

SANTA CLARA RIVER PARKWAY

Ventura County, California



September 2000

SANTA CLARA RIVER PARKWAY Ventura County, California

Conceptual Enhancement Plan

The Coastal Conservancy proposes to acquire a continuous stretch of coastal river and estuary in Ventura County located between the cities of Ventura and Oxnard. The acquisition of this fifteen-mile-long park and wildlife preserve will encompass 6,400 acres and extend from the ocean to South Mountain. The Santa Clara River Parkway has two complimentary purposes: the acquisition and public management of the river corridor to allow for habitat restoration, flood management, public enjoyment and environmental education; and the restoration of the natural processes of the river to prevent continued flood losses of habitat, farmland and public facilities.

RESOURCE VALUES

The lower Santa Clara River is home to seven endangered and two threatened species and thirteen other species or species groups of concern. Despite the recognized significance of the existing river and estuarine habitat, it is understood that more than any other section of the river, the floodplain has been constrained and degraded by private levees, mining, and water facilities, reduced from its former vast extent. Typical of the historical destruction of habitat, the estuary, once 870 acres of wetlands, is now 133 acres.

Acquisition of this continuous estuarine and riverine corridor will result in the restoration of over a thousand acres of habitat that had been converted to other uses and allow the river to return to its natural cycle of meander and braided flows which is critical for the endangered fish species. The lower Santa Clara River is proposed by the National Marine Fisheries Service for listing as critical habitat for the southern steelhead.



The 4,000 acres of restored and enhanced habitat will be a variety of decreasing coastal wetland types including estuarine intertidal emergent, palustrine scrub/shrub, and palustrine forested habitat. In addition to its value as habitat, reestablishment of riparian areas will also stabilize banks, slow flood flows, and reduce erosion.

The estuary and lower river provide crucial habitat for a number of federally listed threatened and endangered species. The endangered southern steelhead, least Bell's vireo, and southwestern willow flycatcher rely on habitat within the acquisition area. Four other threatened and endangered species, the tidewater goby, western snowy plover, California least tern, and Ventura marsh milkvetch, use habitat only in the lower river and estuary. There are thirteen other species of special concern.



FLOOD MANAGEMENT AND RECREATION

The Santa Clara River is the longest and potentially the most significant river in southern California because of its natural functions and its restoration potential. The agricultural and scenic heritage along the river is very significant but the most dramatic part of the river's history has been the flooding, from the St. Francis Dam Disaster to the shocking 1969 flood which wiped out crops and developed areas for approximately fifty miles.

Flood management and trails are two important goals of the project. The cooperation among property owners with the Coastal Conservancy and the linkages possible through existing public land along the river represents an unprecedented opportunity for river restoration in California. The success of this project to acquire sufficient floodplain to remove or substantially setback levees will help similar efforts on rivers in the central coast and the central valley.

Following acquisition, private levees can be removed obviating the pressure for pilot channels, resolving longstanding regulatory battles and eliminating most of the costs of flood damage to farms and public facilities. Acquisition and public management at this time will allow for the integration of hundreds of acres of reclaimed gravel mining areas into the park and preserve. A continuous hiking trail through adjoining parks and the preserve (where appropriate) will provide environmental education opportunities in close proximity to the schools of Ventura, Oxnard, and Santa Paula.

The Conservancy has engaged two of the foremost authorities in the field of wetland restoration and floodplain restoration to begin conceptual restoration plans. Also, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Los Angeles District staff) has expressed strong interest in assisting with design and funding of this innovative coastal floodplain restoration project using their recently authorized Ecosystem and Aquatic Restoration Programs.



