



**SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE  
CACHUMA OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE BOARD**

**Wednesday, March 11, 2026  
12:30 P.M.**

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**HOW TO OBSERVE THE MEETING**

Attend in Person or Join by Teleconference

*COMB follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and local public health guidelines with respect to COVID-19 protocols and masking requirements, based on local conditions and needs. COMB will have available masks for use during public meetings.*

Members of the public may observe the meeting as set forth below.

**Join via Video Conference:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83542285357?pwd=pg7nER7TarYHvYa8EB7BDdyku7xd9t.1>

Passcode:149450

**Join via Teleconference:**

US +1 669 900 6833 Webinar ID: 835 4228 5357 Passcode: 149450

**HOW TO MAKE A PUBLIC COMMENT**

Any member of the public may address the Board on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Board of Directors. The total time for this item will be limited by the President of the Board. The Board is not responsible for the content or accuracy of statements made by members of the public. No action will be taken by the Board on any Public Comment item.

**In person:** Those observing the meeting in person may make comments during designated public comment periods.

**By Video:** Those observing the meeting by video may make comments during designated public comment periods using the “raise hand” feature. Commenters will be required to unmute their respective microphone when providing comments.

**By Telephone:** Those observing the meeting by telephone may make comments during the designated public comment periods by pressing \*9 on the key pad to indicate such interest. Commenters will be prompted to press \*6 to unmute their respective telephone when called upon to speak.

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to review agenda materials or participate in this meeting, please contact the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board office at (805) 687-4011 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to enable the Board to make reasonable arrangements.

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**SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE  
CACHUMA OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE BOARD**  
*held at*  
**3301 Laurel Canyon Road  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105**

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**Wednesday, March 11, 2026**

**12:30 P.M.**

**AGENDA**

**NOTICE:** This Meeting shall be conducted in-person and through remote access as authorized and in accordance with Government Code section 54953, AB 361 and AB 2449.

1. **CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL**
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT** *(In accordance with Government Code Section 54954.3, every notice for a special meeting shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to directly address the legislative body concerning any item that has been described in the notice for the meeting before or during consideration of that item.)*
3. **[UPDATE ON PROPOSED FISH PASSAGE AND HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT – HILTON CREEK](#)**  
Action: Recommend approval by motion and roll call vote of the Board
4. **[PROPOSED EL JARO CREEK, CROSS CREEK RANCH FISH PASSAGE AND HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT – DESIGNS TO SUPPORT GRANT APPLICATION](#)**  
Action: Recommend approval by motion and roll call vote of the Board
5. **DIRECTORS' REQUESTS FOR AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING**
6. **MEETING SCHEDULE**
  - **March 23, 2026 Regular Board Meeting at 1:00 P.M**
  - **Board Packages Available on COMB website [www.cachuma-board.org](http://www.cachuma-board.org)**
7. **COMB ADJOURNMENT**

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#### NOTICE TO PUBLIC

**Posting of Agenda:** This agenda was posted at COMB's offices, located at 3301 Laurel Canyon Road, Santa Barbara, California, 93105 and on COMB's website, in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2. The agenda contains a brief general description of each item to be considered by the Governing Board. The Board reserves the right to modify the order in which agenda items are heard. Copies of staff reports or other written documents relating to each item of business are on file at the COMB offices and are available for public inspection during normal business hours. A person with a question concerning any of the agenda items may call COMB's General Manager at (805) 687-4011.

**Written materials:** In accordance with Government Code Section 54957.5, written materials relating to an item on this agenda which are distributed to the Governing Board less than 72 hours (for a regular meeting) or 24 hours (for a special meeting) will be made available for public inspection at the COMB offices during normal business hours. The written materials may also be posted on COMB's website subject to staff's ability to post the documents before the scheduled meeting.

**Public Comment:** Any member of the public may address the Board on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Board that is not scheduled for as an agenda item before the Board. The total time for this item will be limited by the President of the Board. The Board is not responsible for the content or accuracy of statements made by members of the public. No action will be taken by the Board on any Public Comment item.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to review agenda materials or participate in this meeting, please contact the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board office at (805) 687-4011 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to enable the Board to make reasonable arrangements.

