



August 21, 2013

The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Chair
Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
1020 N Street, Room 160
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Rendon:

The State Coastal Conservancy appreciates the work being undertaken by the Assembly Water Bond Working Group and for the opportunity to comment on the framework for the Clean Drinking Water & Climate Change Response Act of 2014.

We applaud the assembly water bond principles and framework for acknowledging the need for the state to invest in its natural resource infrastructure as part of the broader goal of assuring a sustainable water supply and clean drinking water. There is significant need for projects all along the California Coast and in San Francisco Bay to protect watersheds, improve water quality, reduce flooding, and restore habitat for fish and other species as the state adapts to a changing climate and growing population. Two out of every three Californians lives in a coastal county and millions of visitors come to the coast each year. The National Ocean Economics Program found that in 2000 the total gross state product of California's coast and ocean was approximately \$42.9 billion and it supported almost 700,000 jobs.

The State Coastal Conservancy's revised strategic plan (2013) quantified the need for coastal and bay water-related resources projects at more than **\$300 million**, including **\$150 million** for San Francisco Bay. We have some general comments by section followed by specific examples of priority projects and identified funding needs over the next five years.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Section IV. General Provisions

- Adding priority for multi-benefit projects, such as wetland restoration that restore habitat, reduce flooding, and improve water quality.
- Amending IV.E to give priority to implementation of existing adopted strategic plans and existing conservation plans developed with input from multiple stakeholders and scientists.

Section V. Water Quality: Clean and Safe Drinking Water

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Stormwater management should include low-impact development projects and multi-benefit urban greening projects.

Section VI. Protecting Rivers, Lakes, Streams and Watersheds

- The title of this section should also include “Wetlands” because wetlands provide multiple economic and ecological benefits including benefits to water quality.
- The purpose of this section should be expanded to include the broader “Ecological Benefits” or “Ecosystem Service” benefits of watersheds, wetlands and rivers.

Section VI B.1. Funding: In addition to watersheds, wetlands, and water quality, funding might also cover floodplain restoration and acquisition of fee and easement interests in land.

Section VI B.2.: Using “Multi-benefit fish projects” instead of “Remove Barriers to Fish Passage” would permit funding a broader range of projects benefitting fish and accomplishing other bond purposes.

Section VIII. Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Sustainability

San Francisco Bay should be added to this section as the San Francisco Bay Estuary is an integral part of the ecosystem that includes the Delta. This section should also provide support for ecosystem restoration within the San Francisco Bay. Protection and restoration of the Bay and its local watersheds plays a critical role in anadromous and resident fisheries, water quality, freshwater supply, urban greening, biodiversity, and public recreation. This section should provide funding for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. We recommend that 15% of funding for ecosystem restoration of the Delta should focus on habitat restoration priorities in the San Francisco Bay Estuary and its local watersheds.

PROJECT NEEDS

Within Sections V, VI and VIII of the proposed framework, there are significant needs for along the California coast and in the San Francisco Bay Area.

- At least \$150 million in current water resource-related needs for the California Coast are described below.

Section V. Water Quality: Clean and Safe Drinking Water

Stormwater Management

Coastwide: Develop and implement green infrastructure projects and urban greening projects to reduce water pollution along the coast, increase infiltration, reduce energy consumption,

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and provide other community benefits. One example would be expansion of the Conservancy's green streets projects in the Los Angeles region.
(*\$10 million*)

Section VI. Protecting Rivers, Lakes, Streams and Watersheds

Wetland Restoration and Flood Protection

North Coast: Major wetland systems occur in Tomales Bay, the Eel River Delta, Humboldt Bay, and Lake Earl as well as along many coastal stream and river estuaries. Funds are needed to advance a number of significant projects currently in the planning phase, including projects in the Eel River Delta, Russian River, Humboldt Bay, and Redwood Creek. (*\$10 million*)

Central Coast: Many coastal wetlands could be enhanced to improve habitat and water quality. Including: Watsonville Slough, Elkhorn Slough Devereux Slough, Goleta Slough and the Morro Bay National Estuary.
(*\$15 million*)

South Coast: The Southern California Wetland Recovery Project (SCWRP) has prioritized and supported restoration and enhancement at major wetland complexes of statewide significance, including those at the Ventura and Santa Clara Rivers, Ormond Beach, Ballona, Los Cerritos, Huntington Beach, San Diego County lagoons, San Diego Bay and the Tijuana River Valley and Estuary. (*\$25 million*).

