

Sheila de la Guerra

Public Comment

A-42

**From:** Emily Engel <emilyaengel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 14, 2025 4:54 PM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** Item -42 revised comment  
**Attachments:** County Flood Control Sign-On Letter Sierra Club Final\_2025\_07\_14.pdf



**Caution:** This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Clerk, please accept our updated letter. Thank you, Emily



July 14, 2025

Laura Capps, Chair and Board of Directors  
 Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District  
 105 E. Anapamu Street  
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
 Email: [sbcob@countyofsb.org](mailto:sbcob@countyofsb.org)

Re: Flood Control Annual Routine Maintenance Program and Capital Projects

Dear Chair Capps and Supervisors,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed Santa Barbara County Flood Control District Annual Routine Maintenance Program. The undersigned members of the Watershed Alliance of South Coast Organizations and partners strongly support the County's goals to reduce flood hazards and protect and restore creeks in our region. The protection and enhancement of riparian habitats and wildlife corridors and preservation of local scenic beauty is essential to achieving our collective environmental and community goals. We urge the Board to direct staff to prioritize watershed protection, stewardship, and restoration in future flood control projects through collaboration, nature-based solutions, and habitat restoration.

We support County Flood Control District efforts to protect and improve local streams and waterways in the coming year. County Flood Control District maintenance is essential to the long-term protection and improvement of our community. At the same time, the maintenance program and flood control projects can cause significant long-term damage to sensitive local environmental resources. We encourage county staff and officials to continue to expand restoration-oriented creek projects such as bio-technical bank stabilization projects and to limit environmentally-damaging projects, such as hardening creek banks in order to minimize adverse environmental effects while providing necessary levels of flood mitigation.

Furthermore, we respectfully encourage county staff and officials to identify alternatives and mitigation measures when conducting maintenance and planning for future work, including expanding revegetation with native plants. By identifying less damaging ways to undertake the work to achieve the County's goals, staff can implement strong mitigation measures to lessen negative impacts on local ecosystems, from using planted vegetation to control bank erosion instead of installing rock rip rap which occludes native vegetation to replacing damaged and obsolete pipe and wire revetment fencing with native vegetation to stabilize creeks, as proposed in San Jose Creek. Mitigation efforts can be seamlessly integrated into annual maintenance such as increased removal of non-native invasive plants, planting native vegetation in more locations to restore creeks, and avoiding areas with rare species whenever possible. Adequate, managed ongoing maintenance of plantings in required revegetation will improve the success of Flood Control District revegetation projects. This work will augment future success of flood control maintenance in sensitive creek habitats through proper maintenance and avoid long-term degradation of creek habitats.

We are committed to working informally with Flood Control staff to modify the annual maintenance program and future projects to include alternative approaches, modified projects, and better mitigation.

We request that the Board provide guidance to staff to approach future flood control maintenance and capital projects with increased environmental protection, including:

1. Establishment of a collaborative environmental-flood control working group consisting of staff and nonprofits working on stream and watershed protection and restoration to guide future maintenance plans and flood control projects;
2. Reduced use of stream bank hardening such as rip rap and concrete;
3. Increased removal of invasive nonnative species, including flammable nonnative plants; and
4. Increased planting of native plants to stabilize creek banks and increase riparian habitat.

Sincerely,

Maureen Ellenberger, Chair  
Sierra Club Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter

Linda Krop, Chief Counsel  
Environmental Defense Center

Santa Barbara County Flood Control District Board of Directors: Flood Control Maintenance and Projects  
July 14, 2025

Eric Cardenas, Director of Impact and Advocacy  
Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

Hutch Axilrod, President  
Mission Canyon Association

Ted Morton, Executive Director  
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

Karina Johnston, Executive Director  
Heal the Ocean

Emily Engel, Group Chair  
Sierra Club Santa Barbara Group

Luke Svetland, President and CEO  
Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Dr. Katherine Emery  
Santa Barbara Audubon

Marell Brooks, President  
Citizens Planning Association

Ken Owen, Executive Director  
Channel Islands Restoration

Elizabeth Burns, Project Coordinator  
Southern Steelhead Coalition

Luke Svetland, President and CEO  
Santa Barbara Sea Center

Dr. Mark Rockwell, Conservation Chair  
Santa Barbara Flyfishers

Nancy Black, President  
CLAWS

Janet Cobb, Executive Officer  
California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks

Anne Burdette, President  
Santa Barbara Urban Creeks Collective

Santa Barbara County Flood Control District Board of Directors: Flood Control Maintenance and Projects  
July 14, 2025

Marianne Parra, Communications Director  
hi ho' stoqošlóq' hi xus – Chumash Bear Circle

David Lebell, President  
Friends of Mission Canyon

Jeff Kuyper, Executive Director  
Los Padres Forest Watch

cc: Andrew Raaf, Environmental Manager, County Flood Control District