

# Attachment A

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Detailed Discussion  
Carmel Lagoon Project (EPB/SRPS) Report  
REF120051  
October 2019

***Introduction***

The Carmel Lagoon Project (Project) is located within and adjacent to the Carmel River State Beach and Lagoon between State Highway 1 and the Pacific Ocean in the unincorporated area of Carmel, Monterey County, California. The Project is a multi-objective, multiyear, and multi-agency effort to improve habitat for threatened and endangered species in the lower Carmel River and Lagoon, improve natural floodplain function, and protect public infrastructure, while maintaining or improving flood risk for existing developed areas.

Pursuant to a 2013 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), the Project consists of three components: 1) Ecosystem Protective Barrier (EPB); 2) Scenic Road Protection Structure (SRPS); and 3) Interim Sandbar-management Plan (ISMP). The Capital Improvement Committee (CIC) received its last Project update on March 11, 2019 (Legistar File No. 19-0097).

***Carmel River Lagoon SRPS/EPB Project Update***

At its July 24, 2018 meeting, the Board of Supervisors received a status update on the Carmel Lagoon Ecosystem Protective Barrier (EPB), Scenic Road Protective Structure (SRPS), and Interim Sandbar Management Plan (ISMP) Project (“Carmel Lagoon Project”). After consideration of several options to advance the Project, the Board directed staff to explore the possibility of a mid-slope SRPS alternative, to conduct additional technical studies as needed for SRPS alternatives determined feasible in the technical studies, and to move forward with completion of the environmental review process. At that time, no additional funding was allocated; however, the Board directed staff to seek outside funding, particularly from other stakeholders, to advance the Project and sandbar-management activities.

To move the Carmel Lagoon Project forward, the County has explored other funding sources for the required technical studies and to complete the environmental review process. Outside grant funding is difficult to obtain for planning and environmental design funds without identified matching funds for the project. The CSA 1 Carmel Point Advisory Committee has expressed interest in utilizing CSA 1 funding for a portion of the technical studies for the SRPS component of the project, which can potentially be used for matching funds. On August 5, 2019, RMA staff presented an update to the CSA 1 Advisory Committee regarding the Carmel Lagoon Project and requested input from the Committee on their potential support to utilize CSA 1 budget funds. The Advisory Committee expressed that they would support an allocation of \$100,000 to fund additional technical studies related to the SRPS mid-slope wall alternative, contingent on sustained progress and discussions between the County and State Parks for a MOU to accommodate a mid-slope SRPS alternative, as well as the continued engagement between the County and California Coastal Commission on a potential SRPS project. RMA staff will return to the CSA 1 Advisory Committee to request a more official form of support for the allocation of CSA 1 unassigned funds to pay for additional SRPS technical studies.

RMA also plans to include the Carmel Lagoon Project in a comprehensive report of all capital needs, to be presented before the Board of Supervisors' Budget Committee.

As of this report, CSA 1 funds are the only identified source of potential funding for the Carmel Lagoon Project. If RMA is to satisfy the Board's direction to complete the environmental review process for the Carmel Lagoon Project, additional internal funding sources may need to be identified.

As a next step towards advancing discussions between the County and State Parks regarding a mid-slope SRPS alternative, in November 2018, State Parks drafted an MOU for a potential easement with the County to accommodate the mid-slope SRPS wall alternative. Subsequently, State Parks staff submitted the draft MOU to their counsel for legal review, and that review is in process. If it is determined that it is not feasible to construct a wall on State Parks' property, completely avoiding State Parks lands can be accommodated with a full-height wall in the County right-of-way, which would create an approximately 40-foot wall along Scenic Road. The full-height wall would need safety fencing along the top. Any SRPS alternative faces regulatory approvals by the California Coastal Commission for sand replenishment and coastal access (physical and visual), which would require additional technical studies.

To complete the Carmel Lagoon environmental review process, anticipated project tasks, contingent on allocation of funding for the advancement of the Project, are:

- Complete additional technical studies for the SRPS alternative, including studies on natural stream alignment and location, beach impacts of the SRPS alternative, and sediment transport.
- Formation of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and solicit stakeholder engagement.
- Respond to comments/refinement of Draft EIR.
- Revise and Recirculate Draft EIR.
- Respond to comments and refinement of Draft EIR for Final EIR certification.

### ***Sandbar Management Update***

In anticipation of increased flood risk to the Carmel Lagoon-adjacent properties during the rainy season, staff secured all necessary permits and approvals to allow management activities throughout the 2018-2019 rainy season. In January 2019, County crews successfully managed the sandbar to prevent flooding of the Lagoon-adjacent communities.

As a permit condition to *manage* the sandbar, after the rainy season ends, the County, in coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and NOAA Fisheries, is required to ensure any outlet channel work performed is closed off and the sandbar is restored to optimize wildlife habitat. On July 1, 2019, County crews mobilized to stockpile sand to close the sandbar opened in January 2019. On July 10, 2019, with regulatory agency approval, crews mobilized to close the sandbar by creating a sandbar "plug." On July 23, 2019, after observing erosion of the sandbar plug, the County returned to the Lagoon to fortify the sandbar. During this operation to fortify the sandbar, the bulldozer became immobilized in loose sand for a brief time. Fortification efforts stopped for that day after the bulldozer was safely extracted. On July 25, 2019, County crews returned to fortify the plug to ensure the lagoon did not re-open during the summer months.

### ***2013 Memorandum of Understanding Status***

To demonstrate commitment to assess the project components and implement a long-term solution to the mechanical breaching, in 2013, the County, USACE, and NOAA Fisheries executed a MOU. Pursuant to this MOU, the County can conduct sandbar-management activities with proper permits to reduce flood risk by following the ISMP while it obtains permits from USACE in consultation with NOAA Fisheries to investigate, plan, design, and construct the structural project components (SRPS/EPB).

The 2013 MOU sets a target deadline of September 2020 to complete construction of the preferred alternative for the Project, pending project funding. RMA staff has communicated regularly with USACE and NOAA Fisheries, as well as the other regulatory agencies regarding the Project. Complex issues surrounding the various components and the need to identify funding for the Project require that the 2013 MOU be amended to extend the target deadline for Project completion. RMA staff will continue to work with NOAA Fisheries and USACE on the amendment to the MOU.

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