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September 26, 2020

John Donnelly
Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Board
1700 9th Street, 4th Floor
Sacramento CA 95811

RE: Support for the San Geronimo Conservation Easement and Stream Flow Enhancement Project

Dear Director Donnelly,

The Environmental Action Committee of West Marin (EAC) supports Marin Open Space Trust's application to the California Wildlife Conservation Board's Proposition 1 Stream Flow Enhancement Program for the San Geronimo Conservation Easement and Stream Flow Enhancement Project.

Since 1971, EAC has worked to protect and sustain the unique lands, waters, and biodiversity of western Marin County, California through outreach, engagement, and education. EAC's membership represents 1,000 individuals with 56% of our membership located in Marin County. EAC was an early endorser of the No on Measure D campaign to permanently protect the San Geronimo property for conservation purposes, and it fully supports this project's streamflow enhancement objectives.

Through the purchase of a conservation easement, the project will protect as public open space 135 acres of the former San Geronimo Golf Course in Marin County, and will permanently dedicate at least 20 acre-feet per year of water historically used for irrigation as instream flow to Larsen Creek. Larsen Creek is a tributary of San Geronimo Creek, which also flows through the property. Both creeks provide critical spawning habitat for the federally endangered Central California coast coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout in the Lagunitas Creek Watershed. However, the permitted diversions remove water from the watershed during the winter and early spring months when sufficient flows are needed for salmonid migration.

Operating for over 50 years, the former 18-hole golf course was one of Marin County's 10 largest water users. The Trust for Public Land purchased the property in 2018 with its own resources to prevent another private owner from buying the property to develop it with land uses incompatible with habitat conservation, stream flow enhancement, and passive recreation. The Trust for Public Land and partner Trout Unlimited are at the end of a yearlong community-driven process to develop a planning framework that will enable comprehensive restoration, public access, and conservation-compatible community uses of the property. However, until the property is permanently protected by a conservation easement and more intensive uses are prohibited, there is a very real risk of substantial water diversion and use in the future.

By ensuring that streamflow benefits are permanently realized, this project will have long-lasting benefits for salmonid populations, enhance the ecological health and function of the valley and the watershed, and protect a linchpin property that serves as a hub to thousands of acres of already-protected public land. I hope that you give all due consideration to the San Geronimo Conservation Easement and Stream Flow Enhancement Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Morgan Patton
Executive Director