



County of Monterey

Item No.45

Board Report

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

Legistar File Number: RES 25-135

September 23, 2025

Introduced: 9/3/2025

Current Status: Housing & Community
Development - Consent

Version: 1

Matter Type: BoS Resolution

- a. Adopt a resolution to approve an Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE) Project (REF140048) to amend mitigation measure CUL-9 to construct a berm around historic buildings; and
- b. Adopt a resolution revising the Mitigation, Monitoring and Report Plan for the CRFREE Project to incorporate changes to the Final EIR as adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 28, 2020 to amend mitigation measure CUL-9.

Project: REF140048/Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE) Project

Project Location: Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE), State Highway Route 1, Carmel, CA, 93923, Carmel Area Land Use Plan, Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 243-071-005-000, 243-071-006-000, 243-071-007-000, 243-021-007-000, 157-121-001-000 and 243-081-005-000, 243-071-008-000

Proposed California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Action: Pursuant to CEQA California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 15164, consider an addendum together with the previously certified Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the CRFREE Project.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution to:

- a. Approve an Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE) Project (REF140048) to amend mitigation measure CUL-9 to construct a berm as flood protection around the Historic Barn Complex on property owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation; and
- b. Revise the Mitigation, Monitoring and Report Plan for the CRFREE Project to incorporate changes to the Final EIR as adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 28, 2020, and to amend mitigation measure CUL-9.

SUMMARY:

Approval of this action will adopt a resolution amending the approved Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project (CRFREE Project). (**Attachment A**) The CRFREE Project is a comprehensive effort to improve flood control and restore native riparian habitat, floodplain habitat, and hydrologic function to a portion of the lower floodplain along the Carmel River. Key aspects of the CRFREE Project are to: 1) Create notches in the levees along the south bank of the lower Carmel River, 2) Restore the south lower Carmel River floodplain, and 3) Build a causeway along Highway 1, restoring connectivity between

the lower Carmel River Floodplain and the south arm of the Carmel Lagoon. The CRFREE Project will lower the 100-year flood risk for Community Service Area (CSA) 50 and create public access trails between Carmel River Beach State Park to the west and Palo Corona Monterey Peninsula Regional Parks District (MPRPD) park to the east. The Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified by the Board of Supervisors during a public hearing on January 20, 2020. (**Attachment B**) The Project and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) was approved by separate resolution in June 2021.

DISCUSSION:

The CRFREE project will reconnect the south arm of the Carmel Lagoon with flood flows from the lower Carmel River, which will potentially increase the 100-year flood elevation west of State Route 1. To mitigate the potential increase in flood risk to the historic Creamery and Blacksmith Shop within the Historic Barn Complex on California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) land, approved mitigation measure CUL-9 proposed to raise the Creamery and Blacksmith Shop. (**Attachment C**) Updated flood flow modeling from County Contractor Balance Hydrologics showed that the flood risk to the Historic Barn Complex was different than previously thought, with higher elevation 100-year flood flow base flood elevations at all four buildings within the Historic Barn Complex. (**Attachment D**) The previously contemplated protective berm would be an equally appropriate mitigation measure, and to elevate the buildings above base flood elevation would require a higher first floor elevation than previously thought. State Parks' stated preference is for a berm surrounding the Historic Barn Complex, due to the potential reduced accessibility to the buildings if they are raised.

Per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), California Code of Regulations, CEQA Guidelines Section 15164, an addendum is used when minor changes are made to a project after the EIR has been certified. The decision-making body must consider the changes, and noticing is not required. The proposed amended mitigation measure CUL-9 would provide equal protection to the Creamery and Blacksmith Shop within the Historic Barn Complex, as well as the former residence and the barn. The proposed amendment and addendum to the EIR would allow for the existing berm to be extended around the Historic Barn Complex. (**Attachment E**) This would remove the necessity of raising the historic buildings and meet the request of State Parks to retain the current accessibility of the structures. Staff consider this a minor change which does not require preparation of a subsequent EIR.

In late 2024 the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as part of the FEMA Environmental Assessment and review. The SHPO concurred with the amended mitigation measure text. (**Attachment F**)

The CRFREE Project is currently in the final stages of design and pre-construction coordination, including grant funding, easements, and agreements. Approval of this action will amend the mitigation measure CUL-9, per the request of State Parks, and add an addendum to the previously certified Environmental Impact Report.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

BSLT is co-sponsor for the CRFREE Project. BSLT, State Parks and MPRPD are property owners within the CRFREE Project area. Through a Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans, the County of

Monterey is acting as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality (CEQA) Act for the Project. FEMA conducted an Environmental Assessment and consulted with SHPO for concurrence on the amended mitigation measure CUL-9 text.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified by the Board of Supervisors during a public hearing on January 20, 2020. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), as lead federal agency for the floodplain restoration portion of the CRFREE Project issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) on October 30, 2020. The Project was approved, and the corresponding Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on June 15, 2021. Federal environmental review was completed on April 23, 2021, when Caltrans, as the lead federal agency for the causeway portion of the Project, issued a FONSI consistent with the FONSI issued by the USFWS. FEMA has an additional internal environmental review process, and published an Environmental Assessment in May 2025, and is still pending issuing a FONSI.

FINANCING:

Based on the December 2023 95% Design Engineers estimate, CRFREE is estimated to cost approximately \$56.5 million, escalated to a 2027 construction season, to complete the final design, construction, and restoration efforts, including construction management and soft costs (**Attachment G**). Funding for the CRFREE Project comes from State, Federal and local grants and funds, including from Monterey Peninsula Regional Parks District (MPRPD) fair share contribution for a left-hand turn lane on State Highway 1. The Project responsibility for cost of utility relocation and contribution from utility companies is estimated and will be better determined later this year. Approximately \$2.6 million in grant funds have been spent to date on the CRFREE Project. The County and Big Sur Land Trust have currently been awarded \$28.5 million in unexpended grant funds for the Project pre-construction, construction, and monitoring, with an additional \$30 million pending award, the bulk of which is expected from CalOES/FEMA (Attachment D). The CRFREE Project is budgeted in Capital Project Fund 404, Unit 8564 with \$15.2 million budgeted in the FY25-26 Adopted Budget. Ongoing long-term maintenance of the MFCAs is estimated to begin in Fiscal Year 2028 at the earliest, at an estimated cost of up to \$30,000 annually and shall be financed by CSA 50 Fund 077-3200-8566-PFP031.

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Approved by: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Chief of Planning

Approved by: Craig Spencer, HCD Director

The following attachments are on file with the Clerk of the Board:

Attachment A - Draft Resolution

Attachment B - Link to EIR

Attachment C - CUL -9 current and proposed text

Attachment D - Memo from Balance Hydrologics

Attachment E - Addendum to the EIR

Attachment F - SHPO Concurrence letter

Attachment G - Grant Funding overview

