

June 12, 2017



COASTAL-WATERSHED.ORG

*Preserving and protecting
our coastal watersheds*

Mayor Cynthia Chase
City of Santa Cruz
809 Center Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Re: FY18 Budget Approval

Dear Mayor Chase and Councilmembers,

I am writing to thank you for your decision to include funding for a full-time San Lorenzo River Coordinator in the FY 2018 budget. I recognize that it is possible there could be last minute changes as you approach the final approval of this budget at the June 13, 2017, Council meeting, and I kindly offer this reminder of how important the funding of this position at the full-time level is to the health of the river.

While the City has enjoyed recent success in securing grant funds to improve the lower river and surrounding parks, additional funding opportunities remain untapped. Strong City partners like the Coastal Watershed Council and other nonprofits can accomplish much, but with grant seeking the City is in a unique position. Having a full-time River Coordinator could secure additional grant funds and potentially pay for the expenditure you are considering multiple times over.

The position would also aid the City's coordination with the many community organizations who work on the river with goals the City shares. There are also potential savings within the City by improving coordination among the City staff from multiple departments who work on river issues every day.

The funding of this position was one of the top priorities recommended from the City-sponsored Riverwalk Engagement Summit earlier this year. Filling this position also represents the greatest opportunity to fully implement the partially completed San Lorenzo Urban River Plan of 2003, still the guiding document for river improvements in the City of Santa Cruz.

This seems to be a situation where you have to spend money to make money. While the City faces a potential budget deficit and there is always a challenging balance between revenues and expenses, we have seen what happens along the river when we neglect it. Recent crime within the past year has been an unfortunate reminder of that price. On the positive side, hundreds of community members just enjoyed the Ebb & Flow Arts Celebration last week and just yesterday CWC hosted a benefit dinner to bring thought leaders to see what's possible along the river.

COASTAL WATERSHED COUNCIL

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These past two weeks have been dreamy examples of what a thriving urban riverfront could look like, with more people realizing what a valuable natural resource we have in the San Lorenzo River. Unfortunately, once we move past San Lorenzo River Month in June, too many forget about the river and we can slide back to challenging days. You can prevent that. Help the river and help those of us in the community who are partnering with the City in improving the San Lorenzo River by fully funding this River Coordinator position.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to partner with the City on stewardship of the San Lorenzo River watershed!

Respectfully,



Greg Pepping
Executive Director
Coastal Watershed Council