



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southwest Region
777 Sonoma Ave., Room 325
Santa Rosa, CA 95404-4731

December 1, 2011

In response, refer to:
SWR/F/SWR3:JEA

RECEIVED

DEC 06 2011

MPWMD

David Stoldt
General Manager
Monterey Peninsula Water Management District
5 Harris Court, Building G
Monterey, California 93940

Dear Mr. Stoldt:

Thank you for your letter of October 20, 2011, requesting clarification of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) position on the expansion of the Los Padres Dam and/or the construction of a new replacement dam on the Carmel River, Monterey County, California.

NMFS has been involved with protecting and restoring the South-Central California Coast (S-CCC) steelhead in the Carmel River since the fish were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1997. As you know, the Carmel River population of steelhead has been declining since the 1960s. Excessive water withdrawals and the two dams (San Clemente Dam and Los Padres Dam) have adversely impacted both their population and critical habitat for decades. The Carmel River Reroute and San Clemente Dam Removal Project, slated to begin in 2012, will provide unimpaired access for steelhead to 25 miles of spawning and rearing habitat upstream. This will be a major milestone towards restoring the connectivity of the river and increasing the steelhead population.

Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD) is exploring the possibility of expanding storage capacity behind Los Padres Dam, either by dredging the reservoir of accumulated sediment, or by installing a rubber dam on the spillway. NMFS has been working with California American Water (CAW) to address CAW's adverse impacts to steelhead resulting from their water supply facilities and operations. Los Padres Dam is an impediment to steelhead migration both up and downstream. NMFS is encouraging CAW to study the feasibility of removing Los Padres Dam to avoid these impacts to steelhead and provide uninterrupted passage upstream into the Los Padres National Forest and downstream to the ocean. It follows then, we would not embrace the prospect of a new or enlarged dam.

NOAA is committed to the protection and restoration of the Nation's fisheries and wildlife resources. We are currently reviewing the information provided to us and will contact you if we need additional information. We appreciate your interest in the steelhead population of the Carmel River and the potential impacts of the proposed dam expansion project.



As your letter states, proposals for constructing a new dam on the Carmel River were raised in the 1980s and 90s, and each time the proposals were rejected. NMFS is on the record as being opposed to building a new dam on the Carmel River. Dams and reservoirs are recognized to cause many detrimental effects to river ecosystems. Increasingly, scientists and environmental managers are coming to the conclusion that the most effective means of protecting and recovering species is by removing dams.

NMFS continues to support MPWMD and CAW in pursuing conservation, off-stream aquifer storage and recovery, reclamation of wastewater, and desalination as viable water supply projects for the Monterey Peninsula. If you have any questions please contact Ms. Joyce Ambrosius at (707) 575-6064 or joyce.ambrosius@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick Butler", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dick Butler
North Central Coast Office Supervisor
Protected Resources Division

cc: C. Yates, NMFS, Long Beach
R. Svindland, CAW, Sacramento