

Kellyx Nelson

From: Kellyx Nelson
Sent: Friday, January 12, 2024 5:23 PM
To: Erik.Ekdahl@waterboards.ca.gov; Esquivel, Joaquin@Waterboards
Cc: Matt Clifford; Jarrad Fisher; Brian Johnson; matthew.mccarthy@waterboards.ca.gov
Subject: Appreciation for the innovation and effort of staff to advance climate resiliency projects

January 12, 2024

Joaquin Esquivel
Chair
State Water Resource Control Board

Erik Ekdahl
Deputy Director, Division of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board

Dear Joaquin and Erik,

On behalf of the San Mateo Resource Conservation District and Trout Unlimited, we are writing to express our appreciation for recent efforts by staff at Division of Water Rights to decrease processing times for water rights approvals for projects to enhance instream flow. As Erik knows, our organizations have been partnering for years on projects that seek to improve streamflow in San Mateo County creeks and help to create win-win solutions for people and wildlife in the face of climate change. Because these projects are funded with public grants that come with limited timelines, the ability to expeditiously process water right approvals is a key factor that contributes to the overall success of this work.

A prime example of this work is the Backfield Floodplain and Streamflow Enhancement Project on Butano Creek, which is the latest in a series of projects that work with local farmers to change the timing of existing diversion from the dry season to the wet season through the installation of off-stream storage ponds. The success of these projects hinges on our ability to expeditiously secure the new appropriative water rights that are needed to fill the ponds in the winter season.

Thanks to a concerted effort by your staff, the draft permit for this project was issued just *58 days* after the application was complete! This is by far the fastest we and our partners have ever heard of an application being processed, and faster than we ever thought possible. We particularly want to call out the work of Matt McCarthy, who was our prime contact for the application, while we are sure that other staff were key to this result as well.

We appreciate the significant recent efforts of the State Water Resources Control Board to expedite and simplify permitting of projects that are critically needed to protect water resources, including the Statewide Restoration General Order. This more recent accomplishment of the water rights team bodes well for broader efforts to improve climate resiliency in coastal watersheds by enabling water users to change their water management to reduce reliance on dry season diversion at scale. While we recognize that water rights processes often involve complex issues affecting multiple users with vested rights, and this kind of speed will not be possible in every case, we think this project is a demonstration of what can be achieved.

We are grateful for your staff's partnership, innovation, and effort as we look forward to continuing to work with you all on our shared goals.

Sincerely,

Kellyx Nelson – Executive Director
San Mateo Resource Conservation District

Matt Clifford - California Director of Law and Policy
Trout Unlimited

