



Meeting Date: 03/21/06

ACTION	TYPE OF ITEM
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved Recommendation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Info/Consent
<input type="checkbox"/> Ord. No(s). _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Report
<input type="checkbox"/> Res. No(s). _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing (Info/consent)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Prepared By: Elena Salgado, Senior Management Intern  Agenda Item No. I-7

Reviewed By: City Manager  City Attorney  Finance  Other (Specify)

DATE: March 7, 2006

TO: City Council

FROM: Michael Henderson, Parks & Facilities Superintendent 
Public Works

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for Santa Clara River Estuary Project

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council execute a letter of support to the City's federal representatives regarding the Nature Conservancy's funding request for the Santa Clara River Estuary Project.

DISCUSSION

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), working with California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) and the California Department of Parks and Recreation, seeks letters of support from the City of Oxnard to our federal representatives. The letters would support a \$1 million appropriation for the Santa Clara River Estuary Project through the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP).

CELCP was established through NOAA to protect coastal and estuarine lands considered important for their ecological, conservation, recreational, historical, or aesthetic value. The program goal would provide funding to ensure conservation, management, and protection of the Santa Clara River (SCR) estuary for the benefit of the residents of Ventura County and Oxnard. Funding is provided through the federal appropriation process and requires the critical support of federal senators and members of congress.

TNC and SCC created the Santa Clara River Estuary Project to complement and protect the Santa Clara River Parkway and McGrath State Beach. For the past 5.5 years, they have been protecting the SCR by acquiring more than 10 miles of riverbed in Ventura County. Visited by 200,000 people each year, McGrath State Beach and its Santa Clara River Estuary Natural Preserve provide visitors with coastal campgrounds, beach access, diverse birding, and educational opportunities.

The Santa Clara River has the largest watershed in southern California, providing water and fertile soils for Ventura County's \$1 billion agricultural industry. It is the last major river in southern California

Nature Conservancy's request for support

March 7, 2006

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remaining in a natural state that contains rich wetland habitat. It is a historic reminder of how water used to flow through the region as well as a location for feeding and breeding to the 22-35 listed species that are known to inhabit the watershed.

Funding for the Project will enhance these resources. With matching funds from the State Coastal Conservancy and the McGrath Beach Trustee Council, the Project will provide \$2 million to expand the Santa Clara River Parkway and McGrath State Beach facilities. The benefits to biodiversity, quality of life, and recreational opportunities are unparalleled. For these reasons, the Oxnard City Council should strongly support the CELCP funding request.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This action does not have a financial impact on the City.

(MH/es)

Attachment #1 - Nature Conservancy's Request for Letters of Support
Santa Clara River Estuary CELCP Project

Attachment #2 - Letter of Support

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Request for Letters of Support Santa Clara River Estuary CELCP Project

Overview

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), working with California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks), currently seeks letters of support to our federal representatives to support a \$1 million appropriation for the Santa Clara River Estuary Project through NOAA's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP). These federal funds will be matched 1:1, providing \$2 million to acquire lands and waters in the Santa Clara River estuary and in-holdings at McGrath State Beach to enhance existing recreational, conservation and educational resources in Ventura County.

What is CELCP?

CELCP was established through NOAA to protect coastal and estuarine lands considered important for their ecological, conservation, recreational, historical or aesthetic value. The program provides funding for projects that ensure conservation of these areas for the benefit of future generations, and that can be effectively managed and protected. Funding is provided through the federal appropriation process, thus garnering the support of our federal senators and members of congress is critical.

What is the Santa Clara River Estuary Project?

The Nature Conservancy and State Coastal Conservancy created the Santa Clara River Estuary Project to complement the Santa Clara River Parkway and McGrath State Beach. For the past 5.5 years, TNC and SCC have been protecting the Santa Clara River by acquiring more than 10 miles of riverbed in Ventura County. TNC is currently planning conservation strategies for the Los Angeles County portion of the watershed. McGrath State Beach is an existing facility run by State Parks that provides the public with campgrounds, beach access, excellent birding opportunities and nature education.

The Santa Clara River Estuary Project targets 12 properties in the Santa Clara River estuary and in and around McGrath State Beach for acquisition. The goal is to protect as many of these properties as possible, through conservation easements or fee acquisition to preserve ecological values, provide appropriate public access and enhance the Parkway the State Beach. We are asking for \$1m through CELCP, to be matched by equal funding from SCC and the McGrath State Beach Trustee Council. Additional funds to complete the project will be secured by TNC and SCC. TNC has already conserved two of the target properties, with a goal to protect at least four in the near term.

Why is the Santa Clara River Estuary Project Important?

