Guadalupe-Coyote
Resource Conservation District (GCRCD)

An independent special district of the State of California

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November 2, 2018

Serge Glushkoff, Senior Environmental Scientist
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Bay Delta Region
2825 Cordelia Road, Suite 100
Fairfield CA 94534

Brian Wines, Water Resource Control Engineer
San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: Silver Creek Linear Park

Dear Mr. Glushkoff and Mr. Wines:

Our agency has been documenting the riparian habitat located on a portion of the Silver Creek Linear Park property at the southern terminus of Silver Creek Road for over 20 years. Over time, we have noted changes at the site as it transitioned from cattle grazing to open space managed by the City of San Jose. Most significantly, a seasonal wetlands area has developed, fed by a northern diversion channel from Upper Silver Creek, a tributary of Coyote Creek. We understand that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) have identified this site as one with interesting resource potential and research problems, as well as potential flood control concerns, and we would like to make you aware of our interest in undertaking a site study.

The Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District (GCRCD) is an independent special district led by a volunteer Board of Directors dedicated to the conservation of natural resources and preservation of farmland in Santa Clara County. The District is regulated by Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code (PRC). California's resource conservation districts are leaders in locally-led conservation work throughout the State, and help implement on-the-ground projects, provide technical assistance, and help educate the public to improve their local communities. Our RCD's roots go back to the 1940's, and we have been proactive in watershed issues as the area has developed into an urban center.

The Silver Creek Linear Park property infrastructure includes an access road extension of Silver Creek Road (which provides emergency vehicle access to the creek corridor and adjacent residential neighborhoods) and two buried PG&E gas pipelines. In 2011, the City of San Jose commissioned a study which included the preparation of the document *"Conceptual Hydrologic Engineering Plan, Silver Creek Linear Park Master Plan"*. One of our subcontractors – Balance Hydrologics, Inc. ("Balance") – was the primary author of this report, which focused primarily on flood reduction associated with development of

the Linear Park Master Plan. It is our understanding that the Master Planning has not progressed, and that additional evaluation of the opportunities and constraints associated with the creek and adjacent wetland and associated habitats is warranted because of its natural resource values. The effort did not explore the hydrologic sufficiency associated with the wetland and riparian habitat present at the site, however it provides useful foundational context for site hydrology and geomorphology.

When the report was prepared, flows that were too large to be conveyed by the culvert under the access road left the main creek channel at a point upstream of the access road crossing. The 2011 study by Balance indicated that vegetation and sediment in the main channel had an impact on the size of flows that left the main channel. By 2016, flows that were conveyed through the culvert were leaving the main channel at a point downstream of the culvert. Review of proximal SCVWD groundwater wells suggests that water levels in the underlying aquifer vary between 30-50 feet below ground surface, and thus we surmise that the wetland is not sustained by groundwater flows. No water supply reservoir is present on Upper Silver Creek, however we understand that summer urban runoff may augment the creek corridor and wetland, and should be evaluated. A focused study could determine the likely size and pathways of winter flows that leave the main channel during storm events. The results of this study could inform ultimate management of flows at the Project site for enhancement of aquatic habitat, reduced flood risk and protection of infrastructure.

After consultation with Balance, we developed a proposal to:

1. add 3 to 4 water gauges at key locations near the divergence of the two channels and in the wetlands area in order to gather and analyze existing water flow and diversion levels;
2. review relevant resources and collect geomorphic data (including limited topographic surveys);
3. analyze the existing distribution of flows between the Silver Creek channel and the diversion channel that supports the intermittent wetland, and develop a hydroperiod model to support identification of opportunities, constraints, and site management alternatives;
4. develop a biota assessment to inventory habitat usage by native herpetofauna, birds and fish and/or potential usage relative to the stream channel and intermittent wetland;
5. track the establishment of vegetation and the accumulation of sediment in the main creek channel between the culverted crossing under the maintenance road extension of Silver Creek Road and the downstream former check dam, and
6. use the hydroperiod[1] water balance (HWB) model that GCRCD developed through a CDFW LAG grant to improve understanding of the ways in which climate change may affect the hydrologic drivers of hydroperiod in ponds which have the potential to serve as valuable habitat for native herpetofauna, birds and fish.

In addition to soliciting ongoing feedback from our assigned CDFW and RWQCB project liaisons, we would organize and facilitate at least two meetings of an informal advisory committee ideally consisting of the CDFW and RWCQB liaisons and representatives from the City of San Jose (property owner), the Santa Clara Valley Water District (stream easement holder) and any other stakeholders recommended by CDFW or RWCQB to provide input and feedback to GCRCD and our subconsultants as we manage and implement this project. Our hope would be that with a new study, GCRCD could assist the City of San Jose and other agencies in securing funding for eventual improvements at the site to enhance habitat, minimize impacts to the riparian corridor, and reduce local flood risk.

We understand that the City of San Jose would be supportive of such an effort, but is currently unable to provide resources. We therefore are proposing GCRCD serve as project manager, and seek independent funding for the outside consulting work. Based on the proposed scope of work, we estimate a project cost of $98,557 to complete the study, which includes approximately $5,930 of in-kind project management

[1] The hydroperiod defines period of ponded water or inundation.

and facilitation provided by GCRCD. This total is anticipated to include water monitoring; field work; HWB modeling work; literature and limited field review of the site and its adjacent upper watershed for the biota; and a written final report completed by March 2021. We would appreciate any assistance you could provide in helping identify potential funders for our proposal. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Moreno
Executive Director/District Clerk
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Work: 408-288-5888
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Attachments: GCRCD Project Timeline and Budget
Balance Hydrologics Deliverables and Budget
Live Oak Biological Proposal

Cc: Rick Lanman, President, GCRCD Board of Directors
Barry Hecht, Balance Hydrologics, Inc.