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**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

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

County Clerk of: San Mateo

Project Title: Environmental Review for San Gregorio Creek Habitat Enhancement at  
Apple Orchard, Phase 2

Project Location: Off of La Honda Road (Hwy 84), 6.5 miles east of its intersection with Highway 1

City and County: Unincorporated, San Mateo County

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Description of Nature and Purpose of Project:

The San Gregorio Creek Habitat Enhancement at Apple Orchard, Phase 2 (project) will enhance creek habitat to benefit species at risk of extinction including federally threatened steelhead, federally endangered coho salmon, as well as other native aquatic species. The project will improve creek habitat through installation of natural habitat features to increase complexity to provide the diversity of habitat fish need to forage, take refuge, rest, rear, and spawn. The project is located on a property that is used primarily for agriculture and is surrounded by parcels zoned for the same use.

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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: Christina Kelleher Telephone: 650-712-7765 ext. 127

EXEMPT STATUS:

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

Remarks: See next page.

Date of Determination: January 31, 2024

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

*Christina Kelleher*

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Christina Kelleher, Conservation Project Manager

## REMARKS:

The San Gregorio Creek Habitat Enhancement Apple Orchard, Phase 2 (project) will enhance creek habitat to benefit species at risk of extinction including federally threatened steelhead, federally endangered coho salmon, as well as other native aquatic species. The following provides a brief description of the project, and an explanation for why the project qualifies for exemption from CEQA environmental review under Class 33, Section 15333 (Small Habitat Restoration).

### Project Description:

The San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) proposes to enhance creek habitat in San Gregorio Creek watershed to benefit federally threatened steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and federally endangered coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) as well as other native aquatic species such as species of concern Pacific lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*). The project will improve creek habitat through installation of natural habitat features using large woody debris to increase pool frequency, rearing habitat, and cover for juvenile salmonids. The property, located in unincorporated San Mateo County, CA is used primarily for agriculture and is surrounded by other parcels zoned for the same use.

Installation of these habitat features in the creek will interrupt and decrease water velocities during winter high flows, create side-channel habitat where feasible, increase size and cover of pools during summer low flows, and sort and store sediment. These enhancements provide the diversity of habitat fish need to forage, take refuge, rest, rear, and spawn. The goals of these structures are to improve cover in existing pools, scour new pools, provide high-flow and low-velocity refugia, provide physical cover, enhance floodplain habitat, and aggrade material to improve floodplain connectivity.

The project will install 10 large wood habitat features over 0.36 miles of creek, with a total of 15-17 pieces of large wood. At seven of the sites the project will modify or increase the sizes of existing features installed during phase I of the project in 2016 to enhance their habitat benefits. Feature installation at these sites as well as one new site, will use an anchored method and utilize on-site materials where possible. These eight structure designs each include 1-3 redwood logs sourced onsite. Some structures will also use anchor boulders, and some include alders and other slash wood. For structures that do not include anchor boulders, soil anchors will be used to secure the structures. At each of the two remaining sites, 1-3 trees will be strategically felled into the creek into desired positions to optimize habitat benefits (e.g., cover for juvenile salmonids). Construction is planned to take place in late summer and fall 2024 or 2025, beginning as early as August 2 and ending by October 31. Construction activities are expected to last for approximately six weeks.

### 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 project will not exceed 5 acres in size and is designed to improve habitat for listed and native fish species and meets the criteria for this exemption as summarized below:

- (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 and endangered fish. The project would provide the diversity of habitat fish need to forage, take refuge, rest, rear, and spawn.

To the maximum extent possible, temporary and localized impacts to sensitive habitats would be minimized by implementing the avoidance and minimization measures and construction-related best management practices. All anchored wood will use hardware as described in CDFG's California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual, 4th edition (CDFG 1998). Instream structure is provided by strategically placing appropriately sized logs or logs with rootwads in the channel. For this project, wood placement will be done from the top of bank and will not require equipment to work in the wetted channel. All work along the banks will be conducted with a rubber-tired tractor to reduce impacts to the soil. All logs will be anchored to existing mature riparian vegetation or boulders with the intent of minimizing downstream movement while providing a collection point for existing instream large and small wood. Small woody debris may also be added with project logs as described in the site designs. Where feasible, project wood will be sourced from onsite, non-riparian standing trees. The size of logs, number of logs and the spacing between project sites are designed to reflect natural stream dynamics and help in achieving restoration of the stream's original heterogeneous nature. Construction within the creek will occur during the dry season, minimizing the potential for erosion and any construction-related effects on aquatic species and other wildlife. 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 does not have the potential to 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*

No hazardous materials are known to the site or project vicinity.

*(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 because all such projects comply with requirements of regulatory permits issued for the purpose of protecting natural resources. Overall, the project would improve fish habitat in the creek. The project would not adversely affect farmland, public services, geologic stability, soils, or health risk. 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; and*

The project would be exempt under the above-cited classifications as it involves restoration of San Gregorio Creek for the primary purpose of habitat improvement for native fish through installation of large wood features to provide the diversity of habitat fish need to forage, take refuge, rest, rear, and spawn. The goals

of the large wood structures are to improve cover in existing pools, scour new pools, provide high-flow and low-velocity refugia, provide physical cover, enhance floodplain habitat, aggrade material to improve floodplain connectivity, and reduce incision and sediment deposition by slowing flows.

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.

## REFERENCES

Alford, C. 2013. San Gregorio Creek Large Woody Debris Inventory and Assessment Report, prepared for San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, American Rivers California Conservation Program, Publication No. AR-CA-2013-01, 44 p.

California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). 1998. California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual. Fourth Edition. Available online at:  
<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=22610&inline>

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). 2012. Recovery plan for the evolutionarily significant unit of Central California Coast coho salmon. Volume 1. National Marine Fisheries Service., Southwest Region. Available online at: <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/15987>

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). 2016. Final Coastal Multispecies Recovery Plan for California Coastal Chinook Salmon, Northern California Steelhead and Central California Coast Steelhead. Available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/final-coastal-multispecies-recovery-plan-california-coastal-chinook-salmon>

Stillwater Sciences. 2010. San Gregorio Creek Watershed Management Plan. Available online at:  
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