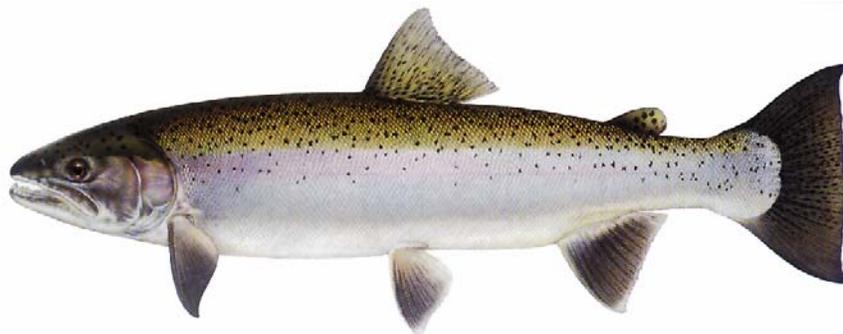
The size and continuity of the proposed park and wildlife preserve beginning at the estuary offer four important advantages over more detached, individual acquisitions. The historic floodplain can be reestablished without concern for downstream impacts to other ownerships. Public management is more efficient in a continuous park and public control can be more flexible in its response to the river's natural dynamics. Viable wildlife and habitat corridors can be created. A trail with interpretive facilities from the ocean to the mountains will be an important recreational resource for the two coastal cities. Adjoining property owners realize that public access will be encouraged where appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The project is consistent with the consensus recommendations of the recently completed, five year planning effort of the Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan (SCREMP) which included representatives of all of the interest groups on the river. The Coastal Conservancy has begun appraisals of several of the properties and will be prepared to begin acquisitions in the fall of 2000. The Coastal Conservancy or its representatives have contacted most of the property owners all of whom have expressed interest in the proposal. The Conservancy has also begun discussions with Santa Clara River property owners and local philanthropists on the establishment of a Santa Clara River Foundation. Several landowners have discussed making cash contributions. One owner of approximately 1,000 acres has proposed donation or possible bargain sale of his property.

Initial funding of Santa Clara River Parkway in the amount of \$9.2 million was included in the Coastal Conservancy's 2000/01 budget by the Governor and has been appropriated by the Legislature. The Conservancy also expects to use its own Salmonid Restoration Program funds for the River Parkway. The Conservancy has received a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant for the acquisition of estuarine habitat near the river mouth and has applied for a \$5 million grant from the Santa Clara River Trustee Council (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and State Department of Fish and Game), which administers oil spill settlement funds to be expended for acquisition and restoration of the river. Also, the project has been selected as a priority project to be funded by the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, a partnership of state and federal agencies dedicated to the protection and restoration of the region's wetlands.

The Coastal Conservancy has been asked to take the lead on acquisition and strategic planning and the formation of a Joint Powers Authority for management of the public lands in cooperation with the cities of Oxnard and Ventura. Site restoration and public operation will occur only after whole reaches of the river have been consolidated in public ownership. The project has been endorsed by the City of Oxnard and City of Ventura Liaison Committee.



**SANTA CLARA RIVER PARKWAY
CAMP ACQUISITION**

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Project Summary
October 26, 2000

**SANTA CLARA RIVER PARKWAY
CAMP ACQUISITION**

File No. 00-105
Project Manager: Peter S. Brand

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approval of the Wetland Resources Enhancement Plan for the Camp property and authorization to disburse an amount not to exceed \$4.8 million to the Nature Conservancy for the acquisition of the Camp property totalling 220 acres.

LOCATION: North bank of the Santa Clara River, east of the Highway 101 bridge, in Ventura County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

ESTIMATED COST: Coastal Conservancy \$4,800,000 *

* Source: Proposition 13, 2000 Water Bond River Protection Program

PROJECT SUMMARY: Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of an amount not to exceed \$4.8 million to the Nature Conservancy for the acquisition of the Camp property totalling 220 acres. Acquisition will preserve 70 acres of river and riparian habitat and allow for the restoration of 150 acres of riparian habitat. The Conservancy has an appraisal on the property and a price to which the landowner has agreed. A grant to the Nature Conservancy will assist in expediting acquisition of the property. The area currently in cultivation would be leased back until additional properties are acquired and a restoration plan for the whole reach has been completed. Part of the restoration plan will be to remove the levee on the property allowing the entire property to be restored as riparian habitat and reconnecting the property to the river.

This project is the first in a series of acquisitions leading to the creation of a fifteen-mile long park and wildlife preserve encompassing 6,400 acres and extending from the ocean to South Mountain. The Coastal Conservancy working with river landowners and its local partners has developed the acquisition and management concept of a Santa

Clara River Parkway, an unprecedented opportunity for river restoration in southern California.

