

March 23, 2018

Chair Bochco  
California Coastal Commission  
45 Fremont Street, Suite 2000  
San Francisco, CA 94105-2219

Re: Support for the Quiroste Valley Cultural Preserve – Vegetation Management Project

Dear Chair Bochco,

The San Mateo Resource Conservation District is an enthusiastic partner to California State Parks and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band in our shared effort to implement the Quiroste Valley Cultural Preserve – Vegetation Management Project.

In its 2006 review of the status of the endangered San Francisco garter snake, the US Fish and Wildlife Service identified encroachment of woody vegetation as second only to development and urbanization in threatening the survival of the species. It further describes how the encroachment is not natural, but rather is the result of human intervention that has removed natural disturbance from the landscape.

When unanimously approving the Coastal Development Permit for this project, multiple members of the San Mateo County Planning Commission expressed their surprise to be voting in support of removing thousands of young trees. The commissioners indicated an understanding that such vegetation management was necessary to protect culturally and biologically significant grassland communities, and that the temporary impacts of manual tree removal are minor compared to the threats to diminishing grasslands posed by forest encroachment.

Restoration practitioners in this region confront significant barriers to our work. A single small project to restore habitat for a critically endangered species may require 7 or more local, state, and federal permits that can take a year or two to secure; cost tens of thousands of dollars or more (sometimes more than the cost of implementing the project); severely constrain the ability to meet project goals; and contain contradictory requirements from different permitting agencies. These challenges, and any other delays or reductions in scale, inhibit our ability to prevent species extinction before it is too late.

Many conservation organizations in the region are hopeful that this well-conceived project, based on more than a decade of research, that directly addresses a known threat to species recovery, under the management of an experienced and reputable project team, may proceed. The San Mateo Resource Conservation District is committed to working with the project partners to ensure the success of the project as well as future stewardship of the property.

Sincerely,



Kellyx Nelson  
Executive Director