



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
777 Sonoma Avenue, Room 325
Santa Rosa, California 95404-4731

April 13, 2020

Supervisor James Gore
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
575 Administration Drive, Room 100 A
Santa Rosa, California 95403

Johannes Hoevertsz
Sonoma County Transportation & Public Works
La Plaza B
2300 County Center Drive, Suite B 100
Santa Rosa, California 95403

RE: Sonoma County Board Item #2019-1710: Asti Summer Bridge Permanent Solutions and Request for Letter of Recommendation

Dear Supervisor Gore

This letter is in regards to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) recommendation for support of a permanent bridge at the Asti Crossing location on the Russian River, Sonoma County. We understand that Sonoma County is undertaking a comprehensive plan to create a permanent bridge at this location. The temporary bridge at the Asti Crossing is installed annually during the summer season by Sonoma County Transportation and Public Works Department. In our Biological Opinion dated June 3, 2009, for consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) permit for this project, NMFS evaluated the projects impacts on Endangered Species Act (ESA) federally listed salmonids including endangered Central California Coast (CCC) coho salmon, threatened CCC steelhead, and California Coastal (CC) Chinook salmon and their associated critical habitat designations. Potential effects to listed species and critical habitat include: crushing of juvenile salmonids, increases in turbidity, alteration in flow, and loss of invertebrates and prey for salmonids. These effects occur from impacts of the activities associated with annual bridge and fill installation including: gravel bar skimming, placement of gravel within the wetted channel and channel realignment, fish re-location prior to dewatering, and bridge removal. While NMFS and other resource agencies include best management practices and minimization and avoidance measures to avoid take of listed species, incidental take of anadromous fish and other species, still occurs.

Given that all of these impacts occur annually and are associated with the construction activities twice a year (i.e., during installation and removal), and not from the operation or existence of the bridge itself, installation of a permanent bridge would eliminate these annual impacts following the initial construction of a permanent bridge. Additionally, NMFS Biological Opinion includes a Conservation Measure intended to minimize or avoid adverse effects of the proposed action on listed species, which directs the Corps to "work with the County of Sonoma to explore alternatives that



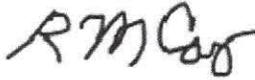
would reduce or alleviate the need to place fill material in the flowing water of the Russian River annually”.

Installation of a permanent bridge would fulfill this conservation measure, and would eliminate bi-annual impacts associated with temporary bridge construction and removal. Note that construction of the permanent bridge would require consultation with NMFS, and we encourage you to involve NMFS early in that process to provide technical assistance.

Therefore, towards reducing the impacts on ESA listed species, and additionally serving the County and local community towards addressing their fire and flood safety concerns, NMFS would support the concept of a permanent bridge, and will work with the County, the Corps, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and other resource agencies towards pursuing this goal and future permitting for eventual construction.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me by telephone at (707) 575-6090 or via email at bob.coey@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R M Coey', written in a cursive style.

Robert Coey
North Coast Branch Chief
North-Central Coast Office

cc: Eric Larson, CDFW Fairfield
Craig Weightman, CDFW Fairfield