The Santa Clara River Parkway has two complimentary purposes: the acquisition and public management of the river corridor to allow for habitat restoration, flood management, public enjoyment and environmental education; and the restoration of the natural processes of the river to prevent continued flood losses of habitat, farmland and public facilities.

The initial focus of the Santa Clara River Parkway effort is on the lower Santa Clara River which is home to seven endangered and two threatened species and thirteen other species or species groups of concern (Exhibit 2). More than any other section of the river, the lower river floodplain has been constrained and degraded by private levees, mining, and water facilities, reduced from its former vast extent. Typical of the historical destruction of habitat, the estuary, once 870 acres of wetlands, is now 133 acres.

Acquisition of this continuous estuarine and riverine corridor will result in the restoration of over a thousand acres of habitat that had been converted to other uses and allow the river to return to its natural cycle of meander and braided flows which is critical for the endangered fish species. The lower Santa Clara River is proposed by the National Marine Fisheries Service for listing as critical habitat for the southern steelhead. In addition to the steelhead, there are six listed threatened or endangered species and thirteen other species of concern in the lower river alone. Enhancement of approximately 3,000 acres will revive a variety of decreasing coastal wetland types including estuarine intertidal and palustrine shrub and forested habitat as well as upland coastal sage scrub on South Mountain.

The Santa Clara River is the largest (100 miles in length with a watershed of 1,460 square miles) and one of the most significant rivers in southern California. Twenty-eight listed species and species of concern inhabit the river. The agricultural and scenic heritage along the river is also a very significant part of California history and will be partially preserved and protected by the River Parkway. The most dramatic part of the river's history however, has been the flooding, from the St. Francis Dam Disaster to the devastating 1969 flood which wiped out crops and developed areas for approximately fifty miles. This river is naturally a highly dynamic system with extremely high winter flood flows but sedimentation and flooding are exacerbated by grazing and erosive agricultural practices, urban development and aggregate mining. These land uses have reduced riparian habitat to

a fraction of its former size at the same time that pollutants and concentrated flood flows have degraded the habitat that remains. However, the Santa Clara River is also unique in southern California in that most of the riverine areas that have been converted to other uses could still be restored as habitat.

Once whole reaches of the river have been acquired, private levees can be removed obviating the pressure for pilot channels, resolving long-standing regulatory battles and reducing most of the future costs of flood damage to farms and public facilities. Reestablishment of riparian areas will also stabilize banks, slow flood flows, and reduce erosion. A continuous river hiking trail connecting adjoining parks to the preserve will provide environmental education opportunities in close proximity to the schools of Ventura, Oxnard, and Santa Paula.

The project is consistent with the consensus recommendations of the recently completed, five year planning effort of the Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan (SCREMP) which included representatives of all of the interest groups on the river. The Plan encourages the purchase of property from willing sellers for the preservation of existing resources and the restoration of degraded habitat. The Coastal Conservancy or its representatives have contacted most of the property owners on the lower river all of whom have expressed interest in the proposal. Nine properties are considered likely prospects for acquisition this fiscal year.

Initial funding of Santa Clara River Parkway in the amount of \$9.2 million was included in the Coastal Conservancy's 2000/01 budget by the Governor and has been appropriated by the Legislature. The funding source is the 2000 Water Bond. The Conservancy has received a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the acquisition of estuarine habitat near the river mouth. The project has been selected as a priority project to be funded by the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project. Also, the Conservancy has applied for a \$5 million grant from the Santa Clara River Trustee Council (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and State Department of Fish and Game), which administers oil spill settlement funds to be expended for acquisition and restoration of the river.

The project has been presented to several community interest groups and has been endorsed by the City of Oxnard and City of Ventura Liaison Committee (Exhibit 3). The Coastal Conservancy has been asked by the cities of Ventura and Oxnard and a coalition of river property owners to take the lead on acquisition and on the formation of a Joint Powers Authority for ultimate management of the public lands.

