

September 24th, 2020



John Donnelly
Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Board
1700 9th Street, 4th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

Re: 2020 Proposition 1 Stream Flow Enhancement Program grant application for Roy's Redwoods Restoration Project

Dear Director Donnelly:

We are writing on behalf of Marin Conservation League (MCL) to add our enthusiastic support for the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy's (Parks Conservancy) grant proposal for the Roy's Redwoods Restoration Project in the Lagunitas Watershed in Marin County, California.

Marin Conservation League was instrumental in the establishment of Marin County's Open Space District (MCOSSD) almost 50 years ago and has long treasured the 293-acre Roy's Redwoods Open Space Preserve as one of the jewels among the 34 Open Space Preserves in the District. Located in San Geronimo Valley not far from Samuel P. Taylor State Park, the preserve is often dubbed "The Other Muir Woods" for its remarkable grove of old growth redwoods that somehow escaped wholesale logging of redwoods in Marin in the early 19th century. Over many decades the grove and its Larsen Creek watershed, under private ownerships, endured a wide variety of uses and misuses before becoming a public preserve in 1978, the first preserve in San Geronimo Valley.

The unmanaged use of the grove created a sprawling network of trails and compacted soils throughout the otherwise sheltered alluvial valley and threatened the health of the ancient redwoods themselves, which range between 95 and 145 inches in diameter. Such abuses degraded understory habitats and impaired hydrologic function, thus compromising the creek system and the overall redwood ecosystem. The County has long desired to restore the hydrology and enhance the habitats in Roy's Redwoods, including habitat of the endangered Northern Spotted Owl, while continuing to maintain the "wild" ambience that makes the preserve particularly popular for families, walkers, and equestrians.

Larsen Creek is a tributary to San Geronimo Creek, which provides spawning and juvenile habitat for the endangered Central Coast Coho (CCC) salmon and threatened steelhead trout in Marin County. The proposed project will not only recreate the natural floodplain of Larsen Creek through the redwoods but also, in restoring natural hydrology, enhance critical habitats in San Geronimo Creek some 3,000 feet beyond the preserve. Thus the project will complement current efforts downstream (including on the adjacent San Geronimo Valley golf course) to

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increase and improve stream flow in the Lagunitas Creek Watershed (which reaches Tomales Bay).

As suggested above, Roys Redwoods offers a kind of sanctuary and natural “park” for the enjoyment of families with kids, walkers, equestrians, and passers-by. By reconfiguring public trails away from the restored creek and important riparian habitat zones, and by removing foot traffic from the base of redwood trees to allow soils to decompact, this project will provide a sustainable infrastructure for visitors to enjoy Roy’s Redwoods and also allow a more natural understory and related wildlife habitats to reestablish. This infrastructure will also contribute to securing the long-term health of the redwoods.

The ability of the MCOSD to partner in this project with One Tam (the collaborative of land management agencies charged with stewarding Mt. Tamalpais, including the MCOSD, Marin Municipal Water District, California State Parks and the National Parks Service, joined by Parks Conservancy) presents a unique opportunity to implement this long-desired multi-benefit restoration project. Offering its abundant talent and experience, Parks Conservancy is taking the lead in implementing this important project. Project plans reflect concepts and designs that have been developed through robust community engagement and thus at this stage have broad community support.

Marin Conservation League urges the Board to support this important stream flow enhancement project within the Lagunitas Creek Watershed.

Sincerely,



Bob Miller
President



Nona Dennis
Chair, Parks and Open Space Committee

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