



## United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area  
401 West Hillcrest Drive  
Thousand Oaks, California 91360-4207

In reply refer to: Steelhead barrier removal CSP

13 September 2011

Mr. Charles R. Hoppin, Chairman  
State Water Resources Control Board  
C/O Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board  
1001 I Street, 24th Floor [95814]  
P.O. Box 100  
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100



**RE: Comment Letter: Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation and California State Park Proposals: Phase 1 (Planning/Design/Engineering) & 2 (Implementation) - Arroyo Sequit Steelhead Barrier Removal Project, Leo Carrillo State Park, Los Angeles County, California**

Dear Mr. Hoppin:

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA, National Park Service) strongly supports Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation's (SMBRF) and California Department of Parks and Recreation's ("California State Parks") proposals to remove three in-stream barriers on Arroyo Sequit Creek. The proposed project will remove two Arizona crossings and a check dam. Free span bridges will be installed at the Arizona crossing locations. Implementation of this project will provide access to an additional 4.5 linear miles of habitat to the federally endangered Southern California steelhead trout (*Ocorhynchus mykiss*), and improve water quality by reducing stream channel erosion and instream sediment loading problems created by the existing structures.

The SMMNRA is a unique mosaic of federal, state and local landholders all within an urban wildland matrix. The NPS places a high importance on working with our partners to protect and improve the diversity, health and sustainability of the entire area. The NPS has already committed considerable resources to steelhead habitat improvement and barrier removal in Solstice Canyon and with ongoing restoration work in Zuma Canyon, just south of the proposed project in Malibu, CA. As such, the proposed project is in direct alignment with the NPS goal to restore steelhead habitat and to protect this imperiled species that is threatened due to human activities.

Within the last century, Southern California steelhead were abundant in some coastal streams of the Santa Monica Mountains, but their population has crashed due to human modification of riverine habitat in southern California. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) listed the southern steelhead Ecologically Significant Unit (ESU) as a federally endangered species in 1997 and estimates the southern steelhead population to be less than 1% of its historic population size (decreasing from 50,000 in the 1950s to fewer than 500 today). The single greatest cause of this population crash in the Santa Monica Mountains is the loss of access to freshwater habitat due to the construction of migration barriers (road crossings, dams) and flood control structures.

In California Trout's 2006 *Santa Monica Steelhead Habitat Assessment Report* (funded by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and California State Coastal Conservancy), watersheds within the Santa Monica Mountains were assessed for their importance to steelhead and the presence of existing migration barriers. Arroyo Sequit (along with Malibu and Topanga watersheds) was identified as the highest priority for restoration. Of these, Arroyo Sequit was identified as receiving the least amount of restoration attention or activity.

Other agencies have identified removal of steelhead barriers in the Arroyo Sequit watershed as a high priority. These include:

- California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1996. Leo Carrillo State Park, General Plan.
- National Marine Fisheries Service. July 2009. Draft Southern California Steelhead Recovery Plan, Public Review Draft Version.
- The 2007 Federal Recovery Outline for the Distinct Population Segment of the Southern California Coast Steelhead prepared by the National Marine Fisheries Service also identifies the removal of fish passage barriers as an important element of the species recovery.

The proposed project is a well-considered solution to both providing access to an endangered species, while improving public safety and accessibility to recreational amenities for visitors to Leo Carrillo State Park. Currently two Arizona crossings (at grade road crossings that have become elevated due to downstream erosion) are estimated to block steelhead passage over 95% of the time, limiting passage to periods of extreme storm flows. A low check dam also limits passage of juvenile steelhead upstream. Removal of these barriers and replacement of the two Arizona crossings with free-span bridges will not only provide ongoing access to steelhead, but will allow the visiting public and state park staff to more frequently and safely access recreational amenities such as the beach and group campground during storm events. The project will additionally entail a significant community outreach component via volunteer-based restoration of the project area and removal of invasive weeds along a one-mile section of Arroyo Sequit Creek.

The National Park Service supports implementation of the Arroyo Sequit Steelhead Barrier Removal Project. This project will provide a significant increase in available high quality steelhead habitat within the Santa Monica Mountains.

We strongly urge you to provide funding for this important project.

Sincerely,



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Chief of Planning, Science  
and Resource Management

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