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Director name: Gary Martin
Meeting attended: Arundo Removal meeting with Congresswoman Katie Hill
Date of meeting: August 23, 2019
Location: Santa Clara River bed near Bouquet Canyon Road
SCV Water Board meeting to be presented at: September 3, 2019

Congresswoman Katie Hill and her staff met with SCVWA board members, SCVWA staff, and Heather Merenda of the City of Santa Clarita to discuss the City's Santa Clara River Watershed Arundo Management Project and the impact of invasive non-native plants in the SCV. The meeting was held in the Santa Clara River bed near Bouquet Canyon Road. Attending for SCVWA were Matt Stone, Steve Cole, Kathie Martin, Board President Bill Cooper, Board Vice President Maria Gutzeit and myself.

Heather Merenda made a presentation on the City's ongoing efforts to eradicate arundo from the Santa Clara River watershed area, and the overall adverse impact of invasive species, such as Arundo, on the watershed. The attached handout was provided to the attendees to help explain the goals and objectives of the project.

SCVWA Assistant General Manager Cole made a presentation to the group on our local aquifer systems to better familiarize the Congresswoman on the serious impacts these invasive plants are having on our water supply.

Congresswoman Hill seemed very appreciative of the briefing and indicated that she would do what she can to help provide Federal assistance for these programs.

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Brief – Santa Clara River Watershed Arundo Management Project

The Santa Clara River watershed is approximately 1,634 square miles and contains the upper and lower reaches of the Santa Clara River, crossing Los Angeles and Ventura County. The Santa Clara River is the largest river system in Southern California remaining in a relatively natural state. The watershed struggles with an infestation of invasive plants, the primary being Arundo. Arundo is a tall, perennial bamboo grass that can reach up to 30 feet in height. It is one of the fastest growing plants in the world. This plant is tolerant of both drought and flooding, and can survive extended periods of salinity exposure. Arundo reproduces from rhizomes (massive root system) and stem segments. Once introduced, arundo has the capability to spread rapidly and out-compete native riparian vegetation. The Santa Clara River requires human intervention to remove Arundo.

Arundo in Santa Clara River on Fire in Santa Paula



Typical Stand of Arundo



One acre of arundo can consume 11.75 acre feet, or almost 4 million gallons of water annually. Current estimates are that arundo invades between 1,000 and 2,000 acres in the Santa Clara River. Arundo does damage in many ways:

- Arundo reduces groundwater recharge.
- Arundo intensifies erosion and sedimentation.
- Arundo degrades habitat and dries ponded water that unarmored three spined stickleback and other species depend on.
- Arundo is extremely flammable throughout most of the year and is highly adapted to fire. The roots also respond quickly after fires, sending up new shoots, and quickly outgrow native species that may have otherwise taken root or sprouted in a burned site.
- It is anticipated that climate change will amplify these results.

Stakeholders in the watershed are looking to create an accurate and up-to-date geo-spatial data tool to control the spread of arundo, prioritize areas for its removal, and secure financing for future long term management of the invasive weed. The comprehensive mapping effort would develop a strategic and systematic process to prioritize removal and management programs to reduce these threats. LIDAR data were recently acquired for the full Santa Clara River floodplain. The raw data needs to be processed to map current vegetation status and prioritize locations for weed management. This project will also provide a key step in developing a natural resources monitoring system to detect trends, both positive and negative, related to watershed management and climate modification. Once prioritized and mapped, this project would implement arundo removal in areas most beneficial to humans and natural at-risk communities.

Arundo removal in the Santa Clara River will have substantial benefits for the watershed communities by:

- Reducing dependence on imported water and protecting, conserving and augmenting groundwater supplies;
- Protecting and improving water quality;
- Protecting people, property and the environment from adverse flooding and fire impacts associated with arundo;
- Protecting and restoring habitat and ecosystems in watersheds;
- Enhancing water-related recreational, public access and educational opportunities.

City of Santa Clarita Project - Before Arundo Removal and After

