

# SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Agenda Number:**  
**Prepared on:** 08/15/04  
**Department Name:** Public Works  
**Department No.:** 054-04  
**Agenda Date:** 10/05/04  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimate Time:**  
**Continued Item:** NO  
**If Yes, date from:**

---

**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
County of Santa Barbara

**FROM:** Phillip M. Demery, Public Works Director

**STAFF CONTACT:** Thomas Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, (Ext. 3436)  
Darcy Aston, PW Program Specialist, (Ext. 3546)

**SUBJECT:** Accept Fisheries Restoration Grant funds from the California Department of Fish & Game for Development of a Rincon Creek Watershed Plan, First District

---

## Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Directors:

- A. Accept the Fisheries Restoration grant funds from the California Department of Fish & Game (DFG) for \$114,602 to develop a coordinated watershed plan for the Rincon Creek watershed on the south coast of Santa Barbara County; and
- B. Authorize the Public Works Director or his designee to execute the DFG Grant Award No. P0350017 and all subsequent agreements or amendments to receive grant funds.

## Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendations align with Goal No. 5: Maintain and Enhance the Quality of Life for all Residents

## Executive Summary and Discussion:

A grant of \$114,602 has been offered to Santa Barbara County to develop a watershed plan with Ventura County, local landowners and other interested parties in the Rincon Creek watershed. Costs associated with the County staff participation and to support for stakeholder participation are provided in separate grants to the County and Community Environmental Council respectively. Preliminary discussions with landowners and resource agencies, including the Ventura County Resource Conservation District and Cachuma Resources Conservation District, indicate interest in development of the plan. Stakeholders will determine the scope and focus of the plan. The County's role would be to facilitate the process and provide technical and report preparation support through this grant.

The concept of watershed planning is not new; Santa Barbara County staff have participated or are participating in development of plans in several watersheds including San Antonio Creek, San Jose Creek, Carpinteria Creek and Arroyo Burro Creek. Each of these efforts has focused on issues of interest to watershed landowners and has used a different overall process. Preliminary discussions with landowners in Rincon Creek watershed indicates interest in three broad issue areas: bank stabilization/protection of land values, habitat for endangered Southern California steelhead trout, and creek and ocean water quality. Many

government agencies, landowners and community members view watershed planning as a flexible, efficient and holistic way to address these kinds of watershed issues.

Rincon Creek has several features which make it a good candidate for a model watershed planning effort. As with many watersheds, it spans more than one governmental jurisdiction, straddling the border of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. At its mouth, the Rincon Creek watershed gives its name to a popular and world-renowned surf spot. Over half of the watershed area is in public ownership, while the privately owned areas are a mixture of agricultural and residential land uses. Most importantly, Rincon Creek historically contained healthy runs of steelhead trout. Among the south coast creeks in Santa Barbara County, Rincon has been ranked sixth for habitat and seventh for steelhead recovery priority (Stoecker et al, 2002).

### Potential Focus of Plan

Three primary issues in the Rincon Creek watershed have been identified in preliminary discussions with stakeholders: bank stabilization/protection of land values, habitat for endangered Southern California steelhead trout, and creek and ocean water quality. The geology and hydrology of the watershed, in combination with agricultural and other types of land use, have created a significant sediment load in the creek and the need for bank stabilization. Certain areas of the watershed have landslide problems which contribute to sedimentation as well. The actual scope and focus of the plan will depend on the interests and concerns of the stakeholders.

Although significant spawning and rearing habitat exist in the Rincon Creek watershed, barriers to migration and in-stream sediment are both identified as primary environmental factors hampering recovery of the steelhead population in this watershed (Stoecker et al., 2002). A culvert running under Highway 101 creates an impassable barrier, preventing steelhead from accessing several miles of high to extremely high quality habitat. The potential cost of mitigating the culvert/barrier is very high; development of a watershed plan will place this project in context and allow a more reasonable and accurate assessment of the benefit and costs.

Finally, water quality has been and continues to be an issue in Rincon Creek for human health reasons. Rincon Creek appears on the Clean Water Act 303(d) list for impaired water bodies due to high fecal and total coliform bacteria counts at Rincon Point. Although significant progress has been made addressing some of the most obvious sources, a watershed restoration plan will provide a forum for evaluating the severity of remaining issues, and identifying and prioritizing solutions.

