



RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
OF THE
SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS

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26 August 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 Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM) 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.

This project has been outlined by many agencies as a priority. California Trout's 2006 *Santa Monica Steelhead Habitat Assessment Report* assessed 23 watersheds within the Santa Monica Mountains for habitat value and existing in-stream migration barriers. Arroyo Sequit was identified as a high priority for restoration. The National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Game have also identified removal of steelhead barriers in the Arroyo Sequit watershed as a high priority. Both California State Parks and the National Park Service have identified this project as a priority in their General Plan documents.

RCDSMM is one of the few permit holders allowed to conduct research and monitoring on the endangered southern steelhead trout in the Santa Monica Bay. Our biologists have been conducting studies within the Santa Monica Bay since 2001, and we currently deploy the only in-stream antenna array to monitor migration of steelhead trout in southern California. Our 2005 publication, *Historic*



Distribution of Southern Steelhead Trout in the Santa Monica Bay Region identified Arroyo Sequit as one of only three Santa Monica Bay streams in which steelhead have been documented since 2000, and we support the removal of barriers as a critical step to maximizing fish passage in this ephemeral stream. Our barrier (earth and concrete berm) removal project with California State Parks at Topanga Creek produced a marked reduction in interrupted stream conditions, and surveys conducted the following season showed a significant increase in fish numbers and upstream distribution. We would expect similar results from the proposed Arroyo Sequit project.

The RCDSMM strongly supports this plan to remove the identified steelhead barriers and strongly urges you approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Stevens'.

Clark Stevens
Executive Officer