



CONCEPTION COAST PROJECT

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GK/AJF
STATE WATER RESOURCES
CONTROL BOARD
2003 OCT -1 PM 1:50
DIV. OF WATER RIGHTS
SACRAMENTO

9/25/03

Andy Fecko
State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
1001 "I" Street
Sacramento, Ca 95812

RE: Comments on Draft EIR to Protect Public Resources in the Santa Ynez River

State Water Resources Control Board,

Southern Steelhead are an endangered species of great concern for our region. Conception Coast Project, our constituents and many of our collaborators are working to bring back Southern Steelhead from near extinction to their righteous place in our region. There is a great opportunity to recover this species in the Santa Ynez River where its numbers ranged upwards of twenty thousand. Our community and Southern Steelhead can coexist in order to save the species and strengthen our region.

Steelhead are a public trust resource, and the DEIR should have targets to restoring steelhead back to the Santa Ynez. It should be quantified with targets to monitor the success of restoration and returned flow efforts. This is not addressed in the DEIR and should be indicated because our community wants to restore a healthy population of Southern Steelhead.

DFG Section 5937 requires that steelhead are kept in 'good condition' below the dam. This is not currently happening and ensuring that the fish are in good condition needs to be indicated in the EIR. Greater minimum flows and continuous flows downstream need to be addressed in the DEIR to maintain healthy populations of fish in order to follow the guidelines of DFG Section 5937.

A healthy population requires quality habitat. The vast majority of quality spawning habitat occurs above Bradbury Dam at the historic spawning grounds. The DEIR does not look at bringing Southern Steelhead to the quality habitat above Bradbury Dam. There is a limited number of spawning areas below Bradbury but over eighty percent of the historic spawning areas are above the dam. We need to look long term about getting fish above the dam.

Our community and steelhead can live together. We can implement conservation methods that allow water to be available for both man and fish. We have the technologies and the community support to implement conservation methods.

We have a unique opportunity to bring Southern Steelhead back from near extinction. I hope you incorporate these changes to make every effort to ensure you protect the public trust resources of Southern Steelhead.

Sincerely,

James Studarus
Operations Manager