

Brooks, Barbara@Waterboards

From: Adrienne Harris <aharris@mbnep.org>
Sent: Monday, July 16, 2012 2:07 PM
To: WB-RB3-centralcoast
Cc: Packard, Harvey@Waterboards
Subject: Comments on Draft Staff Report Regarding SEPs
Attachments: MBNEP Comments on SEP Staff Report final July 2012.docx

Attached are the Estuary Program's comments on the draft staff report on SEPs. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Regards,
Adrienne Harris



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Working to protect and restore the Morro Bay Estuary for people and wildlife.

MEMO TO: Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
DATE: July 15, 2012
FROM: Morro Bay National Estuary Program
SUBJECT: **Comments on Draft Staff Report Regarding Supplemental Environmental Projects**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft staff report on Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEPs). Throughout the years, SEP funds have provided the catalyst to achieve important environmental improvements throughout the region. SEP funding has helped entities implement projects that are in line with the Water Board's highest priorities. The Estuary Program has been fortunate to receive a number of SEPs throughout the years, enabling us to implement projects to address TMDLs in the Morro Bay watershed, encourage proper land management, and improve aquatic habitats.

One highlight of the Estuary Program's SEP-funded efforts is the approximately 60,000 feet of creek fenced to exclude cattle, helping to reduce bacteria loading in the Chorro Creek sub-watershed and improve riparian habitat. For example, at one project where 10,000 feet of creek were fenced to exclude cattle, summer bacteria concentrations were between 54 to 91% lower than pre-project summer concentrations. On another site, bacteria measured at a site downstream of the project area had mean concentrations that were 69 to 91% lower than at the site upstream of the project area. The Estuary Program's Riparian Fencing Program has been implementing projects since 2006. New projects and interested landowners exist in Los Osos Valley, and it is only with funding that these efforts can move forward.

The LID and CCAMP initiatives are important programs in our region and are deserving of continued funding. And yet, there are also other established, long-term programs in the Central Coast that are conducting work that is in line with the Water Board's highest priorities, programs that could use SEP funds to promote healthy aquatic habitats and encourage proper land management. SEP funds can help programs, such as the Estuary Program and the local Resource Conservation Districts, reduce nutrient run-off, sedimentation, and bacterial contamination in critical areas. These organizations have a strong track record of managing Water Board grant funds and SEPs, and they directly contribute to TMDL implementation. While we can appreciate the staff burden associated with SEP oversight, we ask the Board to consider expanding its list of potential SEP recipients to include additional established, long-term programs. A number of established programs have a strong track record and could utilize SEP funds to implement much needed projects, furthering Water Board priorities while decreasing burden to Water Board staff.



Regrowth of Riparian Area after fencing on San Luisito Creek from 2008-2012.