

January 21, 2010

Trish Chapman
Project Specialist
State Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, Suite 1300
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: Carmel River Reroute and San Clemente Dam Removal Project

Dear Ms. Chapman:

American Whitewater has an interest in providing input on the Carmel River Reroute and San Clemente Dam Removal Project. Our organization fully supports the proposed action to remove the dam and restore the Carmel River. This project has significant potential to restore passage for both fish and recreational boaters.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have over 6,500 members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing approximately 80,000 whitewater paddlers across the nation. American Whitewater's mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. As a conservation-oriented paddling organization, American Whitewater has an interest in the rivers throughout central California and a significant percentage of our members live in the greater San Francisco area, a short driving distance from the Carmel River for recreation. The run on the Carmel River is a recognized whitewater boating run from Los Padres Reservoir to Carmel Valley¹ negatively impacted by San Clemente Dam which is a barrier to navigation.

We have reviewed the preliminary plan for removal of the dam and rerouting of the Carmel River and believe this option has the potential to not only reconnect habitat for fishery resources, but also address a significant barrier to navigability. We have been partners on a number of projects to restore habitat and recreational connectivity on river systems throughout the Western U.S. including projects on the Clark Fork (MT), Bear (ID), Elwha (WA), Trout Creek (WA), White Salmon (WA), Sandy (OR), and Rogue (OR). On all of these projects restoration of fishery resources has been the primary goal, but addressing navigability issues as part of the overall process has helped in securing funding, broadening public support, and highlighting the diversity of benefits achieved through dam removal efforts that restore rivers. In fact our work was recently featured in a New York Times story on dam removal.²

¹ See the entry for the Carmel River in our National Whitewater Inventory
<<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/160>>

² <http://travel.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/travel/09explorer.html>

Based on our preliminary review of the project, the proposed approach should restore navigability but we request that this question be specifically addressed prior to initiation of the project. It has been our experience that providing a navigable channel rarely results in any major design modifications and is fully compatible with fish restoration goals but it is important to conduct this review. Many engineering firms have this expertise including several that we have worked with that include Fluid Concepts³, Recreation Engineering and Planning⁴ and McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group.⁵ All of these firms have specific expertise in dam removal as it relates to navigability issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this project. We request that we be placed on the mailing list for any additional opportunities for input on design. In addition please consider us as a resource as you see opportunities to highlight the public benefits of this project. We have been successful with other projects in helping build public support and making the case for necessary funding through grant sources and federal appropriations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dave Steindorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Dave Steindorf
California Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

³ 1510 Lander Street □ Reno, Nevada 89509

⁴ http://www.wwparks.com/dam_projects.html

⁵ http://www.mclaughlinwhitewater.com/ww_services/ww_damremoval.shtml