

# **Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.**

*A Chapter of the National Audubon Society*



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April 13, 2015

Kathy McNeal Pfeifer, Planner  
Planning and Development Department  
Energy and Minerals Division  
123 E. Anapamu Street, First Floor  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

## **Re: Support for The Trust for Public Land's Application for CREF Funds for the Arroyo Burro Creek Property Acquisition**

Dear Ms. Pfeifer:

Santa Barbara Audubon Society (SBAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society with approximately 1100 members in Santa Barbara County. Our mission is to help conserve and restore the natural ecosystems and biological diversity of the Santa Barbara area, and to connect people with birds and nature through education, science-based projects, and advocacy.

This letter is to reiterate our support for the acquisition of the Arroyo Burro Creek property (aka Veronica Meadows) by The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Coastal Resource Enhancement Fund (CREF) grant application they are submitting to achieve this goal.

Located less than one-half mile from the Santa Barbara Channel, the 15 acre Arroyo Burro Creek property is the last undeveloped and unprotected property within the Las Positas Valley. Its preservation would ensure the protection of rare coastal meadowland, unique perennial riparian and creek habitat, and woodland habitat that provides nesting and roosting sites for a variety of raptors, other birds, and bats. The creek is home to numerous fish and wildlife species, including the federally endangered tidewater goby. Dense riparian vegetation, numerous coast live oak trees and hills adorned with coastal sage scrub make this property biologically-rich and central to the health of the Arroyo Burro Watershed.

Preservation and restoration of this property will also allow for expanded public access to 320 acres of coastal parks and protected open space within an otherwise developed landscape including Elings Park, Arroyo Burro Beach County Park/Hendry's Beach, and the Douglas Family Preserve.

The property has historical value as well. For many years, the Veronica Springs Medicinal Water Company bottled mineral water from springs on the property, transporting it by horse-drawn cart. More recently, the property has been at the center of a local debate regarding its potential development. A proposed development project would have resulted in the permanent loss of

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several acres of native habitats and coast live oaks, and the disturbance and potential displacement of wildlife from the creek corridor. In 2012, Santa Barbara voters rejected the landowner's attempts to build a vehicular bridge over Arroyo Burro Creek from Las Positas Road, which would have also impacted city-owned parkland. We are thrilled that the development has been thwarted and that the property has the potential to be preserved in perpetuity.

The Santa Barbara Audubon Society strongly supports TPL's application for this CREF grant.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen J. Ferry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen J. Ferry  
Co-President  
Santa Barbara Audubon Society