Watershed Conservation and Water Source Protection

North Coast: There is a need to conserve working lands to protect important water resource areas and to work with private and public landowners to implement best management practices on agricultural and timber lands for improving water quality and reducing demand. Funds are needed to implement projects in Tomales Bay, Salmon Creek, and Russian, Gualala, Navarro, Eel, Mattole, and Klamath Rivers. (*\$10 million*)

Central Coast: Along the central coast there is a need to implement multi-benefit projects that increase water supply while also improving habitat. There are opportunities to implement collaborative projects that resolve water conflicts between fisheries and agriculture, conserve important watershed lands and address saltwater intrusion into groundwater. (*\$15 million*)

South Coast: Projects include helping resolve sediment management issues in the Tijuana River estuary; completing acquisitions along the Ventura and Santa Clara river parkways and at Ormond Beach; and partnering with the City and County of Los Angeles to develop urban greening projects. (*\$25 million*)

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Protecting Rivers, Lakes and Streams

North Coast: There is a need for work in key watersheds to improve riparian cover, remove ongoing source of pollution and improve land use practices, and improve fish passage, spawning and rearing habitat for salmon and steelhead. Funds are needed to support ongoing efforts in the Klamath, Smith, Eel, Mattole, and Russian Rivers, Humboldt and Tomales Bay, and smaller coastal watersheds. (*\$25 million*)

Central Coast:

There are opportunities to improve fishery habitat and reduce sediment loads in many coastal watersheds, by implementing priority projects in the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program. There are river habitat restoration and flood reduction projects along the Salinas River, the Lower Carmel River, Santa Rose Creek and Arroyo Grande Creek, and the Big Sur watersheds. (*\$10 million*)

South Coast: Projects to implement river and floodplain enhancement projects in the context of the Southern California Wetland Recovery Project, and facilitate removal of the Matillija Dam on the Ventura River, opening 17 miles of steelhead habitat. (*\$5 million*)

Section VIII, San Francisco Bay Estuary

Land and water conservation work in the Bay Area is inextricably linked to the future of the Delta. The Bay is part of the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary, and many point out that a Water Bond that could lead to significant changes within the Delta should include conservation funds for the other half of the Estuary – the San Francisco Bay and its watersheds. Protection and restoration of the Bay and its watersheds supports anadromous and resident fisheries, water quality, freshwater supply, flood protection, urban greening, and wildlife habitat.

- At least \$150 million in current water resource-related needs for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program are described below.

The Conservancy has a successful track record in the nine county San Francisco Bay Area on the key resource issues being addressed in the water bond. In particular, efforts have focused in four main areas of water resource and ecosystem sustainability:

Wetland Restoration and Coastal Flood Protection: Work to enhance and restore up to 100,000 acres of wetlands throughout the estuary per recommendations of the *Baylands*

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Ecosystem Habitat Goals has integrated significant improvements to shoreline flood capacity and adaptation to sea level rise. Major projects to date include the South Bay Salt Ponds and Shoreline Study, Napa Sonoma Marshes Restoration, Hamilton Field and Bel Marin Keys, Sonoma Baylands and Sears Point, and Dutch Slough. (\$50 million)

Watershed Conservation and Water Source Protection: Acquisition of fee title and conservation easements protecting important water resource areas throughout the region, building off of regional *Conservation Lands Network* and *Integrated Regional Water Management Plan* efforts. Previous examples include work with the San Francisco PUC to protect the watershed above Calaveras Reservoir in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties and work with Peninsula Open Space Trust to protect lands above Santa Clara Valley Water District's Uvas Reservoir. (\$50 million)

Riparian Enhancement and Fish Passage Restoration: Work in key watersheds to improve riparian cover, remove ongoing sources of pollution and improve land use practices, as well as improvement of fish passage, spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and salmon in the region's eight "Anchor Watersheds" based on recommendations of independent fisheries experts and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Examples include the removal of barriers via the retrofit of the Zinfandel Lane Bridge by Napa County, which restored access to 65 miles of upstream habitat, as well as work with multiple partners to support fisheries improvements in the Alameda Creek watershed. (\$35 Million)

Health of the Open Bay: Improving the water quality and environmental health of the bay via implementation of the *Subtidal Habitat Goals*. Example projects have included eelgrass and oyster restoration in the bay and work to abate sources of contamination including mercury and creosote. (\$15 Million)

The Coastal Conservancy again wishes to thank you, the Assembly Water Bond Working Group, and the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee for your leadership on this very important issue and for allowing us to weigh in on California Coast and San Francisco Bay issues. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nadine Peterson".

Nadine Peterson, Deputy Executive Officer

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