



Monterey County

Zoning Administrator

Agenda Item #4

Legistar File Number: ZA 16-020

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Current Status: Agenda Ready

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PLN150247 - NORTH MONTEREY COUNTY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Public hearing to consider action on a Coastal Development Permit to allow voluntary Amphibian Habitat enhancement.

Proposed CEQA Action: Mitigated Negative Declaration

13990 Castroville Boulevard, Castroville, North County Land Use Plan, Coastal Zone

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Zoning Administrator adopt a resolution to:

- a. Consider a Mitigated Negative Declaration;
- b. Approve a Coastal Development Permit to allow voluntary Amphibian Habitat Enhancement, based on the findings and evidence and subject to four (4) conditions of approval (**Exhibit B**).

PROJECT INFORMATION:

APN: 133-092-007-000

Agent: Liann Reyes, Resources Conservation District

Plan Area: North County Land Use Plan

Flagged and Staked: No

Zoning: (PQP (CZ)) Public/Quasi-Public (Coastal Zone)

SUMMARY:

The North Monterey County Amphibian Habitat Enhancement is a voluntary project that seeks to restore wetlands and uplands and enhance habitat for Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders (SCLTS) at the 25-acre piece of land adjacent to the North Monterey County High School campus. The project will improve SCLTS breeding and upland habitat through wetland enhancement, improving upland conditions, and creating a corridor of microhabitats beneficial to SCLTS. The project will also provide low-impact recreational and educational opportunities for North Monterey County High School students and the local community through the installation of trails and interpretive signage.

DISCUSSION:

Setting: The proposed project site is located on approximately 25 acres of land immediately north of the North Monterey County High School campus on Castroville Boulevard, near Castroville. The site is across the street from agricultural land in production, next to residential/medium and high-density residential housing subdivision (Moro Cojo Subdivision), and backs up to Resource Conservation Wetlands (Moro Cojo Slough).

Background: In 2002, the property north of North Monterey County High School campus was selected as the location for a new middle school. Extensive site grading occurred in winter

2005/06 until construction ceased due to incomplete permitting. This was examined as a Code Enforcement action, but previously prepared biological surveys showed no Environmentally Sensitive Habitat on-site and the investigation was closed. However, by 2007, depressions created by the grading filled with water creating ponds, which brought in SCLTS and the California Tiger Salamander (CTS) from the Moro Cojo Slough. In 2014, the School District approached the Central Coast Wetlands Group (CCWG) to determine ways in which to utilize the property for educational purposes.

Project: The project seeks to restore wetland and upland habitat for SCLTS. Habitat restoration includes the removal of excess vegetation within the ponds to help increase breeding habitat; enhancing riparian corridors to help amphibian migration; restoration of upland habitat (by regrading, removing invasive species, and replanting native plants) to provide a better breeding habitat for SCLTS; reducing erosion problems on the site; and installing trails to provide recreational and educational opportunities to students and the public, which will also protect the sensitive habitat. The site includes three ponds that are overgrown with dense vegetation which limits open water essential for SCLTS breeding habitat. The main goal of this project is to enhance the wetland habitat in order to create a better breeding site for SCLTS, which is a fully protected species under Federal and State regulations. CTS is also present in the area, and is a state and federally threatened species. Regrading of the site will be done during the dry season, with no import or export of dirt, and in compliance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Memorandum: Intra-Service Biological Opinion on the Issuance of a IO(a)(1)(A) permit.

CEQA: An Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared for the North Monterey County Amphibian Habitat Restoration project in January 2016, and filed with the County Clerk on February 5, 2016. The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) and CCWG are acting as the project Lead Agencies. Monitoring of the mitigation measures will be done by the lead agencies. The County of Monterey is the Responsible Agency processing the Coastal Development Permit entitlement.

There are two projects that are being proposed on the North Monterey County School District site. The other project consists of the reconstruction of the athletic facilities. Staff identified three potential impacts that could occur from the other project. These issues have been addressed in project PLN150535.

- **Lighting:** There is existing stadium lighting. However, additional lighting proposed within the field bowl will have fixture cutoffs to limit offsite glare and will not affect the amphibian habitat restoration project. All lighting at the school will be operated with a manual on switch and automatic timer off switch and will be utilized only during night games.
- **Noise:** The existing public address (PA) system was installed with low ambient levels so as not to impact the neighboring homes. No additional system is proposed. The amphibian habitat restoration project will not begin until after completion of the athletic facilities, therefore, temporary construction noise from reconstruction of the field will have no affect on the sensitive species.
- **Drainage:** The slopes to be modified in the athletic facilities project are the result of the existing development pattern so modifying those slopes will not cause adverse impact from a change in drainage patterns or erosion.

Therefore, none of the mitigation measures are needed to address County resource protection requirements.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The following agencies have reviewed the project, have comments, and/or have recommended conditions:

- RMA - Public Works
- Environmental Health Bureau
- Water Resources Agency
- North County Fire Protection District
- √ RMA - Environmental Services
- California Department of Fish & Wildlife
- U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Resource Conservation District of Monterey County

This project was not referred to the North County Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) for review. The restoration project design was developed in consultation with a Technical Advisory Committee to work on the project and included representatives from CCWG, RCDMC, NMCUSD, Elkhorn Slough Foundation, CDFW and USFWS. The project was presented to the community at several school board meetings and received support from community members. It was approved by the North Monterey County School District Board.

FINANCING:

Funding for staff time associated with this project is included in the FY2015-2016 Adopted Budget for RMA-Planning.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Gonzales, Associate Planner, x5102
Reviewed by: John Ford, RMA Services Manager, x5178
Approved by: Carl P. Holm, AICP, Resource Management Agency Director 

Attachments:

- Exhibit A Project Data Sheet
- Exhibit B Draft Resolution, including:
 - Conditions of Approval
 - Site Plan, Floor Plan, and Elevations,
- Exhibit C Vicinity Map
- Exhibit D Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

cc: RMA Front Counter Copy; Zoning Administrator; John Ford, RMA Services Manager; North County Fire Protection District; RMA-Public Works; Environmental Health Bureau; Water Resources Agency; Paul Robins, Jasmine Ruvalcaba, RCDMD; Liann Reyes, NMCUSD; Applicants; California Coastal Commission; Supervisor District 2; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch; Project File PLN150247