AGENDA ITEM NO. 5

MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
BOARD REPORT

DATE: November 4, 2026
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Eric Morgan, General Manager
SUBJECT: Presentation of the Inaugural Trout Unlimited Steinbeck Country Chapter "River Champion" Award

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SUMMARY

This item provides for the presentation of the inaugural Trout Unlimited Steinbeck Country Chapter "River Champion" Award to the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. The award recognizes the District's significant contributions to the restoration of cold water fishery habitat through the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project on the Carmel River.

Representatives from Trout Unlimited's Steinbeck Country Chapter will present the award. The presentation is informational only; no formal Board action is required.

BACKGROUND

The River Champions Award honors individuals or organizations that have made important contributions to restoring, sustaining, reconnecting, or protecting cold-water fish and their habitat, resulting in tangible outcomes within the Steinbeck Country Chapter boundaries. River restoration, and in particular floodplain reconnection, is especially important for the federally threatened south-central California coast steelhead.

The Carmel River watershed contains over one hundred stream miles of high-quality salmonid spawning grounds, but virtually no natural floodplain. A restored floodplain provides vital winter refugia from high flows and serves as nursery and rearing habitat for steelhead before their return to the ocean.

The District is completing Phase II of the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project. Once complete, the project will result in approximately 40 acres of constructed floodplain, 7,600 linear feet of restored river channel, and the establishment of 175,000 native plants on the newly graded floodplain. The project significantly contributes to the recovery of steelhead on the Carmel River and has been recognized by Trout Unlimited as a national demonstration of commitment to cold-water fishery restoration.

The Steinbeck Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited, representing over 1,000 members and supporters throughout the Central Coast of California, is presenting its First Annual River Champions Award to the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. Staff is pleased to accept this recognition on behalf of the Board of Directors and the many partners who supported the project.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this informational presentation.

FUNDING SOURCE

N/A

FUNDING BALANCE

N/A

DISCUSSION

The presentation of this award provides an opportunity for the Board and the public to recognize the progress of major habitat restoration that advances the recovery of a federally threatened species. The Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project exemplifies the District's commitment to science-based conservation and multi-benefit river restoration on the Monterey Peninsula.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff respectfully recommends that the Board of Directors receive the presentation of the inaugural Trout Unlimited Steinbeck Country Chapter "River Champion" Award. No formal Board action is required.