

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

DATE: February 05, 2020
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Rafael Payan, General Manager
SUBJECT: DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEM: Authorizing the General Manager to Sign Documents Necessary to Execute Wildlife Conservation Board Grant Agreement

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

As previously recommended, Staff respectfully requests the Board receive this report and consider authorizing MPRPD's General Manager to sign documents **(ATTACHMENTS 1a and 1b)** contingent upon MPRPD receiving the Letter of Assurance signed by the County **(ATTACHMENT 2)**, as submitted herein or in substantially similar form, pursuant to the County of Monterey's grant application to the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) for funding portions of the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CR FREE) project.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Not Applicable

FUNDING SOURCE:

Not Applicable

FUNDING BALANCE:

Not Applicable

DISCUSSION:

As presented at the January 08, 2020 MPRPD Board of Directors' meeting, the Monterey County Resource Management Agency (MCRMA) has applied for a \$2.5 million WCB Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Program Grant. These funds will complete final design and initiate construction of the CR FREE project. The landmark CR FREE project is a multi-benefit green infrastructure endeavor that will reduce flood risks and restore riverine habitat at the mouth of Carmel Valley.

The lower Carmel River and its lagoon at the river's mouth were once rich coastal habitats, with lush riparian, wetland and brackish marsh biotic communities connected to Carmel Bay's diverse marine environment. In the 1930s, earthen levees were constructed along the river's banks to protect agricultural fields on the south side of the river channel, and urban areas to the north. Today, the river is confined to a narrow channel that constrains high-flows and impedes the floodplain's natural function. The elevated State Route 1 (Highway 1) roadway embankment separates the lagoon from the floodplain and acts as a weir that creates backwater impacts during high-flow

events. In the last 25 years, several high-flow events have repeatedly caused millions of dollars in flood damage to homes and businesses at the mouth of Carmel Valley, including the structural failure of the Highway 1 Carmel River bridge, in 1995. The CR FREE project is part of a larger green infrastructure plan to reduce flood risks and enhance the Carmel River's, and its floodplain's and lagoon's hydrologic functions.

The required environmental review and permitting processes are nearly complete. On January 28, 2020, certification of the Final Environmental Impact Review (EIR) was presented to, and favorably received by, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors. Permitting is underway and the critically important U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit has been obtained.

Construction will begin once all funding has been secured. Costs are anticipated to reach \$33 million. Construction of the proposed Highway 1 causeway, levee notching, and floodplain grading is expected to take in excess of two years, with construction projected to start in 2021. Project support has been received from partner organizations including, the Big Sur Land Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, CA Wildlife Conservation Board, CA Coastal Conservancy, CA Department of Water Resources, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Caltrans. FEMA has accepted a \$22.9 Million grant application for Hazard Mitigation Grant Funds.

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, California State Parks, and the Big Sur Land Trust are real property owners within the footprint of the CR FREE project. To complete the \$2.5 million WCB grant application, MPRPD, State Parks, and the Big Sur Land Trust, as land owners, must indicate their support of the grant application by jointly signing: (1) the Grant Agreement between WCB and the Grantee (MCRMA); and, (2) a NOUGA (Notice of Unrecorded Grant Agreement). Attached to this Board report are examples of these documents. WCB will forward the final drafts of these documents for signature once the documents have been finalized. Time is of the essence, as signed documents must be received by WCB no later than February 12, 2020.

MCRMA has provided the attached letter of assurance, in draft form, to MPRPD, wherein MCRMA assures protection and continued function of MPRPD's River Field Well, asserting that said Well is and will continue to be a component of the CR FREE project, and that all costs required for the Well's protection and continued function, excluding the well's operating costs, shall solely be borne by the CR FREE project.

Contingent upon MPRPD receiving the aforementioned Letter of Assurance signed by the County, MCRMA respectfully requests that the MPRPD Board of Directors authorize the MPRPD General Manager to sign the Grant Agreement and NOUGA in support of the County application for the WCB funding to complete final design and initiate construction on the CR FREE project.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Examples: [WCB Standard Template Grant Application \(1a\)](#); and [NOUGA \(1b\)](#)
2. [MCRMA's River Field Well Protection and Function Assurance Letter to MPRPD](#)