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Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society



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April 5, 2010

SB County Board of Supervisors
Attention: Clerk of the Board
sbcob@co.santa-barbara.ca.us

LATE
DIST

**RE: Agenda Items #4 & #6 CREF Allocations
and Work plan, funding**

Dear Supervisors:

Santa Barbara Audubon is an advocate for open space, natural resource protection, and has been a strong supporter of the GavPAC process. We have also supported CREF allocations to community groups when proposed coastal resource protection or public access projects provide public benefit leveraged by volunteer efforts and supplemental funds. Our organization has in fact received CREF funds in the past for habitat enhancement projects in the Goleta Slough.

We understand that the county has major financial problems, and is seeking to continue some of the coastal long range planning efforts with CREF funding. If it is necessary, we would support a *one year* commitment of CREF funds to only county-sponsored projects. In general, the county benefits when non-profits manage projects that benefit the county and its residents, leveraging available CREF funds. Funding is limited for local non-profits as well as the county, and they provide benefit to county residents.

Three projects are proposed by the County Long Range Planning Department for funding by CREF: 1) Gaviota Coast Plan, 2) Summerland Plan Update, and 3) Santa Claus Lane. We support funding for the GavPAC, but question the request for 4 years of funding from CREF. Allocations from CREF were yearly until 2007, and your Energy staff has suggested a return to one-year increments in the fiscally uncertain times. Perhaps 2 years at most, with the option for returning for additional funding, is recommended. While Summerland is a coastal town, it is unclear if completion of the Plan Update would significantly increase open space protection or coastal public access. Other funding (such as the interest income mentioned in the staff report) may be more appropriate. The Santa Claus Lane master plan would move forward the County Parks effort to provide a public beach and safe railroad crossing to the beach, which seems in alignment with the CREF guidelines.

Coastal acquisitions and conservation easements, especially on the Gaviota Coast, are critical to the long-term protections of the Gaviota Coast. Audubon encourages the Board to maintain 50% or 65% of the CREF monies for acquisition, and available to all land partners such as the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County and the Trust for Public Lands. The table in the staff report demonstrates how these funds in the past have leveraged other funds for significant land acquisitions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these issues.

Sincerely,

Darlene Chirman
Darlene Chirman, President