



# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** March 20, 2012

**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

**FROM:** Creeks Division, Parks and Recreation Department

**SUBJECT:** Resolution To Apply For Grant Funding For Construction Of Mission Creek Fish Passage Project – Lower Caltrans Channel

### RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, A Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara authorizing the Parks and Recreation Director, or Designee, to Apply for Grant Funds of \$775,000 with the California Wildlife Conservation Board for the Mission Creek Fish Passage Project – Lower Channel.

### DISCUSSION:

Mission Creek provides the best opportunity for steelhead trout restoration in the City of Santa Barbara. Mission Creek contains high quality spawning and rearing habitat within the stream channels in the mid and upper watershed. Currently, rainbow trout (freshwater version of steelhead trout) live in the upper stream channel and historically Mission Creek supported a healthy steelhead trout population. Over the last ten years there have been frequent sightings of steelhead trout attempting to migrate upstream without success due to barriers within the stream channel.

The large concrete flood control channels along Mission Creek, known as the "CalTrans Channels", are significant barriers to upstream steelhead trout migration. Removing these barriers will help provide access for steelhead trout to 3.9 miles of creek channel, which include two miles of moderate to high quality spawning and rearing habitat. Phase I of the construction, which included fish passage modifications to the upper (.3 mile long) channel was started in August 2011 and will be completed in June 2012. Phase II will involve fish passage modifications to the lower (.8 mile long) channel. Pending available funds, Phase II will be constructed during the summer of 2013.

Because Mission Creek is a seasonal creek, the ability of fish to swim through the constructed passage will be limited to periods of time during rainfall and for short periods of time after the cessation of rainfall when there is sufficient flow in the creek. Although it may be feasible to augment water flows in the creek by making releases of

water from Gibraltar Reservoir, such action would have a significant negative impact to the City's water supplies. No requirement for Gibraltar water releases is contemplated in the construction and maintenance of this project.

Over the last six years, the Creeks Division has worked with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Santa Barbara County Flood Control District, Environmental Defense Center, and community members to remove barriers to endangered steelhead trout migration and restore riparian habitat in Mission Creek. The Creeks Division is now reaching out to new partners such as the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) in order to successfully complete the important fish passage restoration work on Mission Creek.

The Creeks Division is preparing a grant application to the WCB for Phase II construction. It is anticipated that the application will be considered at the May 2012 Board meeting. WCB requires a Resolution from the City Council as part of the grant application package.

**BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

The construction cost estimate for the fish passage modifications to the Lower Caltrans Channel is \$4,200,000. The Creeks Division will be requesting \$775,000 in grant funding through the WCB's Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Program. The remaining amount would be funded with a combination of \$1.7 million in California Department of Fish and Game grant funding, Measure B matching funds, and other private and public grant sources.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:**

The purpose of the project is to improve steelhead trout migration in Mission Creek during and shortly after rain events when adequate natural stream flows exist. These efforts will contribute to local, regional, and federal objectives of removing migration barriers for the federally endangered steelhead trout.

**PREPARED BY:** Cameron Benson, Creeks Restoration/Clean Water Manager

**SUBMITTED BY:** Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director

**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office