

Ramirez, Angelica

Public Comment

#7

From: Couch, Rachel@SCC <Rachel.Couch@scc.ca.gov>
Sent: Friday, May 13, 2022 11:54 AM
To: sbcob
Cc: Couch, Rachel@SCC
Subject: Santa Maria Levee Trail Study - May 17 2022 BoS comment letter
Attachments: Conservancy SM Levee Trail Bos Letter2.doc



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Santa Barbara County Clerk of the Board,

Please accept the attached comment letter from the CA Coastal Conservancy for the Public Works - Santa Maria Trails Study item on the May 17th Board of Supervisors meeting agenda.

Thank you,
Rachel

Rachel Couch | Project Manager
State Coastal Conservancy
Central Coast Program
(805)845-8853 office
rachel.couch@scc.ca.gov
<http://scc.ca.gov>



May 12, 2022

Santa Barbara County
Board of Supervisors
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

Re: Santa Maria Levee Trail Study

Honorable Supervisors,

The Coastal Conservancy is a state agency that works with others to protect and restore, and increase public access to, California's coast, ocean, coastal watersheds and the San Francisco Bay Area. The Conservancy is a non-regulatory agency that supports projects to protect coastal resources and increase opportunities for the public to enjoy the coast. Our vision is of a beautiful, restored, and accessible coast for current and future Californians.

We are writing today to express our strong support for County board direction to staff to continue the next phase of study for the use of the Santa Barbara Levee as a multi-use trail recreation amenity. This trail also has great potential to better serve the community as an active transportation corridor between the cities Guadalupe and Santa Maria.

The Coastal Conservancy contributed half the funding for the initial *Santa Maria Levee Trail Study* before you. The purpose of the Study is to gather the information needed to assess the potential options for public use of the levee. The Conservancy also funded the *Guadalupe to Beach Multi-use Trail Study* completed in 2021. We are encouraged to see broad community engagement and significant public support for the concept of extending the levee trail. We acknowledge the issues identified in the Study and in the public comments that will require continued attention, discussion, and resolution. As a partner and project-focused, solution-oriented agency, the Conservancy will continue to work with stakeholders, be they public agencies, private organizations, tribes, or private landowners to achieve community goals. We do this through technical assistance, funding and collaboration.

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The trail would utilize the levee, a publicly-owned facility, to serve North County communities where there is a great need for increased recreational areas. The project would be transformative especially for the City of Guadalupe, a disadvantaged community, which is completely surrounded by private intensive commercial agricultural operations. Guadalupe would greatly benefit from additional recreational facilities, specifically a non-motorized recreational corridor connecting it with Santa Maria to the east and nearby beaches to the west. The trail would dramatically improve community and economic health and safety, while providing alternative transportation options for commuting workers, as well.

Recreational use and agricultural operations are not necessarily incompatible. While the Study identified a number of existing and potential constraints as well as opportunities, we believe that additional detailed study would continue to demonstrate that the issues identified in the study can be resolved through various means, including interagency agreements, public-private partnerships, best practices and funding so that the significant community benefits of the project can be realized.

In summary, the Coastal Conservancy appreciates the County's efforts to initiate the Study, conduct a thorough stakeholder engagement and outreach process, and identify the project's potential opportunities and constraints. This is only the first step, and we encourage your board to provide direction to staff to continue to advance the project to the next level of planning and study. The Conservancy stands ready to assist and work with all parties to successfully address issues and develop a successful project that will greatly benefit and serve the communities of north County and the Central Coast region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Couch".

Rachel Couch
Project Manager
Central Coast Program