

WALNUT CREEK
WATERSHED
COUNCIL

August 17, 2024

Mr. Warren Lai
Public Works Director and Chief Engineer
Contra Costa County Flood Control & Water Conservation District
255 Glacier Drive
Martinez, CA 94553

Subject: Letter of Support for a USACE CAP 1135 'new start' on Walnut Creek Drop Structure No. 1 in Contra Costa County

Dear Mr. Lai,

The Walnut Creek Watershed Council (Council) wishes to express its strong support for the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (Flood Control District) to submit a project for the remediation of Drop Structure 1 on Walnut Creek as a USACE CAP 1135 'new start.' This 'new start' would initiate a study to mitigate a significant barrier to fish migration that was constructed by the Corps as part of the Walnut Creek flood protection project over 50 years ago. It is a significant impediment to anadromous fish passage, creating an impassible ten-foot barrier. Drop Structure # 1 is the first barrier along Walnut Creek upstream from its discharge into the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary. The Walnut Creek Watershed once hosted a thriving anadromous fishery, before it was significantly modified by the USACE.

After the significant storm in October 2021, we observed many chinook salmon at the base of Drop Structure #1. They were not able to get above the structure, and most were ultimately taken by poachers.

The Council has been an active partner with the Flood Control District since our inception over ten years ago. The Board of Directors of the Council consists of a representative from each local community stewardship group that has a focus on watershed restoration. With these 'Friends of the Creek' groups, we provide an inclusive, invested forum for public discourse on flood protection, creek stewardship, invasive plant removal, and other watershed issues. We are excited about partnering with the Flood Control District throughout the investigations and community conversations that would be a part of this study.

With the support of the Flood Control District, the Council has prepared a draft list of potential restoration sites within the middle part of the watershed (upstream of the Lower Walnut Creek project, but not including potential sites in the upper watershed areas, which are mostly part of the regional or state park systems). Drop Structure #1 is at the top of our list.

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Our Board of Directors voted unanimously to support this 'new start' project, and we are eager for it to commence and to work with the Flood Control District on it. Please feel free to contact me at bobsimmons2866@gmail.com or at (925) 588-9914 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Bob Simmons

Bob Simmons, President
Walnut Creek Watershed Council