**Note:** If you challenge in court any of the Board's decisions related to the listed agenda items you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at any public hearing described in this notice or in written correspondence to the Governing Board prior to the public hearing.

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# CACHUMA OPERATION & MAINTENANCE BOARD

## BOARD MEMORANDUM

Date:	March 11, 2026
Submitted by:	Tim Robinson
Approved by:	Janet Gingras

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**SUBJECT:**     **Consultant Contract - Designs to Support Grant Application – Proposed Hilton Creek Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Board of Directors review the hydraulic modeling and advanced design costs for the proposed Hilton Creek Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project (Project) and:

- 1) Authorize the General Manager to engage HDR, Inc. (HDR) to conduct the hydrologic modeling needed to advance the designs and technical memo for the Project in an amount not-to-exceed \$25,000.
- 2) Authorize staff to submit a revised grant application to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Fisheries Restoration Grant Program (FRGP) for the proposed Hilton Creek Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project.
- 3) If grant funding is awarded during Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-27, authorize an additional budgeted amount of \$40,000 for HDR to advance the designs and technical memorandum from 65% to 100%.

**SUMMARY:**

At the December 16, 2024, COMB Board meeting, the Board authorized the General Manager to execute a Professional Services Agreement with HDR for the initial designs for a 3-phase (3 year) habitat improvement project on Hilton Creek, contingent upon Reclamation’s written approval. The Board also authorized and directed staff to submit a grant application to the California Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Fisheries Restoration Grant Program (FRGP) once written approval from Reclamation was received. Written approval was received from Reclamation and the grant application was submitted on April 17, 2025.

In late December, COMB received a notice from CDFW stating that our grant application was not successful due to limited state funds and further information was needed. CDFW stated that the project has merit and COMB should reapply through the next round of funding after addressing a list of provided comments/recommendations from the reviewer’s score sheets. The most significant comment from the FRGP grant review team was that the project design only included minimal hydrologic modeling. The hydrologic modeling included in the original application was preliminary in an effort to save costs. By conducting further extensive modeling, COMB’s CDFW-FRGP grant application would be much more competitive. The hydrologic modeling costs are contained within the current fiscal year budget and the approved Professional Services Agreement with HDR.

If successful with the revised grant application, COMB plans to budget and utilize \$40,000 in FY 2026-27 for HDR to complete the designs and technical memo which will include construction drawings sufficient for project bidding by qualified contractors. Project construction costs would then be included in the FY 2027-28 operating budget.

## **BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT:**

The benefits of the 3-phase (3 year) project include improvement to access, amount, and quality of habitats in the creek for *O. mykiss* spawning and rearing. Constructing improvements for fish passage and habitat enhancements would greatly improve access to the entire watered section of Hilton Creek downstream of the Upper Release Point (URP) on Reclamation property that contains suitable spawning and rearing habitats. The project would be evaluated and designed by a fish passage engineer who would provide a list of improvements with designs to follow. Improvements would vary by site characteristics and would be done in phases, prioritized from downstream to upstream over a sequence of years to minimize overall impact to the fishery during construction. The effort could improve the carrying capacity of the watered section of the creek resulting in an increase in the *O. mykiss* population from enhanced spawning and rearing potential. COMB has utilized cutting edge fish passage engineers from HDR to design and conduct engineering oversight for most of our past fish passage projects, and they are well positioned to provide the engineering analyses, estimated construction costs, and designs for the project.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Hilton Creek receives continuous discharge from Lake Cachuma from the Hilton Creek Watering System (HCWS) to the URP and Lower Release Point (LRP). This wetted section of the creek from the URP to its confluence with the LSyr has a relatively steep gradient with multiple bedrock sections. The stream velocity, lack of resting habitats, and shallow stream depth over bedrock shelves can pose potential fish passage barriers particularly after high streamflow years when many instream elements were washed out, specifically in WY2023 and WY2024. Constructing improvements for fish passage and habitat enhancements would greatly improve access to the entire watered section of Hilton Creek downstream of the URP that contains suitable spawning and rearing habitats to maximize the biological benefit for the endangered Southern California steelhead with the continuous lake water delivered to the creek.

