



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



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To: Interested parties

RE: Matilija Dam Feasibility Study PMP April 2001

We have taken the time to review the updated PMP. In general the plan has been rewritten with much greater attention to detail.

However, one primary concern is the lack of attention to the short- and long-term benefits afforded by dam removal relating to the restoration and sustainability of coastal beaches. The benefits include shore protection, environmental restoration, and recreation. Short-term benefits will result from the release of impounded sediments within the reservoir area, while long-term benefits will result from the restoration of the natural sediment flows within the watershed. Given the Corps role in coastal processes, this should be a primary objective for this project.

The Study Authority (page 8) specifically states that the objectives include

“...particular attention to restoring anadromous fish populations on Matilija Creek and returning natural sand replenishment to Ventura and other Southern California beaches.”

And the stated planning objectives (p 12-13) are:

- (1) To improve aquatic and terrestrial habitat along Matilija Creek and the Ventura River to benefit fish and wildlife species, including the endangered Southern California steelhead;
- (2) **Restore the hydrologic and sediment transport regime to support downstream coastal beach sand replenishment conditions;** and
- (3) Enhance recreational opportunities along Matilija Creek and the downstream Ventura River system. Note: The Corps is limited in their ability to participate in recreational opportunities and recreation benefits do not influence project formulation.

However, the PMP maintains that beach replenishment is an “incidental benefit” within the Corps Federal Interest (p17):

Since ecosystem restoration appears justified and is a high priority budget output and that ecosystem restoration is the primary output of the alternatives to be evaluated, there is Federal interest in conducting the feasibility study. **There is also Federal interest in other incidental benefits resulting from the alternatives, such as beach nourishment,** possible recovery of Federally-listed endangered species (steelhead) and limited recreation (hiking trails) that could be developed within the existing policy.

So that, in the cost-benefit analysis outlined under Socioeconomic Studies (p 36 – 41) primary benefits are limited to an increase in the “habitat units” afforded by riparian restoration related to the dam removal (p37):

Environmental Restoration/Enhancement - Expected benefits are primarily related to the study purpose of **environmental restoration of the riparian ecosystem**, including endangered species habitat, with some incidental benefits related to recreation and environmental enhancement.

The next section, Incidental Benefits – Overview, continues with:

Two benefit categories, which may result from **beach nourishment**, are environmental and recreational enhancement. As incidental benefits, these **need not be quantified in monetary terms for project justification purposes**, but will be discussed in the Economics Appendix.

Therefore, the Socioeconomic (i.e. cost/benefit) analysis is limited to benefits resulting from the Habitat Quality Index (HQI) of riparian restoration.

Since the benefits from beach restoration have been identified as a primary objective of the study, and there is authorization for this aspect of the study, the short- and long-term benefits to beach restoration should be a Primary Benefit within the Socioeconomic Studies.

Sincerely,

A. Paul Jenkin, M.S.

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