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 26, 2000

**SANTA CLARA RIVER PARKWAY
CAMP ACQUISITION**

File No. 00-105
Project Manager: Peter S. Brand

STAFF

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following Resolution pursuant to Sections 31105, 31107 and 31251 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby approves the Wetland Resources Enhancement Plan for the Camp property, attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as its Exhibit (the “Enhancement Plan”), and authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed four million eight hundred thousand dollars (\$4,800,000) to the Nature Conservancy for the acquisition of the Camp property on the Santa Clara River, as described in the Enhancement Plan, subject to the following conditions:

- a. Prior to the disbursement of any funds for this acquisition, the Executive Officer shall review and approve all title and acquisition documents including but not limited to the appraisal, agreement of purchase and sale, escrow instructions and documents of title;
- b. The Nature Conservancy shall pay no more than fair market value for the property, as established by an appraisal approved by the Executive Officer; and
- c. The property shall be permanently protected for public access, open space and habitat conservation in a manner acceptable to the Executive Officer and consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31116(b);

No funds shall be disbursed until the California Coastal Commission has determined that the Enhancement Plan is in accord with the Division 20 of the Public Resources

Code and applicable local coastal programs, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 31258.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purpose and criteria set forth in Chapter 6 of the Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31241-31270) regarding enhancement of coastal resources; and with the authority of the Conservancy to acquire or give grants to acquire interests in real property for the purposes of Division 21, pursuant to Sections 31105 and 31107;
1. The proposed project is consistent with the interim Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on May 27, 1999;
2. The portion of the Santa Clara River that is within the Coastal Zone is identified as a significant and environmentally sensitive resource requiring public action to resolve existing and potential resource problems in the City of Oxnard’s certified Local Coastal Program, in the City of San Buenaventura’s certified Local Coastal Program, and in The California Department of Parks and Recreation’s Plan for McGrath State Beach Natural Preserve.”

STAFF DISCUSSION:

Project Description: Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of an amount not to exceed \$4.8 million to the Nature Conservancy for the acquisition of the Camp property totalling 220 acres. Acquisition will preserve 70 acres of river and riparian habitat and allow for the restoration of 150 acres of riparian habitat and a trail along one mile of the river. The Conservancy has an appraisal on the property and a price to which the landowner has agreed. A grant to the Nature Conservancy will assist in expediting acquisition of the property . The Santa Clara River Valley is one of four core areas that are the focus of the Nature Conservancy’s new L.A.-Ventura Project.

The area currently in cultivation would be leased back until additional properties are acquired and a restoration plan for the whole reach has been completed. Part of the restoration plan will be to remove the

levee on the property allowing the entire property to be restored as riparian habitat and reconnecting the property to the river.

The project is consistent with the consensus recommendations of the recently completed, five year planning effort of the Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan (SCREMP) which included representatives of all of the interest groups on the river. The Plan encourages the purchase of property from willing sellers for the preservation of existing resources and the restoration of degraded habitat.

The Coastal Conservancy has been asked by the cities of Ventura and Oxnard and a coalition of river property owners to take the lead on acquisition and the formation of a Joint Powers Authority for ultimate management of the public lands. A grant to the Nature Conservancy will expedite transfer of ownership and provide interim management a.

The Camp property is particularly important to the Santa Clara River Parkway concept plan. Not only can former riparian habitat be restored but also the river can be reconnected to its former floodplain. Once the adjoining reaches of the river have been acquired, private levees on the Camp property and others can be removed obviating the pressure for pilot channels, resolving longstanding regulatory battles and flood damage to farms and public facilities both up and downstream. Until additional properties have been acquired that will allow for implementation of a restoration plan, the property will be leased back allowing time for the farmer to transfer his agricultural operations to other land out of the floodplain.

The conceptual enhancement plan for the Camp property proposes various measures to enhance existing habitat that is used by many threatened coastal species and restore riparian wetlands that have been converted to agriculture. The expected results will be reduced flooding and non-point source pollution that have damaged resources downstream critical to the ecological health of the coast. The Conservancy is hiring biologists and hydrogeomorphologists to assist in the development of a strategic plan that will integrate restoration plans for different reaches of the river that can be implemented in coordination with the acquisition program.

