



From the Desk of **STEVE BENNETT**
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**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF VENTURA**

GOVERNMENT CENTER, HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
800 SOUTH VICTORIA AVENUE, VENTURA, CALIFORNIA 93009

September 6, 2005

Mike Chrisman, Chair
California Ocean Protection Council
California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Support for Matilija Dam Project

Dear Chair Chrisman:

I am writing to express my support for the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project and Ventura River restoration effort.

Constructed in 1947 by the Ventura County Watershed Protection District, Matilija Dam was intended to provide a local water supply for agricultural needs while offering limited flood protection for downstream communities. Over its 50 years of life, the deposition of sediment behind the dam has nearly eliminated both of those original functions. Additionally, the dam is a barrier to fish passage, blocking 17 miles of the historically pristine rearing and spawning habitat of the endangered southern steelhead trout. Further, blockage of natural sediment transport to the ocean has starved local beaches and the Ventura River for fifty years, and without dam removal this damage to the coastline and river will continue for many decades to come.

In June 2001, the US Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the Ventura County Watershed Protection District, initiated a feasibility study to assess the extent of Federal interest in removing the dam and restoring the ecosystem. The feasibility study was completed in December 2004, and in July 2005 the team initiated the design phase of the project. Throughout this effort, the State of California, through the participation of the Coastal Conservancy, has played a key stakeholder role in the success of this project.

Mike Chrisman
September 6, 2005
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The plan to remove Matilija Dam and restore the ecosystem is actively supported by local, State and Federal agencies, non-governmental agencies, and many individual citizens committed to protecting their community's natural resources. The expeditious removal of Matilija Dam will provide for the recovery of California's endangered southern steelhead trout, the restoration of historic outdoor recreational opportunities, and replenishment of Ventura County's coastal beaches and restoration of the Ventura River.

I support the recommendation before the Ocean Protection Council and would respectfully urge the Council to make the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project a high priority and provide funding for the engineering and design phase of the project.

Sincerely,



Steve Bennett
Supervisor, First District



VENTURA COUNTY

PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY
RONALD C. COONS
Agency Director

WATERSHED PROTECTION DISTRICT

September 7, 2005

Mike Chrisman, Chair
California Ocean Protection Council
California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Jeff Pratt

District Director

Lawrence Jackson

Water Quality/Environmental

Peter Sheydayi

Design/Construction

Sergio Vargas

Planning/Regulatory

Tom Lagier

Operations/Maintenance

Lowell Preston, Ph.D.

Water Resources Division

Subject: Support for the Matilija Dam Project

Dear Chair Chrisman:

On behalf of the Ventura County Watershed Protection District (District), I am writing to express support for the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project and Ventura River restoration effort.

The Matilija Dam, constructed in 1947 by the District, was intended to provide a local water supply for agricultural needs, while offering limited flood protection for downstream communities. Over its 50 years of life, the build-up of sediment behind the dam wall has undermined both of those original functions. Currently an estimated six million cubic yards of sediment lie behind the dam wall, leaving only a small, shallow reservoir that currently holds less than 500 acre-feet of water. In addition, the presence of the dam has adversely impacted the ecosystems of the Ventura River and the Matilija Creek, preventing the natural flow of sand and sediment from the mountains to the beaches and blocking endangered southern steelhead trout from reaching the place of their ancestral spawning and rearing. Today, more than half of the original steelhead spawning habitat lies locked behind the dam.

In June 2001, the US Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the District, initiated a feasibility study to assess the extent of Federal interest in removing the dam and restoring the ecosystem. In an effort to reach consensus among the many stakeholders, work groups were formed to address environmental concerns, public outreach, recreation, plan formulation, technical studies, and funding opportunities. The feasibility study was completed in December 2004, and in July 2005, the team initiated the design phase of the project. Key to these efforts was the support we received through the participation of the Coastal Conservancy.

Mike Chrisman, Chair

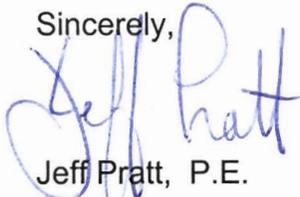
September 2, 2004

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The plan to remove Matilija Dam and restore the ecosystem is actively supported by local governments, residents, and a broad coalition of State and Federal stakeholder organizations. The expeditious removal of Matilija Dam will provide for the recovery of California's endangered southern steelhead trout, the restoration of historic outdoor recreational opportunities, and replenishment of Ventura County's coastal beaches.

Therefore, the District supports the recommendation before the Council and respectfully urges your favorable consideration of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Sincerely,



Jeff Pratt, P.E.
Director

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Surfrider Foundation
Ventura County Chapter – Matilija Coalition
239 W Main St., Ventura, CA 93001
(805) 667-2222 www.matilija-coalition.org



September 2, 2005

Mike Chrisman, Chair
California Ocean Protection Council
California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Support for Matilija Dam Studies

Dear Chair Chrisman:

I am writing on behalf of the Matilija Coalition, a group of environmental and citizen organizations working to restore the Ventura River watershed through the removal of Matilija Dam. The Matilija Coalition was formed in 2000 under leadership from the Surfrider Foundation, and serves as the primary public representative in the multi-agency effort to decommission Matilija Dam.

It is now widely recognized that human impacts to the coastal watersheds in Southern California have resulted in long-term degradation of coastal resources. This is especially evident in the loss of recreational beaches due to beach erosion and the endangered status of native anadromous fisheries.

Over the past decade, the Surfrider Foundation has taken a leadership role in presenting viable solutions to the crisis facing our coast. In this case, we have successfully worked with local, state, and federal agencies to take our proposal for dam removal, something that was once considered a radical concept, through to a completed federal feasibility study. Our goals have been to restore natural watershed processes to renew the natural coastal sediment supplies, and to provide fish passage to the historical spawning streams of the federally endangered southern steelhead trout.

Since the first studies began in 1998, the State of California has provided the necessary support through the Coastal Conservancy. We now know that it is entirely feasible to decommission Matilija Dam, and the studies clearly document the environmental benefits of doing so. But with every winter storm that passes, Matilija Dam traps more beach sediment and limits the survival and recovery of the native steelhead trout.

Continued support from the State of California is needed to ensure that this effort is completed as quickly as possible. We recommend that the Ocean Council recognizes the Matilija Dam project as a high priority in the state Ocean Agenda, and provide the funding necessary for the final design/engineering phase. Upon its completion, this precedent-setting Ecosystem Restoration project will establish the State of California as a world leader in the restoration of our coastal resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Paul Jenkin".

A. Paul Jenkin
Coordinator, Matilija Coalition
Environmental Director, Surfrider Foundation - Ventura County Chapter
(805) 648-4005 paul@matilija-coalition.org

Cc: Neal Fishman, California Coastal Conservancy