

In December 2003, the California Coastal Conservancy provided \$453,000 in grant funding for the *Santa Barbara County Fish Passage Project Development Program* to be managed by the Santa Barbara County Water Agency. The Program was developed to expedite the planning, design and permitting of local fish barrier modification projects. This program focuses only on South Coast streams because projects in northern Santa Barbara County watersheds (Sisquoc and Santa Ynez River) are predominantly on private or Forest Service property (Sisquoc) or have a process in place for fish passage project completion, such as the *Lower Santa Ynez River Fish Management Plan*.

Through this program, the Santa Barbara County Water Agency is working with landowners, regulatory agencies and local fisheries restoration advocacy groups to develop a strategy for prioritizing the local fish passage improvement project inventory. Several projects from this list would then be planned, designed, and permitted with this grant funding. Through the process described below, Carpinteria Creek was selected as a focus for project implementation. Carpinteria Creek rose to the top of the list because of the dedicated watershed group, the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition, and because of the excellent opportunity the creek presents for steelhead restoration.

The project selection process began at a workshop in December 2003, where interested members of the public, regulatory agencies, and local fisheries restoration advocates developed a prioritization strategy, and formed a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to implement the strategy to create the list of projects to be completed under the grant program.

In March 2004, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) developed a first draft of the watershed priority list based on the biological and physical habitat information that was already compiled in the *Steelhead Assessment and Recovery Opportunities In Southern Santa Barbara County, California* (Stoecker, 2002). The TAC then selected priority watersheds using the watershed ranking in the Stoecker 2002 report and rankings submitted by the December 2003 workshop participants. Finally, the TAC reviewed the two lists, and removed from consideration the watersheds where all migration barriers were already being addressed and agreed to focus on the top five watersheds from that list to find projects for this program.

The TAC then focused on watersheds where the Coastal Conservancy grant funding could provide planning, design and permitting of projects that, when constructed could potentially open the entire watershed to steelhead migration. With estimates that six to 10 barriers could be removed with this amount of funding, and eliminating barriers that would require millions of dollars in funding to complete, the TAC narrowed the list to two watersheds with a small number of various types of barriers that needed to be addressed.

The TAC then moved on to the ranking of individual barriers. The ranking criteria for this part of the process included the Extent of the Barrier (Total/Partial/Temporal); Quality of Habitat above the Barrier; Fish are present now; Willing Landowners; One of the Barrier Types Needed for Demonstration Purposes (culvert, debris basin, channelized

section, Arizona crossing); Bang for Buck – Most watershed opened for least cost; Barrier Type (Man-made vs. Natural); and Feasibility.

This effort resulted in the project focus on Carpinteria Creek, San Ysidro Creek and Montecito Creek Watersheds. The projects are (by barrier type - in no particular order):

Channelized Sections:

- San Ysidro Barrier #2 – Bridge abutments - UPRR/SBCPWRD
- Montecito Barrier #1 - Channelized Section at the Mouth of Montecito Creek
- Montecito Barrier #11– Arched Driveway Bridge and Concrete lined Channel
- Montecito Barrier #14 - Concrete Channel

Grade Control Structure:

- San Ysidro Barrier #9 – Pipeline - Montecito Water District
- Montecito Barrier #19 - Grade Control Structure above Highway 1

Culverts:

- Gobernador Barrier #5 – Road crossing
- Carpinteria Barrier #6 – Road crossing

Debris Basins:

- Gobernador Debris Basin
- Carpinteria Creek Debris Basin
- San Ysidro Creek Debris Basin

The County hired Questa Engineering to conduct the planning and design of modifications for the selected barriers. Landowner outreach is coordinated through existing watershed groups or, if no watershed group exists, will be conducted with a targeted effort to landowners with fish passage barriers selected by the TAC. Completion of the project design process is planned for June 2006, and then grant funds will be pursued to construct the projects. For more information on this project, please contact Rory Lang, County Water Agency, at 568-3545.