- The Santa Clara River (SCR) has the largest watershed in southern California, providing water and fertile soils for Ventura County's \$1 billion agricultural industry

- The SCR is the last major river in southern California remaining in a natural state, with intact hydrologic and geomorphic functions. Maintaining this natural state provides public benefits far beyond the mouth of the river by providing sand to replenish beaches down the coast.
- Approximately 22-35 threatened and endangered species and species of concern have been identified on the SCR – including the anadromous southern steelhead trout, least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, red-legged frog and the southwestern pond turtle.
- The SCR estuary provides a crucial transitional environment for the southern steelhead trout. Smolts, or young steelhead trout migrating from their hatching waters in upstream tributaries out to the Pacific Ocean, depend upon the nutrient-rich estuary to grow strong enough to travel out to sea. Southern steelhead trout returning to spawn also depend on the estuary to transition from the salt-water ocean to the freshwater river.
- SCR contains rich wetland habitat - significant because we have destroyed more than 90% of the wetlands in southern California.
- Nine important habitat types converge at McGrath State Beach making the area high in biological diversity
- Permanent protection of the estuary and coastline will enable habitat restoration, prevent development or conversion to undesirable uses and prevent habitat fragmentation.

Congressional Contact Information

Please send letters with the heading "Re: Support for Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) Funding for Santa Clara River Estuary Project"

Representatives Lois Capps
141 South A Street, Suite 204
Oxnard, CA 93030
(805) 385-3440
Fax: (805) 385-3399

Senator Barbara Boxer
312 N. Spring Street, Suite 1748
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 894-5000
Fax: (213) 894-5042

Representative Elton Gallegly
2829 Townsgate Road, Suite 315
Thousand Oaks, CA 91361-3018
(805) 497-2224 or (800) 423-0023
Fax: (805) 497-0039

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
One Post Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, CA 94104
(415) 393-0707
Fax: (415) 393-0710

**** with a copy to:**

Sandi Matsumoto
The Nature Conservancy
3639 Harbor Blvd, Suite 201
Ventura, CA 93001
805.6420.345 x. 502
805.642.0343 fax
smatsumoto@tnc.org

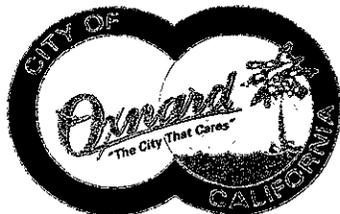
Other Resources

For more information on The Nature Conservancy: www.nature.org

For more information on CELCP: www.ocrm.nos.noaa.gov/landconservation.html

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CITY COUNCIL OFFICE

305 West Third Street • Oxnard, CA 93030 • (805) 385-7428 • Fax (805) 385-7595

March 21, 2006

Honorable Lois Capps
 Congressperson
 141 South "A" Street, Suite 204
 Oxnard, CA 93030

Re: Support for Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
 Funding for the Santa Clara River Estuary Project

Dear Congressperson Capps:

On behalf of the City of Oxnard, the Oxnard City Council wishes to express its support for the Nature Conservancy's \$1 million funding request through the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for the Santa Clara River Estuary Project (Project). With less than 10% of the historic wetlands remaining in southern California, this Project will preserve rare and threatened habitats located in the Santa Clara River estuary and at McGrath State Beach. In addition to the rich biological diversity, the Project area contains important recreational, historic and aesthetic values that benefit the residents of Ventura County and Oxnard, as well as complement the precious resources unique to California.

The Santa Clara River is the last major river in southern California that remains in a relatively natural state. As such, it is a historic reminder of how water used to flow through the region, as well as a bastion of feeding and breeding grounds to the 22-35 listed species that are known to inhabit the watershed. The estuary is critically important to the anadromous southern steelhead trout, which transition its physiology to adapt from freshwater to salt water, and vice versa, during an incredible life cycle.

Recognizing this conservation priority, The Nature Conservancy, the State Coastal Conservancy and other partners have protected more than ten miles of the Santa Clara River, laying the foundation for the "Santa Clara River Parkway." Visited by more than 200,000 people each year, McGrath State Beach and its Santa Clara River Estuary Natural Preserve provide visitors with coastal campgrounds, beach access, diverse birding and educational opportunities.

Funding for the Project will enhance these resources. With matching funds from the State Coastal Conservancy and the McGrath Beach Trustee Council, the Project will provide \$2 million to expand the Santa Clara River Parkway and McGrath State Beach facilities.

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Letter to Congressperson Capps
Re: Support for Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
Funding for the Santa Clara River Estuary Project
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The benefits to biodiversity, quality of life and recreational opportunities are unparalleled. For these reasons, the Oxnard City Council strongly supports the CELCP funding request. We encourage you to do the same.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas E. Holden
Mayor

Andrés Herrera
Mayor Pro Tem

Dean Maulhardt
Councilmember

John C. Zaragoza
Councilmember

Timothy B. Flynn
Councilman

cc: Sandi Matsumoto, Project Director, The Nature Conservancy

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