Project Financing: Coastal Conservancy \$4,800,000

Site Description: The Camp property is generally divided into two parts, the north half in citrus agriculture, and the southern half in riparian floodplain, each separated by a private levee. The vegetation has high structural and

habitat diversity and high species richness (a large number of species for its size). In a site visit on October 2, 2000, the Conservancy's biologist observed a total of 78 species of plants onsite, consisting primarily of wetland species.

The natural vegetation consists of Freshwater Marsh, Southern Willow Riparian Scrub, Scalebroom Scrub, and Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest. The Freshwater Marsh habitats contains a rich assemblage of wetland plants and wildlife.

Several special-status species occur onsite, or are known to occur nearby. Least Bell's Vireo, a state and federally listed migratory songbird is reported to use riparian habitats onsite at the southwestern end of the property. The federally endangered Southern Steelhead Trout uses the riverbed portion of the property as a migration corridor. Santa Ana Sucker, a small minnow-like fish, is expected to occur onsite, and the Southwestern Pond Turtle likely inhabits the site.

Twenty one species of plants observed onsite are considered as species of local concern, each having fewer than ten known occurrences in Ventura County (Magney 2000). This is remarkably high number of species of special concern on one site. While none of these plants are rare in California as a whole, they can be considered rare locally, i.e. Ventura County.

The Santa Clara River is the largest river in southern California and one of the last major rivers in the region that exists in a relatively natural state. The Santa Clara originates in the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains in Los Angeles County, traverses Ventura County and flows into the Pacific Ocean halfway between the Cities of San Buenaventura and Oxnard. Its total length is approximately 100 miles with its watershed covering approximately 1,200 square miles.

The headwaters of the Santa Clara and all of its major tributaries originate on National Forest lands. The estuary at the river mouth is protected as a natural preserve within McGrath State Beach. The portion of the river in Los Angeles County is designated as a "significant ecological area" by Los Angeles County. While this designation does not convey protective status, it does recognize the biological importance of the upper Santa Clara River. The majority of the main river corridor is privately owned and not protected.

Elevations in the Santa Clara River watershed range from 8,831 feet above sea level on Mount San Piños to sea level at McGrath State Beach. Streamflows into the Santa Clara River

are highly variable. Average discharge measured at Montalvo (three miles upstream of the estuary) ranges from no flow for many days during the summer to winter flood flows over 100,000 cubic feet per second. Major floods are common on the Santa Clara, and because the river carries high sediment loads and has a broad migrating channel, flood damage has been extensive. The most damaging flood occurred in January 1969, when a peak flood of 160,000 cubic feet per second jumped the north bank of the river and destroyed the East Side Treatment Plant, Ventura Boat Harbor, and several upstream bridges.

From a biological perspective, the river is unmatched in southern California. Extensive patches of high quality riparian habitat are present along the entire length of the river. These patches serve as “stepping stones” for migratory birds traveling between riparian areas and wetlands on the south coast.

The river is also home to many species in decline throughout the southern California region. The federal listed endangered least Bell’s vireo and unarmored threespine stickleback are two such species. Projections in the draft recovery plan for the vireo indicates that approximately 4,500 acres of riparian habitat on the Santa Clara River could support 625 territorial male vireos, more than any other southern California river, making the Santa Clara the site for a new population stronghold. Likewise, two reaches of the river in Los Angeles County are designated as essential habitat for the stickleback. Without these areas, the sticklebacks, vireos, and the other endangered or candidate species (*e.g.*, least tern, tidewater goby, *etc.*) will face localized extinction and possible extirpation from the region.

The Santa Clara River is a highly dynamic system susceptible to episodic flood events, most recently in 1969, 1978, and 1995. Natural processes such as flooding and fire, and historic land use practices such as grazing, agriculture, urban development, and aggregate mining have influenced the geomorphic characteristics of the watershed. Use of the watershed has changed from grazing to agriculture and urban development in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties over the past two centuries. In the 1900s the trend of narrowing the river for agricultural land reclamation and increasing urban development up to the river banks have created a narrower river/riparian corridor with a greater potential for erosion damage. Local efforts at bank stabilization have required frequent maintenance and raised

concerns that the methods used for channel stabilization at one location could be aggravating bank erosion at another location.

