



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: Watershed Committee/Board of Directors
Title: Lagunitas Creek Enhancement Plan Update
From: Shaun Horne, Watershed Resources Manager
Through: Ben Horenstein, General Manager
Meeting Date: December 12, 2023

TYPE OF ACTION: Action X Information Review and Refer

RECOMMENDATION: Receive staff update on Lagunitas Creek Enhancement Plan progress

SUMMARY: Since 2020, the District has been developing habitat enhancement designs for Lagunitas Creek with the support of grant funding from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The Lagunitas Creek Watershed Enhancement Plan (Project) is currently at the 65% design stage, and 90% designs are anticipated by the end of December 2023. Final designs will be completed by March 2024. Phase 1 of the Project, which includes eight sites, is on track to begin implementation in summer 2024. Staff anticipates returning to the Board in early 2024 to seek authorization to move forward with a competitive bid process for qualified contractors to commence the Phase 1 work.

DISCUSSION: Over the past three years, the District and its consultant, Environmental Science Associates (ESA), have been working collaboratively with the Lagunitas Technical Advisory Committee and State and Federal agencies to develop an extensive set of habitat enhancement plans for Lagunitas Creek from Peters Dam through Samuel P. Taylor State Park. This planning effort has been funded primarily through two CDFW grants aimed at improving conditions for endangered Coho Salmon and threatened steelhead, as well as other rare and sensitive aquatic species such as California freshwater shrimp.

In total, the Project includes 13 distinct sites, encompassing approximately 4,450 linear feet of channel, where over 270 logs and approximately 12 tons of gravel will be added to create favorable habitat for salmon spawning and rearing. The Project will be split into two phases to facilitate planning, permitting, and implementation over several years. Phase 1, which includes eight sites, is nearing the final planning stages and is slated to begin implementation in summer 2024. Grant funding totaling \$6,649,898 from CDFW, US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has been secured to fully implement Phase 1.

In August 2023, the Project was granted an exemption from CEQA through the State's SERP (Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects) process. Since Project implementation will be partially funded with federal USBR grant money, District and ESA staff are coordinating with USBR to prepare the necessary documents for National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) compliance as well. The NEPA document is expected to be completed in early 2024.

District and State Parks staff have met with representatives from the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (FIGR) to discuss tribal monitoring for the Project. No cultural resources or known records were found within the Project area as part of the initial resource studies. The Project will include minimal disturbance of the existing streambed and banks, and no placement or removal of native soils. A draft monitoring plan, which includes provisions for tribal oversight during construction, has been shared with the FIGR for review. Coordination with the tribe will continue throughout the project with regular check-in meetings and onsite visits.

The Project will require State and Federal environmental permits for implementation. With input from District staff, ESA has completed applications for a Section 404 Permit (US Army Corps of Engineers), Section 401 Permit (State Water Resources Control Board), and 1600 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (CDFW). Permit applications will be submitted in December 2023 and are expected to be reviewed and issued in spring 2024, prior to construction contractor bidding. Staff has also been in discussion with the County of Marin's Department of Public Works to determine whether a County permit will be required for the Projects. Those discussions are still ongoing.

Staff anticipates coming back to the Board in early 2024 (February-March) to seek authorization to move forward with a competitive bid process for qualified construction and management contractors.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT(S): None.