



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Region
777 Sonoma Ave., Room 325
Santa Rosa, CA 95404-4731

February 3, 2010

In response refer to:
SWR/F/SWR3:CAA

Supervisor Steve Kinsey
Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 329
San Rafael, California 94903

Dear Supervisor Kinsey:

The purpose of this letter is to express NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) support for the fundamental framework and priorities outlined by the San Geronimo Valley Salmon Enhancement Plan (SEP). The SEP is a Marin County Department of Public Works document, and identifies relevant actions and strategies to promote natural watershed processes that in turn may improve salmon and steelhead (salmonid) survival in the San Geronimo Creek watershed. The SEP is proposing a process to evaluate watershed functions using habitat targets to identify factors most limiting to salmonids in San Geronimo Creek. These targets can be evaluated and tracked to measure improvements in watershed conditions, salmonid survival, and status of salmonid populations through time.

We are planning for NMFS to release the draft federal recovery plan for the Central California Coast (CCC) coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) Evolutionarily Significant Unit for public review in March 2010. The SEP population goals, habitat targets, and recommended actions are closely aligned with recommendations forthcoming in this draft recovery plan. We initially had concerns about the 35-foot stream enhancement zone described in the SEP, but now have the understanding this is intended to describe the zone of first priority for voluntary riparian restoration measures, and is not a riparian buffer. The 100-foot setback as described by the Marin County Wide Plan as a buffer is consistent with NMFS' recommendations for buffering streams from adjacent land use practices.

The situation for CCC coho salmon is dire; extinction of salmon on the central coast is possible unless significant protections are implemented in the immediate future. The draft coho recovery plan identifies critical watersheds where increasing survival of CCC coho salmon is paramount. San Geronimo Creek is one of the highest priority areas for increasing survival identified by the draft recovery plan and the SEP supports this goal.



The County and its partners have worked hard to develop a comprehensive approach and an implementation plan to rehabilitate critical coho habitat and support recovery of the population. We look forward to working in partnership with Marin County to provide support in implementing this critically important plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick Butler", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dick Butler
Santa Rosa Area Office Supervisor
Protected Resources Division