With the exception of the mouth (McGrath State Beach), headwaters, and tributaries (National Forests), the river is all privately owned. Access to the main river corridor is very limited and difficult.

Project History: In August 1992 the Coastal Conservancy authorized the disbursement of \$200,000 as part of a \$710,000, 11-agency program to develop an enhancement and management plan for the Santa Clara River watershed. Nine main categories were identified to be the basis of the study: agriculture, aggregate extraction, biological resources, cultural resources, development, flood control, public access and recreation, transportation, and water supply. Additionally, protecting property rights and standardizing regulatory procedures were important sub-topics. The Management Plan Project Steering Committee has contracted for and produced ten reports on the history and resources of the river as well as a GIS mapping program for the river corridor.

The Conservancy has authorized disbursement of \$140,000 for the preparation of CEQA documentation and related environmental studies and analyses necessary to the completion of the Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan. The County of Ventura and the County of Los Angeles have committed \$100,000 to match the proposed Conservancy contribution.

The management plan resource reports and proposed recommendations now need to be analyzed for their potential environmental impacts and redrafted and synthesized into a final report. Further studies will be done to assess the feasibility of specific restoration measures that could be undertaken following adoption of the plan. The revised and refined enhancement plan, along with the CEQA documents will then be presented to the Conservancy and many of the participating agencies for their consideration and possible approval or adoption.

In 1996, the Conservancy in conjunction with its plan partners determined that demonstration projects were urgently needed to show the feasibility of streambank stabilization using biotechnical techniques. After studies of alternate sites and methods, Valley View Ranch near Santa Paula was selected. An enhancement plan was prepared and approved for reach five of the river, including this property. The Conservancy authorized phased acquisition of the ranch in 1997. The Conservancy, the

owner, and Friends of the Santa Clara River continue to work together to complete permitting and acquisition documents required for the sale and transfer.

Three properties at the mouth of the Santa Clara River and at the adjoining McGrath Lake have been recommended for acquisition in the draft river enhancement and management plan and in the McGrath State Beach General Plan. On August 20, 1998, the Conservancy authorized an appraisal of these properties which will be complete in October 1999.

PROJECT SUPPORT: The Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan has the support of Assemblyman Jack O'Connell, the City of Santa Clara, the City of Fillmore, the City of Santa Paula, the City of San Buenaventura, the Ventura County Resource Conservation District, the United Water Conservation District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, CalTrans, the Coastal Commission staff, the California Department of Fish and Game, the Angeles National Forest, the Los Padres National Forest, the Ventura County Farm Bureau, the sand and gravel industry, the State Parks Foundation, the Nature Conservancy, and the Audubon Society.

**CONSISTENCY WITH
CONSERVANCY'S**

ENABLING LEGISLATION: This project is undertaken pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code; in particular Chapter 6 (Public Resources Code Sections 31251-31270).

Consistent with Sections 31105 and 31251, the Conservancy may award grants to acquire or may acquire lands that have suffered losses of natural and scenic values as a result of human actions.

Pursuant to Section 31251.2, in order to enhance the natural character of coastal resources within the coastal zone, the Conservancy may undertake a project or award a grant to enhance a watershed resource partly outside the coastal zone. The Santa Clara River Parkway project will result in improved coastal resource management and will enhance the natural and scenic character of the river and its watershed. The Santa Clara River has suffered a loss of habitat values as a result of land use and flood control practices. Unless alternatives are developed that reduce these losses, habitat will continue to degrade.

Consistent with Section 31252, the tidal portion of the Santa Clara River is identified in the City of San Buenaventura's certified Local Coastal Program as needing public action to resolve existing and potential resource problems. The inland portions of the river also are identified in the Ventura County Certified Local Coastal Program, the Los Angeles County, City of Santa Clarita, City of Santa Paula, and City of Fillmore General Plans as a significant ecological resource in need of public action to resolve existing and potential resource problems. The Santa Clara River Parkway project would address existing and potential resource problems and craft long-term solutions for resolving these problems. Consistent with Section 31258, the Enhancement Plan will be forwarded to the Coastal Commission for review, because it involves areas both within the Commission's retained jurisdiction and areas in which two or more local governments have jurisdiction.