COMB has utilized fish passage engineers from HDR to design and conduct engineering oversight for most of our past fish passage projects for the last two decades. They are well positioned and have the expertise to provide engineering analyses and designs for the project. HDR visited the site multiple times and has identified a list of focused projects in Hilton Creek that have been broken out into 3 phases to minimize overall impact to the fishery during construction over a 3-year period that are organized by priority and would vary by site characteristics.

- **Phase 1:** Canyon and trail bedrock section.
- **Phase 2:** Lower cascade chute section.
- **Phase 3:** Habitat enhancements in Reaches 1 and 5.

The detailed topographic surveying needed for design work has been conducted by Prober Land Surveying utilizing cutting edge technologies to complete the topographic surveys that were incorporated into the HDR designs. HDR was on site in December 2025 and fine-tuned the location of each instream element in their designs.

To submit a credible grant funding application, COMB would need to provide at least 65% designs including hydraulic modeling, and a technical memo for the project at the time of application. If COMB is successful in being awarded a grant, staff will submit the terms of the grant contract, the total project costs, and the result of the Construction Bids to the Fisheries Committee and subsequently to the Board for consideration and approval.

## **FISCAL IMPACTS:**

The estimated cost of the 3-phase (3 year) project is anticipated to be approximately \$2.2m in total with a potential grant funding offset of \$2.0m. Reclamation provided a written "non-objection" to the COMB project that carries a condition in which COMB must incorporate, in perpetuity, the continued maintenance of the proposed elements in the Project. It would be premature at this time to estimate the long-term costs associated with continued maintenance as there are many unknowns. It is projected that most of the long-term maintenance would be hand clearing of debris by COMB staff.

The hydraulic modeling, updated designs and technical memo costs (\$25,000) are incorporated in the current COMB Budget. The incremental cost to go from 65% to 100% project design is estimated to be approximately \$40,000 and would be considered in next fiscal year's budget (FY 2026-27). The complete (100%) designs and technical memo along with staff time and environmental permit costs would be considered in the grant funding match. Construction costs would be incorporated in the FY 27-28 COMB budget.

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE:**

All environmental permits for the fish passage and habitat improvement project will be obtained prior to any construction. Any required environmental surveys will be conducted just prior to construction.

**LIST OF EXHIBITS:**

NA

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# CACHUMA OPERATION & MAINTENANCE BOARD

## BOARD MEMORANDUM

Date:	March 11, 2026
Submitted by:	Tim Robinson
Approved by:	Janet Gingras

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**SUBJECT:**     **Proposed El Jaro Creek Cross Creek Ranch Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project - Designs to Support Grant Application**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Board of Directors review the design costs for the proposed El Jaro Creek Cross Creek Ranch Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project and:

- 1) Authorize a budget adjustment in the amount of \$65,000 as outlined below in the staff memorandum.
- 2) Authorize the General Manager to execute a sole-source Professional Services Agreement (PSA) with HDR, Inc. (HDR) for 65% designs (including hydrologic modeling) and the associated technical memo for the proposed El Jaro Creek Cross Creek Ranch Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project in an amount not-to-exceed \$65,000.
- 3) Authorize the General Manager to execute PSA with a licensed surveyor for the required topographic information in an amount not-to-exceed \$10,000.
- 4) Authorize staff to submit a grant application to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Fisheries Restoration Grant Program (FRGP) for the proposed El Jaro Creek Cross Creek Ranch Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project.
- 5) If grant funding is awarded during Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-27, authorize an additional budgeted amount of \$40,000 for HDR to advance the designs and technical memorandum from 65% to 100%.

**SUMMARY:**

On November 18, 2009, COMB successfully completed the Cross Creek Fish Passage Improvement Project. That project backwatered a historic low flow concrete stream crossing of El Jaro Creek with six rock weirs to allow for full juvenile and adult fish passage. The most downstream rock weir was an at-grade weir, meaning it was below the stream bottom and added stability to the downstream end of the project.

