

The Reasons why I voted NO on Recommended Paddling Pilot Program

The City Council on March 10, 2015, directed an Advisory Group to “develop the framework for a possible paddling pilot program on the lower San Lorenzo River...” I applied using my credentials as a community/ San Lorenzo River issues advocate. I, along with five others, was appointed to this Group because of my concerns for Santa Cruz Wildlife and Community issues.

After going over all the concerns in the short time of only fourteen hours (six meetings), I concluded that I had to vote NO on a paddling pilot program on the lower San Lorenzo River. My reasons fell into three categories: (1) threat to wildlife (2) non-compliance with Santa Cruz Community stated interest in its natural resources (3) major shortcomings in the proposed pilot project itself. Here they are:

1. The decision to determine the potential wildlife impact with a semi-scientific, short cut, snapshot monitoring survey flies in the face of environmental science studies. There are ample, thorough, well reputed studies available, which document in detail human disturbances on river birds, which should be taken into account as an already established guideline to explore the feasibility of the Pilot Program.
2. Opening up the San Lorenzo River to recreational access will have long range wildlife effects consequently rushing the Pilot Program process without thorough data is ill advised.
3. The San Lorenzo River wildlife is already heavily impacted by the Boardwalk recreational activity. Further San Lorenzo River recreational activity will increase existing wildlife impact.
4. During the **San Lorenzo State Symposium Fred Keeley & John Laird** stressed that our watersheds were under statewide revised scrutiny/efforts/attention to restore, preserve and conserve our natural resources. They mentioned that there were increased grants & funding available for these pursuits. Both speakers urged the City, County and community of Santa Cruz to head towards that goal. The recommended paddling pilot program does not prove it heeds this direction.
5. The concept of spending a good amount of money on monitoring, which does not give a long term valid, comprehensive study of the bird count,

paddler long term bird impact, negates the **General Plan 2030's** Santa Cruz community environmental values.

6. Under the **General Plan 2030** goals, policies and actions it is the City's responsibility to protect, enhance and sustain the Santa Cruz community's concerns and commitment to its natural managed creek systems, riparian environments and wetland resources. The current Pilot Program does not follow these goals as it there are no studies/reports that prove paddling enhances the existing natural resources.
7. Should the current financial City situation with its overextended staff prohibit a correct long term environmental scientific study and due Public process in order to re-present the stated community interest then it is prudent to acknowledge that the Pilot Program is beyond the City's means.
8. The City of Santa Cruz 2015 Park and Recreation Survey showed that recreational boating is not a high priority for Santa Cruz residents since (in section Q4 of the survey) 48.7% showed interest in hiking or walking compared to 3.3% interest in kayaking. The high discrepancy between the 2 categories was evident in all sections of the survey.
9. The possible spreading of invasive New Zealand Mudsnail to other waterbodies, the bare bone Paddle Pilot Program wildlife monitoring study, the potential destruction of the endangered Goby, the void of wildlife concern co-ordination amongst City/County Depts., the lack of studies proving paddlers positive impact on homeless & wildlife, the cost, the unknown aspect of long term wildlife impact are not in line with the expressed SC community interest for/in SC natural resources

These unresolved wildlife & community issues made me vote NO