



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 31, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting \$3,000,000 in funding for the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project (Carmel River FREE). The entity to receive funding is the County of Monterey located at 168 West Alisal Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Salinas, CA 93901.

The Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project is a multi-benefit, green infrastructure project that will recreate hydrological connectivity, restore habitat, and reduce flood hazards in the Carmel River Watershed.

Carmel River FREE will reduce high-loss, repetitive flooding to critical state infrastructure, as well as commercial, residential and conserved recreational lands by notching levees on the south side of the Carmel River and directing high stream flows to a restored floodplain and then to the river mouth through a new causeway (overflow bridge) under Highway 1 (SR-1). Additionally, an agricultural preserve will be constructed.

Carmel River FREE has been identified as the preferred future scenario for flood control within Monterey County Service Area-50; it eliminates the need for approximately \$14 million in levee improvements for property owners in the vicinity to meet FEMA's 100-year flood protection standards and to protect properties on the north side of the river adjacent to the project site. The total aggregate benefits of the project are over \$80 million, with environmental and social benefits included. In addition, the project will significantly reduce State liabilities along the Caltrans State Route-1 transportation corridor south of Carmel-by-the-Sea. SR-1 is the sole access between Carmel and Big Sur, serving as a gateway between the urbanized cities of the Monterey Peninsula and the rural Big Sur coast and mountain regions, a tourist destination that draws millions of visitors each year.

If awarded, funds will be used for Carmel River FREE Project construction, including construction of the causeway overflow bridge, and the floodplain restoration and grading. Community project funding is needed to help close the funding gap that currently exists.

The project has a Federal nexus because it is a highway/bridge project eligible under 23 USC 133(b) (Surface Transportation Block Grant Program).

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Panetta", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress