

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Filed to: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044
County Clerk of: San Mateo

Project Title: San Pedro Creek Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project

Project Location: Adobe Drive bridge over San Pedro Creek in Pacifica, CA 94044
Latitude: 37.587082, Longitude: -122.495482

City and County: Pacifica, San Mateo County

Description of Nature and Purpose of Project:

The San Pedro Creek Fish Passage Project at Adobe Drive in Pacifica will replace an undersized, perched culvert identified as a priority barrier in CDFW's 2021 fish Passage Priorities. The project will restore access to 9.5 miles of upstream habitat, including 4 miles of critical habitat for threatened Central California Coast steelhead trout, improve 150 feet of creek and riparian habitat, stabilize banks, and reduce erosion while modestly lowering localized flood risks. This effort will deliver durable ecological and community benefits while advancing regional steelhead recovery and watershed resilience to climate change.

Name of Person, Board, Commission or Department Proposing to Carry Out Project:

San Mateo Resource Conservation District
80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

Lead Agency
Responsible Agency

Contact Person: Colleen McNally-Murphy Telephone: 650-712-7765 ext. 131

EXEMPT STATUS:

Categorical Exemption Class 33, Section 15333 (Small Habitat Restoration)

Remarks: See next page.

Date of Determination: January 23, 2026

I do hereby certify that the above determination has been made pursuant to State and Local requirements.



Colleen McNally-Murphy, Conservation Project Manager

REMARKS:

As described below, the Project meets the CEQA criteria for exemption from environmental review under Class 33, Section 15333. This section of the guidelines describes Small Habitat Restoration Projects that do not exceed 5 acres in size and are constructed for the purpose of maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, and wildlife.

This Project will restore access for federally threatened steelhead to 9.4 miles of creek habitat, including 4 miles of critical habitat, by addressing a temporal fish passage barrier and improving habitat in adjacent areas. The Project is less than 1 acre in size and is for the purpose of habitat improvement for steelhead, a federally threatened species and a California species of special concern.

Project Description

The project will restore access for salmonids to nearly 9.4 miles of creek habitat, including 4 miles of critical habitat, of San Pedro Creek by removing the fish passage barrier posed by a concrete box culvert, and replacing it with a free span bridge. The barrier is an aging and undersized 8x8 feet, 51-foot-long concrete box culvert which is perched up to 1.6 feet above the downstream channel. This culvert results in a vertical drop that blocks juvenile passage at low flows, as well as excessive velocities which impede adult passage at higher flows. San Pedro Creek is the only stream that supports federally threatened Central California Coast (CCC) steelhead along a roughly 30-mile stretch of coastline between the Golden Gate Bridge and Half Moon Bay; this crossing is the furthest downstream barrier in the San Pedro Creek watershed, and restricts access to 4 miles of critical high-quality upstream spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and 5.4 miles of additional instream habitat.

In addition to impeding fish passage, the undersized culvert constricts the natural channel width, resulting in increased flow velocities through the crossing. This hydraulic constriction causes excessive downstream scour and channel incision, disrupting natural sediment transport processes, and further degrading instream habitat quality. Downstream of the crossing, evidence of this process is seen as the channel displays signs of failing bank armoring, incision, and erosion. During storm events, the culvert's limited capacity causes water to back up upstream of the crossing, indicating insufficient flood conveyance of the existing structure. Replacing the culvert with a free span bridge will provide unimpeded fish passage while improving flood conveyance, climate resilience, and sediment transport. The project will also improve instream habitat by embedding large wood pieces into the rock slope protection to provide cover and refugia for fish.

The project objectives will be accomplished through implementation of the following actions:

- Remove the concrete box culvert and replace it with a free span bridge.
- Install five weirs in the channel to adjust grade and one row of engineered streambed material to retain pool below the bridge.
- Remove failing sac-rete bank armoring and fill from the channel at the creek crossing.
- Install rock slope protection against the channel walls to prevent future erosion.
- Install 8 large wood pieces in the rock slope protection on the banks of the pool to provide cover and refugia.
- Plant willow stakes and native seed on the creek banks, and revegetate all cleared areas with native plants.

Class 33 (CEQA State Guidelines, Section 15333) Small Habitat Restoration Projects

Class 33 consists of projects not to exceed five acres in size to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife. The following four bullets list the criteria for projects to meet Categorical Exemption 15333 as described in the CEQA Statute and Guidelines.

(a) There would be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to section 15065

The proposed project is designed specifically to benefit threatened fish and other native aquatic species. The project would restore ancestral migration access to an additional 9.4 miles of habitat, including 4 miles of critical habitat, and provide the diversity of habitat fish need to forage, take refuge, rest, rear, and spawn. Additionally, this culvert is identified as a Top Priority fish passage barrier (PAD ID 713787 on California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Fish Passage Priority List (2021), reflecting both the severity of the barrier and the high value of the habitat it blocks. At the federal level, NOAA Fisheries' Coastal Multispecies Recovery Plan and the Federal Recovery Outline for CCC Steelhead call for removing downstream-most migration barriers and restoring access to high-quality spawning and rearing habitat in coastal watersheds such as San Pedro Creek. This project directly implements NOAA's highest-value recovery actions.

To the maximum extent possible, temporary and localized impacts to sensitive habitats would be minimized by implementing avoidance and minimization measures and construction-related best management practices. Construction within the creek will occur during the dry season, minimizing the potential for erosion and any construction-related effects on aquatic species. Additionally, erosion control measures, such as fiber rolls, will be installed to further reduce the risk of sedimentation resulting from project activities. Disturbed areas will be winterized and re-vegetated as needed following construction. The project will not degrade the quality of the environment and would not substantially reduce the habitat or threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of any endangered, rare or threatened species; or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.

(b) There are no hazardous materials at or around the project site that may be disturbed or removed

There are no known hazardous materials at the site or project vicinity based on site investigations.

(c) The project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.

The proposed project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with effects of past, current, and probable future projects. Overall, the project would improve fish habitat in the creek. There are no known or planned overlapping projects in the vicinity that would have environmental impacts to which the proposed project would add cumulatively.

(d) Examples of small restoration projects may include, but are not limited to:

(3) stream or river bank revegetation, the primary purpose of which is to improve habitat for amphibians or native fish;

The project would be exempt under the above-cited classifications as it involves restoration of San Pedro Creek for the primary purpose of habitat improvement for native fish through remediation of a

passage barriers and enhancement of 150 feet of creek. The goals of this project are to restore fish passage to 9.4 miles of creek habitat, enhance creek habitat, and improve flood conveyance.

CEQA State Guidelines Section 15300.2 states that a categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. As described above, there are no unusual circumstances surrounding the proposed project that would suggest a reasonable possibility for a significant environmental effect.