### Potential Process for Development of the Plan

Each watershed planning effort to date has focused on issues of interest to watershed landowners and has used a different overall process. Stakeholders will determine the scope and focus of the Rincon Creek Watershed Plan. In general, the County's role would be to facilitate the process and provide technical and report preparation support through this grant. To insure that the watershed restoration planning process is landowner-based and stakeholder-driven, DFG has also awarded a Fisheries Restoration Grant to the Community Environmental Council (CEC) to develop a Rincon Creek Watershed Council. Involving the landowners and other interested community members creates the crucial link between enhancing and protecting the biological integrity of the watershed with the social needs, such as preserving land uses and protecting private property rights. Without landowner and community support, any watershed plan developed would meet opposition that could severely delay or derail proposed projects. The planning process also creates an important opportunity to educate the community about erosion control, steelhead and water

quality issues, and the value of watershed planning. In addition, Ventura County Watershed Protection District staff will develop a portion of the plan through involvement in the stakeholder group, data sharing, and development of the watershed plan. The relationship between Santa Barbara and Ventura County in this process will be formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding.

### Potential Outcomes

Based on preliminary discussions, individual landowners, a large homeowners group, agricultural interests, and community organizations have all expressed interest in the development of a watershed restoration plan for Rincon Creek. Because of the wide variety of interests and environmental factors represented in the Rincon Creek watershed, it provides an important opportunity to develop a model watershed plan that could be replicated in other south coast watersheds. The watershed plan would identify and address the above issue and potentially others, and provide a blueprint for implementing solutions. Specifically, the document could then be used by government agencies, community-based organizations, and others to identify and prioritize projects, develop more detailed property specific plans and to seek funding. For example, it could provide a basis for the development of NRCS/RCD management plans that would have broad benefits to land owners and natural resources in the watershed.

Currently, Project Clean Water staff is working on several watershed projects. These projects include development of a hydrogeomorphic assessment model for South Coast creeks and demonstration restoration projects (funded through an EPA grant), a pilot watershed plan for San Jose Creek watershed, the Southern California Wetlands Recovery project Task Force, and support for various local watershed groups. There has been significant Board and community support for these projects. The proposed grant is a natural continuation of these efforts.

### **Mandates and Service Levels:**

The DFG Fisheries Restoration Grant will be used to cover the consultant costs for development of the baseline data assessment and watershed plan. County staff time will be required to implement this project; these costs will be covered the Watershed Coordinator Grant received by the County from the California Department of Conservation in May 2004.

### **Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

The proposed budget for the project is shown below. Matching funds are provided in staff time, as described above. Staff anticipates that the Rincon Creek Watershed Plan can be developed with no net County cost. Staff will process a budget revision to receive these funds since this grant was not included in the 2004-05 budget.

### **Special Instructions:**

Direct the Clerk of the Board to send a copy of the minute order of these actions to the Water Agency office; attn: Christina Lopez.

**ESTIMATED BUDGET  
RINCON CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION PLAN**

				Amount Requested	Amount of Cost Share	Project Total
<b>A. PERSONNEL COSTS</b>						
	<b>Level of Staff</b>	Number of Hours	Hourly Rate			
Program Specialist, Senior (Project Leader)		336	\$70.00	0	\$23,520	\$23,520
Engineering Tech (GIS)		80	\$62.00		\$4,960	\$4,960
Water Agency Manager		80	\$90.00		\$7,200	\$7,200
Hydrologist		40	\$70.00		\$2,800	\$2,800
Staff benefits @ 16.53%					\$6,360	\$6,360
<b>TOTAL Personnel Costs</b>						<b>\$44,840</b>
<b>B. OPERATING EXPENSES</b>						
Meeting Expenses				\$1,000		\$1,000
Printing & Supplies				\$5,000		\$5,000
Transportation (1200 miles @ \$0.32/mile)				\$384		\$384
	<b>Subcontractors</b>					
Senior Professional		130	\$90.00	\$11,700		\$11,700
Staff Professional, II		50	\$70.00	\$3,500		\$3,500
Staff Professional, I		665	\$60.00	\$39,900		\$39,900
Biologist		315	\$85.00	\$26,775		\$26,775
Meeting Facilitator		55	\$55.00	\$3,025		\$3,025
GIS Subcontractor		165	\$60.00	\$9,900		\$9,900
	<b>Other Consultant costs</b>			\$3,000		\$3,000
<b>TOTAL Operating Expenses</b>						<b>\$101,184</b>
SUBTOTAL				\$104,184	\$44,840	\$149,024
Administrative Overhead @ 10%				\$10,418	\$4,484	\$14,902
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>\$114,602</b>	<b>\$49,324</b>	<b>\$163,926</b>