

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion Screening Form
Environmental Action Statement**

I. Project Information

- A. Project name:** City of Santa Cruz Operations and Maintenance HCP
- B. Affected species:** Ohlone tiger beetle, Mount Hermon June beetle, tidewater goby, California red-legged frog, Ben Lomond spineflower, robust spineflower, Santa Cruz tarplant, Pacific lamprey, western pond turtle, San Francisco popcorn flower
- C. Project size (preferably in acres):** The project is dispersed throughout much of Santa Cruz County (HCP, Figure 1; most project features are linear water pipelines), from the city of Capitola in the east to Liddell Creek in the west and from Loch Lomond Reservoir in the north to the Pacific Ocean in the south.

D. Brief project description including minimization and mitigation plans:

City facilities would be operated, maintained, and improved. The City's drinking water supply and distribution, storm water and flood control management, and associated vegetation, road, and habitat management activities are addressed. Because the covered activities would be operation, maintenance, and improvement of existing facilities (rather than new construction with new effects to habitat), the conservation strategy centers on minimizing the effects to covered species within existing maintained areas (relocation of individuals, revegetation of temporarily disturbed areas, etc.). In addition, the City proposes habitat management on City-owned lands to mitigate for take of Ohlone tiger beetle and Mount Hermon June beetle, improved minimum streamflow requirements to mitigate for take of tidewater goby and Pacific lamprey, and an in lieu fee payment (or alternate off-site mitigation, to be determined) to mitigate for take of California red-legged frog and western pond turtle (HCP, Table 1).

II. Does the HCP fit the following Department of Interior and Fish and Wildlife Service categorical-exclusion criteria?

- A. Are the effects of the HCP minor or negligible on federally listed, proposed, or candidate species and their habitats covered under the HCP?** Yes. Minor effects to listed species would occur during operations, maintenance, and improvement of existing facilities. Because little new construction is included in the proposed HCP, new impacts to habitats would be small and impacts to listed species using those habitats would be minor. No proposed or candidate species are expected to occur within Santa Cruz County.
- B. Are the effects of the HCP minor or negligible on all other components of the human environment, including environmental values and environmental resources (e.g. air quality, geology and soils, water quality and quantity, socio-economic, cultural resources, recreation, visual resources, environmental justice, etc.) after implementation of the minimization and mitigation measures?** Yes. Effects to other

environmental values and resources would be minor during operations, maintenance, and improvement of existing facilities. Because limited new construction is included in the proposed HCP, new ground disturbance would be small and impacts to all resources would be minor.

- C. Would the incremental impacts of this HCP, considered together with the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions (regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions) not result, over time, in a cumulative effects to the human environment (the natural and physical environment) which would be considered significant?** Yes. The proposed operations, maintenance, and improvement of existing facilities would not contribute to any significant cumulative effects.

III. Do any of the exceptions to categorical exclusions (extraordinary circumstances) listed in 43 CFR 46.215 apply to this HCP?

- A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?** No, we expect no adverse effects to public health and safety from the proposed activities. The proposed action would include maintenance and improvement of drinking and storm water facilities that are important to public health and safety.
- B. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as: historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990) or floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds, eagles, or other ecologically significant or critical resources?** No, we expect no adverse effects to unique geographic characteristics from the proposed activities. Because little new construction is included in the proposed HCP, new ground disturbance would be small and impacts to all resources would be minor.
- C. Have highly controversial environmental effects (defined at 43 CFR 46.30), or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources?** No, we expect no highly controversial environmental effects from the proposed activities. Most activities addressed in the HCP are ongoing and their effects are predictable.
- D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects, or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?** No, the proposed activities include operations, maintenance, and improvement of existing facilities. Most of these activities have been ongoing for many years and there are no uncertain, unique, or unknown effects or risks.
- E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?** No, the proposed activities are not connected to or precedent setting for any known future actions.

- F. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?** No, the proposed activities are not connected to or precedent setting for any known future actions.
- G. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places?** No. A review of mapping provided by the National Park Service (<https://www.nps.gov/maps/full.html?mapId=7ad17cc9-b808-4ff8-a2f9-a99909164466>) indicates that Historic Places are present within Santa Cruz County. However, the nature of the proposed operations, maintenance, and improvement of existing facilities (as opposed to new construction within Historic Places) are not expected to affect such places.
- H. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?** As discussed in section II, we expect all effects to listed species to be minor. Critical habitat for several listed species has been designated within Santa Cruz County, but we expect effects to these critical habitats to be minor or non-existent.
- I. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law, or a requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?** No, activities addressed in the HCP would be conducted in compliance with all applicable laws and requirements.
- J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?** No, disproportionate effects are not anticipated to low income or minority populations.
- K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?** No, effects to Indian sacred sites are not anticipated.
- L. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?** No, measures to address noxious and non-native weed species are incorporated in the HCP.