



Monterey County

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Legistar File Number: WRAG 21-040

February 16, 2021

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Consider recommending that the Monterey County Water Resources Agency Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution authorizing and directing the General Manager to enter into a grant agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to receive a grant of \$17 million dollars for the construction of Fish Exclusion System in conjunction with the Interlake Tunnel construction.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Monterey County Water Resources Agency Board of Directors:

Recommend that the Monterey County Water Resources Agency Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution authorizing and directing the General Manager to enter into a grant agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to receive a grant of \$17 million dollars for the construction of a Fish Exclusion System in conjunction with the Interlake Tunnel construction.

SUMMARY:

The Fiscal Year 19/20 budget for the State of California included seventeen (\$17) million dollars for the construction of a Fish Exclusion System (fish screens) in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) budget. In order to secure these funds, MCWRA and CDFW must enter into an agreement by June 30, 2021.

DISCUSSION:

White Bass (*Marone chrysops*), native to St. Lawrence-Great Lakes, Hudson Bay and Red River Basin, and Mississippi River basins from Quebec to Manitoba and south to Louisiana are present in the Nacimiento Reservoir and have periodically been physically observed in the Nacimiento River, a tributary of the Salinas River. White Bass were introduced to Nacimiento Reservoir in 1965, but concerns about the spread of the fish during the 1970s resulted in management actions to eradicate the species in all but Nacimiento and subsequent regulatory and state code changes to preclude White Bass from any waters of California other than Nacimiento Reservoir.

White Bass are a non-native species listed by state regulation as Detrimental as they may alter/affect existing sport fisheries resulting in a shift from more preferred gamefish to a fishery dominated by White Bass. Additionally, they pose a threat to native fish species, including vulnerable steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Steelhead trout inhabiting the Salinas River Basin are part of the South-Central California Coast Evolutionary Significant Unit (SCCC-ESU) as defined by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The NMFS listed steelhead trout in the SCCC-ESU as a federally threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act and CDFW is a co-manager for the SCCC-ESU.

In 2014, Monterey County Water Resources Agency staff and consultants began working to resolve the issue of potential transfer of white bass from Nacimiento Reservoir to San Antonio Reservoir via the Interlake Tunnel Project (ILT) once it is constructed. This work led to a succession of meetings with CDFW staff and the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in December 2018 regarding the design and construction of a Fish Exclusion System. The MOA is referenced and is an attachment to the grant agreement.

In June 2019 the budget enacted by the state of California included \$17 million dollars in CDFW's budget for the Fish Exclusion System. In order to secure these funds, MCWRA and CDFW must execute a grant agreement by June 30, 2021. CDFW, MCWRA, County Legislative Office staff and consultants have been meeting since September 2019 to finalize a grant agreement.

The attached agreement is being processed through CDFW's internal process and is expected to be finalized by June 2021. It is expected that there will be little or no changes to attached agreement in that process.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Monterey County Legislative Affairs Office, Monterey County Counsel Office, Monterey County Legislative Committee, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

FINANCING:

Seventeen million dollars in State funds with no match required. This money will be included into the Agency's budget when available.

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Approved by: Brent Buche, General Manager, (831) 755-4860

Attachments:

1. Final draft grant agreement
2. Resolution