flood events. This frequent flooding has impacted access to the unincorporated community of Pescadero for several decades and poses a safety hazard to both residents and visitors to this coastal community. In addition to the well-documented flooding issues along lower Butano Creek, downstream of Pescadero Creek Road, the creek drains into Pescadero Marsh, which is considered a critical ecological system that is home to a variety of federally and state protected fish and wildlife species. The current condition of the crossing and the sediment impacted reach directly downstream

resulting in a significant passage impediment to salmonids attempting to migrate upstream into Butano Creek.

Historic land use, including logging and channelizing creeks, road construction, agriculture, and development in the watershed (including a town in the floodplain) dramatically increases the volume of sediment entering the marsh. Routine dredging in the marsh historically conducted by local farmers ended when the State of California acquired the marsh and lagoon in 1974 as a natural preserve, along with environmental regulations, notably: Endangered Species Act (1973), Clean Water Act (1977), and California Coastal Act (1976).

Lower Butano Creek, where it runs through the marsh, has completely filled in with sediment. This blocks threatened steelhead trout and endangered coho salmon from the entire watershed for spawning, rearing their young, and finding critical refuge during storms and droughts. The sediment-filled channel exacerbates flooding and road closures along the main road into Pescadero cutting the community off from emergency services and access to State Highway 1. Road closures due to flooding severely impact commercial activity in town.

The goals of the Butano Channel Restoration and Resilience project are to: 1) restore fish passage and migration, opening access to 10.1 miles of anadromy; 2) reduce flooding of Pescadero Creek Road and affected private properties, improving accessibility to town, safety, and the town's economy during rain events; 3) reduce the risk of severity of fish kills; 4) improve habitat for several protected species (coho salmon, steelhead trout, San Francisco garter snake, California red-legged frog); and 5) provide resilience for salmonids by providing refuge in drought, flooding, and poor water quality conditions.

The above listed goals will be accomplished by dredging to re-establish 8,000 feet of the historic creek channel, remove 45,000 cub yards of sediment, and re-use the dredge material to fill historic human-made pits to restore 28 acres of degraded marsh. The County will be working with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District as the lead partner. A total of \$4 million in State funding is sought for this project. In addition, SMRCD has applied for a \$1.4 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for this project. A detailed summary of the project and funding request is attached.

Tunitas Creek Acquisition Project

The Tunitas Creek Acquisition Project will enable the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) to acquire approximately 57.5 acres of private coastal property in unincorporated San Mateo County adjacent to Tunitas Creek Beach, 12 miles south of Half Moon Bay. The purpose of the Tunitas Creek Acquisition is to secure the permanent protection of the Tunitas Creek Beach property for natural and cultural resource protection, open space, and public access. San Mateo County anticipates entering into an agreement with POST for interim management upon close of escrow in November 2017, and subsequent transfer of the property to the County for long-term management and operation of Tunitas Creek Beach as a new San Mateo County park.

Over the past three years, an overwhelming increase in unregulated public access over an illegally graded trail through Tunitas Creek has resulted in hundreds of people camping overnight, leaving human waste and garbage on the beach, incidents of vandalism on a house on the property, and severe damage to the area's natural resources. Given the dangers posed by the current arrangement and in light of the strong outpouring of community concern regarding the impacts of unregulated public access at Tunitas Creek Beach, the County is actively working with POST on the acquisition deal and the signing of an agreement to assume full responsibility for the ownership,

maintenance, and operation of the Tunitas Creek Beach property as a County park in perpetuity.

A total of \$2 million in state funding is sought for this land purchase estimated at \$5 million in total. The State Coastal Conservancy is expected to contribute \$1 million in existing funding and POST the remaining \$2 million. Finally, the County is expected to contribute approximately \$1,708,000 in one-time costs for public access improvements and \$1,004,000 in on-going annual operations and patrolling costs. A detailed summary of the property acquisition costs and one-time and ongoing County costs for the new Tunitas Creek Beach Park are attached.

Approval of these resolutions contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of Environmentally Conscious community by working collaboratively with federal, state and local governments to preserve and protect the County's precious natural resources.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolutions as to form.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact resulting from this request. The County's FY 2017-19 Recommended Budget includes \$1 million in matching funds for the Butano Channel Restoration and Resilience Project should the NOAA grant be awarded, and an additional \$150,000 for the SMRCD to complete final designs for this project. The County has also recommended \$3 million to address coast side flooding and open space preservation, which would include expenditures directly related for the soon-to-be established Tunitas Creek Beach Park.