Consistent with Section 31253, the level of Conservancy funding for this project has been determined through consideration of the total amount of funding available for coastal resource projects, the relative urgency of the project, and other factors prescribed by the Conservancy, as detailed below.

CONSISTENCY WITH
CONSERVANCY'S
PROGRAM GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's interim Program Guidelines adopted May 27, 1999, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes: see above.

Consistency with the purposes of the funding source: The project is consistent with the funding source. The River Protection Program provides for acquisition and restoration of riparian habitat, riverine aquatic habitat, and other lands in close proximity to rivers and streams and for river and stream trail projects undertaken in accordance with among other things the statutory provisions of Chapter 6 of Division 21, the Conservancy's enabling legislation.

Support: The project is supported by the federal and state resource agencies and local governments and resident representatives in the watershed.

Location: The project advances the objectives of planning for and restoring the natural resources of a coastal watershed. The project area is outside the coastal zone but will have direct beneficial impacts on the river's coastal resources.

Need: The Conservancy has been a key partner, along with the counties of Ventura and Los Angeles, in the funding and implementation plans for restoration of the Santa Clara River.

Urgency: There are 28 species of special concern on the Santa Clara River. Much of the habitat along the river has either been converted to other uses or is degraded due to flooding and pollution. Agricultural lands along the river, among the most productive in the nation, are endangered by severe flooding that is increasing due to development. Newhall Land and Farming has recently received development approvals for approximately 6,000 acres of its 12,000-acre holdings in Los Angeles County. Newhall owns 15,000 acres in Ventura County downstream from its current development and is considering future development of these lands along the Santa Clara River.

Additional Criteria

Greater-than-local-interest: The Santa Clara River was selected by a federal task force as one of the top 11 rivers in the country for its American Heritage River designation.

Resolution of more than one issue: The enhancement plan will help resolve several issues including flood management, habitat loss, sedimentation, erosion, water quality impairments, recreation, and mining.

Leverage: Conservancy funding is expected to leverage \$5 million of oil spill settlement funds for allocation to the Santa Clara River Parkway project.

Conflict Resolution: Conflicts exist among the 27 stakeholder representatives involved in formulating the plan. The draft plan includes a list of 35 riverwide recommendations agreed to by the Plan Committee and 50 recommendations specific to different reaches along the river. These recommendations if implemented will resolve many longstanding conflicts about the current use and the future of the Santa Clara River.

Cooperation: All of the federal and state resource agencies and local jurisdictions and landowner group representatives have participated in the planning process.

**CONSISTENCY WITH
THE COASTAL ACT:**

The proposed project would be consistent with the following specific policies of the Coastal Act:

Public Resources Code Section 30231 states that the “biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms . . . shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored. . . .”

Public Resources Code Section 30240 states that “environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas.”

The City of San Buenaventura, City of Oxnard, and the County of Ventura’s certified Local Coastal Programs identified the Santa Clara River as an environmentally sensitive resource that should be protected and restored.

**COMPLIANCE
WITH CEQA:**

The Wetland Resources Enhancement Plan for the Camp property recommends acquisition and further planning to develop wetland restoration opportunities on the properties to be acquired. Acquisition and partial sale of these properties is categorically exempt from review of environmental impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act because the transfers of ownership or interest in land is for the purpose of preserving open space (14 California Code of Regulations Section 15325) and for wildlife conservation purposes (14 California Code of Regulations Section 15313). The disbursement of funds for planning, feasibility studies, and property studies is statutorily exempt from review of environmental impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act in that it consists of planning studies only (14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262). Wetland restoration and management plans will consider environmental factors and will be subject to CEQA review and analysis prior to implementation. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption with regard to actions recommended in the Enhancement Plan following Conservancy authorization.