High stormflows in WY2023 and WY2024 scoured the downstream tailwater control (locally referred to as the Boulder Garden) that resulted in a drop in the stream profile and a head-cut that moved up into the project area, exposed the at-grade rock weir, and left a two+ foot jump to go over that weir (Figure 1). That jump height is now out of compliance with NMFS and CDFW for their fish passage criteria and needs to be addressed by 1) reconfiguring the at-grade rock weir for fish passage (pool weir configuration as designed for the five rock weirs upstream), 2) adding a new rock weir just downstream to accommodate the elevation differential, and 3) reconfiguring the tailwater control within the downstream Boulder Garden to once again stabilize the downstream project invert and the designed stream profile for fish passage with jump heights that meet NMFS and CDFW criteria.

Not included in the 2009 project was stabilization of the western bank approximately 75 yards downstream of the end of the original project that has now severely eroded into the agricultural field causing significant bank failure by mass wasting and large amounts of fine sediment delivery to El Jaro Creek. This process has greatly accelerated since high streamflow events in WY2023 and WY2024. The stream is now running

directly underneath a vertical 30-foot-high wall of fine alluvial sediments (Figure 2). Since 2000, approximately 80 feet of the agricultural field has been lost due to the stream undercutting the bank and subsequent mass wasting.

The second part of the proposed El Jaro Creek Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project will be to install approximately 200 feet of rock slope protection (RSP) at least 20 feet in front of the toe of slope with three short rock barbes at the upstream end to deflect streamflow away from the bank and place a willow planting terrace behind that will provide structural and bioengineering stability. The stream channel will be rerouted slightly to the southeast.

The landowner has brought reach condition to our attention and has requested assistance to address the observed problems. The landowner has stated interest in a partial cost-share match for the project.

**BACKGROUND:**

El Jaro Creek is the largest tributary to Salsipuedes Creek and is the closest accessible watershed to the Pacific Ocean by way of the Lower Santa Ynez River. Both El Jaro Creek and Salsipuedes creeks have been designated by NMFS in 2005 as critical habitat for the recovery of the endangered Southern California steelhead. COMB, on behalf of Reclamation, has successfully completed four fish passage, three bank stabilization, and one cattle exclusionary fencing projects in the El Jaro/Salsipuedes Creek watershed. Most of these projects were proposed actions within the 2000 BiOp. There are no other anthropogenic fish passage barriers in the watershed. Anadromous adult steelhead have been observed most frequently in the El Jaro/Salsipuedes Creek drainage within the LSYR basin. Maintaining fish passage and enhancing instream habitats are critical actions for steelhead recovery.

**FISCAL IMPACTS:**

The cost for the designs and associated technical memo sufficient to apply for grant funding at 65% design level will be \$65,000. These costs would be funded through the following budget adjustment:

<b>FY 2025-26 Operating Budget</b>		<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
<b>6201</b>	<b>BO/FMP</b>	\$25,000.00	
<b>6320</b>	<b>Hilton Creek Habitat Enhancement</b>	\$40,000.00	
<b>6321</b>	<b>EJC - Cross Creek Ranch Habitat Enhancement</b>		\$65,000.00
		<u>\$65,000.00</u>	<u>\$65,000.00</u>

The cost for the surveyor is included in the current fiscal year operating budget. If successful on receiving a CDFW-FRGP grant, there would be an additional \$40,000 needed to take the designs and technical memo from 65% to 100% with designs sufficient for contractor bidding. The estimated cost of the project including COMB’s cost share match ~\$(115,000) is approximately \$500,000.

The incremental cost to go from 65% to 100% project design would be considered in next year’s budget (FY 2026-27). Construction costs for the project would be incorporated in the FY 2027-28 COMB budget.

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE:**

All environmental permits for the fish passage and habitat improvement project will be obtained prior to any construction. Any required environmental surveys will be conducted just prior to construction.

**LIST OF EXHIBITS:**

- 1) Proposed El Jaro Creek Cross Creek Ranch Habitat Enhancement Project current condition photos



**Figure 1:** 2026 condition looking (a) upstream at the 5<sup>th</sup> rock weir and the 2+ foot jump height, (b) upstream at the exposed at-grade rock weir, and (c) at the at-grade weir from the top.



**Figure 2:** Downstream bank condition in February 2026 looking (a) upstream and (b) downstream.