

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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February 9, 2010

Board of Supervisors
County of Marin
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

Dear Board Members:

SUBJECT: Presentation of the completed San Geronimo Valley Salmon Enhancement Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Accept as complete the San Geronimo Valley Salmon Enhancement Plan (SEP)
- 2) Direct staff to develop an implementation plan that includes a staffing request, budget and timeline for your consideration during the FY 2010-11 budget process

SUMMARY: On February 12, 2008 your Board directed staff to develop a salmon enhancement plan for the San Geronimo Valley watershed. The plan is a product of settlement negotiations between your Board and the Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN) to avoid litigation associated with the County's adoption of the 2007 Marin Countywide (General) Plan and the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). At the February 12, 2008 meeting, your Board agreed to enter into a tolling agreement with SPAWN and to approve an interim ordinance to enact a moratorium on building permits which was extended for a total period of two years. At your June 17, 2008 meeting, your Board executed an agreement with the firm of Stillwater Sciences, with Prunuske Chatham Inc. as a sub-contractor, to prepare the San Geronimo Valley Salmon Enhancement Plan (SEP). This staff report summarizes the development of the Plan and what steps the County will take to evaluate implementation. The building permit moratorium ends on February 11, 2010.

BACKGROUND: The San Geronimo Valley Salmon Enhancement Plan presents science-based recommendations to improve and maintain habitat conditions to support viable populations of salmon and steelhead trout in this watershed. The Lagunitas Watershed, which includes the San Geronimo Valley, supports the largest and most stable population of the endangered coho salmon south of Fort Bragg and presents one of the best opportunities to preserve and restore coho in central California. In addition to coho salmon, the San Geronimo Valley also supports threatened steelhead trout and a fall run of Chinook salmon. The plan and all its supporting documents are available at www.marinwatersheds.org.

A Salmon Advisory Committee was formed and was comprised of Supervisor Kinsey, two landowners, federal and state resource agency staff, SPAWN's executive director and an ocean scientist. This committee guided the development of the plan and met ten times over the last two years including four public meetings.

The first phase of this project included the preparation of an Existing Conditions Report (ECR) in January 2009 that compiled and synthesized all available studies and summarized the science supporting salmon habitat restoration. This phase of work also included work to fill key data gaps. Field surveys at 26 locations (12 sites within the mainstem and 14 in the major tributaries) were conducted during the summer of 2008 to evaluate channel and floodplain conditions for future restoration and enhancement planning. Additionally, surveys of stream side vegetation were conducted at 17 sites to assess the composition, percent cover and potential recruitment of large woody debris. Surveys were also conducted to assess the area around tributaries confluent to San Geronimo Creek for their potential to provide refugia for salmonids during winter flows. The survey summaries are included as appendices to the ECR. This Existing Conditions Report provides the scientific foundation for the recommendations presented in the Salmon Enhancement Plan.

The first draft of the Salmon Plan was released on July 22, 2009. The community requested additional time to review the Plan and the deadline was extended to October 23 and a community meeting was held on October 15, 2009 to solicit further public input. Based on input received at this meeting and over 100 comment letters, phone calls and emails submitted from the community, local organizations and the resource agencies, staff worked with the consultants to clarify language and to revise the organization of the plan and the plan itself. A second draft of the Plan was released on December 23, 2009. A second community meeting was held on January 21, 2010.

Some significant changes to the Plan include preparation of an executive summary, reorganizing the document to clarify the intent and science behind the recommendations, and emphasizing that voluntary actions and partnerships are needed in order to rapidly enhance watershed conditions. This Plan, as a planning feasibility study, is exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The 17 recommendations presented in the Plan are consistent with state and federal guidelines for coho recovery. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) fisheries service, the federal agency that coordinates salmon recovery, is set to release their coho recovery plan in February. The Plan's consultants met with NOAA fisheries biologists on several occasions to develop a conceptual approach for estimating life stage population and habitat area requirements for coho in San Geronimo Valley. This process is summarized in Chapter 4 of the SEP.

In following up to the Plan, the Community Development Agency is drafting revisions to the County's Development Code to protect riparian vegetation. The schedule and content for the tree ordinance revisions will be discussed at the first community meeting currently planned for March 6. Public hearings to review the proposed revisions are planned for this summer.

The Plan's recommendations are designed to improve salmon habitat by encouraging landowners to implement measures that would support the following goals:

- Increase width and diversity of creek side forests
- Increase number of pools and provide flow refuge during storms
- Improve water quality and maintain sufficient water quantity through the watershed.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: The Salmon Advisory Committee provided input and guided the development of the Plan. The final meeting of this Salmon Advisory Committee was held on February 3, 2010. Appendix A lists the members of the Salmon Advisory and Technical Advisory Committees.

Staff managed multiple tasks at various levels to complete the Salmon Enhancement Plan. These tasks included the following:

- Coordinating the Salmon Advisory Committee meetings
- Press releases and meeting announcements including updates to the marinwatersheds web site
- Production and distribution of the "Fish-Friendly Guide"
- Coordinating landowner access for the surveys conducted by the consultants for the Existing Conditions Report in 2008 and for the additional Steam Conservation Area (SCA) surveys requested by the Salmon Advisory Committee. The SCA surveys were conducted by Public Works staff with some initial assistance from MMWD. Staff completed the analyses and summary contained in Appendix G.
- Produced maps and graphics for the Plan and public meetings
- Printed 300 copies of Plan drafts and copies of the complete version presented at the Board today
- Provided technical review and formatting of the final Draft Plan
- Coordinated logistics for community meetings.

The contact and communication with landowners and other interested parties was constant and critical to the process and was significantly augmented from September through February. A total of \$180,000 in staff time was charged to production of this plan. The additional work created an unbudgeted shortfall of \$130,000 in staff time.

The County received a \$100,000 grant from the California Coastal Conservancy to support the development of the Salmon Enhancement Plan. The Existing Conditions Report and the Plan itself cost \$300,000 to prepare.

NEXT STEPS: The San Geronimo Creek watershed is similar to many Marin watersheds in that 90% of the creeks inhabited by salmon are privately owned. Acknowledging that the continued stewardship of Valley streams and watershed lands by residents is paramount to improving salmon habitat, the Plan encourages the development of a comprehensive outreach and education program to augment ongoing work and to support new efforts to restore salmon habitat. With your Board's acceptance of this completed Plan, staff will develop an implementation plan, environmental

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compliance documents and a budget request and timeline for your consideration during the FY 2010-11 budget process.

FISCAL IMPACT: The recommended action by your Board has no fiscal impact. The potential fiscal impact of any future implementation plan would be determined as part of your Board's future approval of such a plan.

REVIEWED BY:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Department of Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	County Counsel	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Lewis
Principal Planner

Attachments

San Geronimo Valley Salmon Enhancement Plan – Final

