



The Otter Project

August 21, 2007

www.otterproject.org

State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Small Community Wastewater Grant
Letter of support: Morro Bay

Dear Water Board Members and Staff,

The Otter Project wishes to express its strong support for a Small Community Wastewater Grant for Morro Bay to assist in the upgrading the Morro Bay-Cayucos Wastewater Treatment Plant to tertiary treatment (Region 3, Project number SCG1005).

Until recently, Morro Bay held one of the few remaining 301(h) waivers in the state. Retirement of this waiver and timely upgrade of the plant to a high level of tertiary treatment has been a focus of The Otter Project and our members.


The short stretch of coast surrounding the Morro Bay outfall is the number one location in the state for finding dead sea otters and is considered the population's number one hot spot for sea otter mortality. As examples, 28 and 20 percent of all dead sea otter strandings occurred in this area in 2005 and 2006 respectively. In June of this year, 11 of 25 dead strandings occurred in this small area. *These numbers are vastly disproportionate to the local sea otter population.*

Research has shown these sea otters are dying of diseases washed from land. While science has neither proven nor dis-proven a nexus to the existing antiquated plant, we feel it is critical for all of us to support actions that restore ocean health and vitality in this area.

We feel this is not only about sea otters: Otters are considered a "sentinel species" indicative of problems that could impact human health as well.

It is time to fix this problem. Please provide financial assistance to the small coastal community of Morro Bay to help upgrade their plant to a standard protective of sea otter - and human - health.

Sincerely,


Steve Shimek
Executive Director

The Otter Project, Inc.

A Nonprofit Organization

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