



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 2/6/2024

To: Board of Directors, Sonoma County Water Agency
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Water Agency
Staff Name and Phone Number: Greg Guensch 707-547-1972/Dave Cook 707-547-1944
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisory District(s): First and Third

Title:

Santa Rosa Creek Fish Passage Improvement Project

Recommended Action:

Adopt a resolution determining that the Santa Rosa Creek Fish Passage Improvements Project will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment, adopting the California Environmental Quality Act Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Project, adopting mitigation measures and the mitigation monitoring reporting program, making certain related findings, and approving the Project. (First and Third Districts)

Executive Summary:

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) is proposing the Santa Rosa Creek Fish Passage Improvements Project (Project). The Project site is located on Santa Rosa Creek at two locations in the City of Santa Rosa. The E Street Bridge Fishway Extension site is located at the intersection of E Street between Sonoma Avenue and Second Street within a developed commercial and residential area and the Melita Road Dam site is adjacent to Montgomery Drive at Melita Road. The purpose of the Project is to improve fish passage, primarily for steelhead, over a broader range of flows at the E Street Bridge Fishway Extension and Melita Road Dam sites, address ongoing erosion to the right bank at the E Street Bridge Fishway Extension site, and improve access for and reduce the frequency and extent of channel maintenance needs to maintain fish passage through the E Street Bridge Fishway Extension site.

An Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact (Initial Study) was prepared to evaluate and disclose the potential environmental impacts of the Project, which determined that all potential impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated. Approval of this item would adopt a resolution determining that the Project will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment, adopt the Initial Study and the mitigation monitoring reporting program for the Project, make certain related findings, and approve the Project.

Discussion:

HISTORY OF ITEM/BACKGROUND

In the late 1950s, Sonoma Water (at that time known as the Sonoma County Flood Control and Water Conservation District) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (at that time known as the USDA Soil Conservation Service) developed the Central Sonoma Watershed Work Plan to combat recurring flood damage in Sonoma County. Among other elements

of the Central Sonoma Watershed Work Plan, the Central Sonoma Watershed Project focused on mitigating flooding in the Santa Rosa Creek watershed through an integrated network of channels, detention reservoirs, and diversion structures (flood control facilities) that were completed between 1962 and 1988. While focusing on critical flood protection, fish passage elements were also included throughout the flood control facility network to allow for fish movement.

Sonoma Water maintains fish passage structures at the Central Sonoma Watershed Project flood control facilities through its Stream Maintenance Program, including, but not limited to, its sediment removal and vegetation management activities. Over time, debris and sediment occasionally collect within portions of Santa Rosa Creek and impede fish movement in some locations, including at the E Street Bridge Fishway Extension. The E Street Bridge Fishway is a long, underground fish passage structure alongside a large double culvert that runs beneath downtown Santa Rosa. The E Street Bridge Fishway Extension is a 29-foot-long concrete structure that extends upstream of the adjacent E Street Bridge Fishway into Santa Rosa Creek. The Fishway Extension also includes grouted rock weirs at the double culvert entrance that direct creek base flows into the fishway.

The City of Santa Rosa constructed structures to divert water from Santa Rosa Creek at the Melita Road Dam. The existing Melita Road Dam is an abandoned concrete diversion dam foundation that was constructed in 1948 by the City of Santa Rosa, located approximately 300 feet upstream of Sonoma Water's Santa Rosa Creek Diversion Structure. The approximately two-foot-high Melita Road Dam structure is owned by the City of Santa Rosa, and the land underlying it is partly owned by Sonoma Water and partly by an adjacent private interest. The City of Santa Rosa possesses an easement over the dam with Sonoma Water. Also, Sonoma Water has issued a revocable license to Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) for a gas line located on the downstream side of the dam, on Sonoma Water-owned land. The Melita Road Dam is a barrier to salmonid passage at low flows due to its height and the lack of sufficient depth in the jump pool downstream.

In 2020, Sonoma Water received a \$274,000 grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board's Wildlife Corridor and Fish Passage Program with supporting funds of \$193,504 from Sonoma Water to develop a plan to address fish passage issues along Santa Rosa Creek. Grant tasks included project design, environmental review and permit applications, and grant administration.

In 2021, Sonoma Water executed a \$403,374 agreement with FlowWest LLC to identify conceptual solutions at each site, conduct field studies and engineering analyses, and prepare engineering documents (plans, specifications, cost estimates, design reports), California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents, and environmental permit applications.

In FY 2023/2024, a \$103,400 budget will cover remaining Sonoma Water staff and consultant expenses for finalizing design and CEQA documents, preparing permit applications, submitting final grant deliverables, and closing out the grant.

Santa Rosa Creek Fish Passage Improvements Project

The Proposed Project is located on two sites on Santa Rosa Creek within the City of Santa Rosa and on lands owned by Sonoma Water. The E Street Bridge Fishway Extension site is located at the intersection of E Street between Sonoma Avenue and Second Street within a developed commercial and residential area and the Melita Road Dam site is adjacent to Montgomery Drive at Melita Road. The purpose of the Project is to

improve fish passage, primarily for steelhead, over a broader range of flows at the E Street Bridge Fishway Extension and Melita Road Dam sites.

The E Street Bridge Fishway Extension infrastructure is currently not functioning as designed because of settlement at the upstream end, several design and structural issues, and creek bank erosion. The Project would include replacing and structurally improving the fishway extension, removing the existing trash rack and installing a system of improved trash racks to reduce debris accumulation, installing grouted rock upstream of the fishway extension to support the existing grouted rock weirs and fishway extension infrastructure, and protecting the right bank with riprap to address erosion. Additionally, a permanent gravel access road would be installed on the left bank to allow regular maintenance within the E Street Bridge Fishway Extension, including the removal of debris, sediment deposits, and other barriers to fish passage in a timely manner.

Impaired fish passage at the Melita Road Dam site occurs due to excessive jump distance over the concrete foundation and inadequate pool depth at the base of the dam at lower flows. To remedy this issue, a series of non-grouted rock weir step pools would be installed below the dam site to facilitate fish passage. Also, a temporary access along the left bank would be constructed for use during construction.

Project implementation (construction) funding will likely come from grant sources, similar to the planning for this project. These expenditures are estimated to be \$1.6 million for the E Street Fish Ladder Extension Site and \$1.5 million for the Melita Dam site. Sonoma Water is exploring funding opportunities. At this time, the project would only be constructed if grant funding is obtained.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT DOCUMENTATION

Sonoma Water, as a lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), prepared an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact (Initial Study) for the Project pursuant to the requirements of the CEQA (California Public Resources Code sections 21000 et seq.), the State CEQA Guidelines (Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3), and Sonoma Water's Compliance Procedures for CEQA. The Initial Study discloses potential environmental impacts of implementing the Project; identifies the means to avoid or reduce potential significant adverse impacts on the environment; and concludes the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Project would not have a significant adverse effect on the environment. The Project's mitigation measures will minimize the potential for the Project to adversely affect biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, noise, transportation, tribal cultural resources, utilities and service systems, and wildfire.

The Notice of Completion and Notice of Availability and Notice of Intent to Adopt the Initial Study were filed with the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research's State Clearinghouse and Sonoma County Clerk's Office on June 28, 2023. The Initial Study was available for a 30-day public review period that began on June 29, 2023, and ended on July 28, 2023. The Notice of Availability for the Initial Study for public review was distributed to the responsible and trustee agencies and sent to stakeholders, interested persons, and property owners adjacent to the Project area on June 28, 2023. Copies of the Initial Study and Notice of Availability were also made available at Sonoma Water's administrative office and an electronic version of the document was made available on Sonoma Water's website. A legal notice was also published in the Press Democrat on July 2, 2023.

During the review period, Sonoma Water received a single comment letter from the California Department of

Fish and Wildlife. The comment letter and Sonoma Water’s response is provided in Attachment 2. In addition, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria provided comments during the tribal consultation process. Staff have incorporated two revised mitigation measures and substitution of a tribal cultural resources measure into the Initial Study based on the comments received. These measures are equivalent or more effective in mitigating significant effects on the environment to a less than significant level, do not cause any potentially significant effect on the environment, and do not require recirculation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080(f) and CEQA Guidelines section 15074.1.

Sonoma Water staff recommends that the Board adopt a resolution determining that the Project will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment, adopting the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Project, adopting mitigation measures and the mitigation monitoring reporting program, making certain related findings, and approving the Project.

County of Sonoma Strategic Plan Alignment

This item directly supports the County’s Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Resilient Infrastructure

Goal: Goal 5: Support, fund, and expand flood protection.

Objective: Objective 1: Develop partnerships with cities, tribal governments, and private organizations regarding flood protection and sustainability to identify gaps and address climate change impacts.

Sonoma Water Strategic Plan Alignment

Flood Protection, Goal Provide efficient and effective flood protection programs.

Goal: Environmental Stewardship

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

04/28/2020 Authorized Sonoma Water’s General Manager to execute a grant agreement with the California Wildlife Conservation Board; total project cost of \$560,000, with grant funds of \$274,000 and Flood Control Zone 1A funds of \$286,000.

06/08/2021: Authorized Sonoma Water’s General Manager to execute an agreement with FlowWest LLC for engineering and design of structures, environmental and regulatory compliance, and related services through May 31, 2024, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$403,374.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$103,400		
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$103,400		
Funding Sources			

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General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal	\$18,119		
Fees/Other	\$85,281		
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$103,400		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Budgeted amount of \$103,400 and offsetting revenue of \$18,119 from the California Wildlife Conservation Board is available from FY 2023/2024 appropriations for the Flood Control Zone 1A Fund. Appropriations will cover remaining expenses for finalizing design and CEQA documents, preparing permit applications, submitting final grant deliverables, and closing out the grant. No additional appropriation is required.

Construction budget appropriations will be budgeted in the fiscal year in which construction is anticipated, which is yet to be determined. Sonoma Water will be working with project partners on seeking grant funding, and planning and scheduling project implementation. Project implementation expenditures are estimated to be \$1.6 million for the E Street Fish Ladder Extension Site and \$1.5 million for the Melita Dam site. At this time, the project would only be constructed if grant funding is obtained.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Resolution with Exhibit A, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
Attachment 2: Comment Letter and Response to Comments
Attachment 3: Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration
PowerPoint Presentation

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None.