

Santa Cruz County



NATURAL BRIDGES STATE PARK

With 29 miles of beautiful beaches and a very accommodating climate, Santa Cruz County is a great place for people to live. It's a good home to wildlife, too, with its vast forests of towering redwoods, rich wetlands, and the southernmost salmon streams in California. Adding to this, the Pajaro Valley contains some of the most productive farmland anywhere and Santa Cruz Harbor has supported commercial and recreational fishing communities for the last 50 years.

POPULATION: >270,000

LENGTH OF COASTLINE: 41 miles

CONSERVANCY PROJECTS: >90

CONSERVANCY FUNDING: >\$40 million

The Coastal Conservancy has worked with the people of Santa Cruz County since 1980 to protect scenic natural lands and open them to the public. The Conservancy has helped communities build stairways to beaches and trails through natural areas so that people can get to and enjoy the outdoors. The Conservancy's work has restored the health of creeks and wetlands to benefit fish, birds, and other wildlife that depend on those environments.

The Conservancy intends to continue its work in Santa Cruz County to:

- Provide outdoor recreational opportunities for a growing and diverse population
- Restore and improve the health of waterways, marshes, and natural lands
- Keep farmland in production and support local fisheries
- Meet the challenges posed by rising seas and a changing climate.

Natural & Working Lands Protection

Through assistance to local communities and nonprofit organizations, the Coastal Conservancy has helped to protect more than 19,000 acres of scenic natural lands and open those lands for the public's enjoyment. The Conservancy is also working to keep valuable farmland in production.

- Acquisition of the 7,000-acre **Coast Dairies** property near Davenport protected more than seven miles of shoreline, five pocket beaches, five major creeks, forests, meadows, and productive farmland. The coast side of the property is now a State park and trails will soon open the inland portion to the public.
- Purchase of interests in the 8,500-acre **San Vicente Redwoods** property next to Coast Dairies will protect natural resources on the largest privately owned property in the County while allowing sustainable timber harvesting and public trails.
- At **Sand Hill Bluff**, between Coast Dairies and Wilder Ranch State Park, 94 acres of highly productive coastal farmland were protected from a proposed development.
- Purchase of the **Gray Whale Ranch** added 2,300 acres of forested hillsides to **Wilder Ranch State Park** on the edge of UC-Santa Cruz.
- Acquisition of the 64-acre **Willow Canyon** property near Aptos protected several rare and threatened species of animals and plants.
- More than 930 acres—many under threat of development—were purchased in the area of **Watsonville Slough** to protect wildlife habitat, preserve farmland, improve floodwater management, and build public trails. Much of the acquired land is being leased to farmers and managed to protect adjacent wetlands.

Trails, Recreation, & Education

Millions of people visit the Santa Cruz County coast every year to enjoy its beaches, waterfront attractions, and spectacular natural areas. The coast is also a perfect spot for hands-on learning about natural environments. Conservancy-assisted projects include:

- Preparation of a master plan for completing the **California Coastal Trail**, with construction of trail segments expected to follow soon.
- **Beach improvements** for visitors including stairways, restrooms, and wheelchair ramps at 20 beaches from Greyhound Rock on the north coast to Aptos in the south.
- Improvements to eight **public trails and bike paths** to and along the coast from the Skyline to the Sea Trail near Waddell Creek to San Andreas Road in Watsonville.
- Acquisition of and improvements to the popular **Depot Park**, a formerly blighted area that now serves as a link between downtown Santa Cruz and the waterfront.
- Reconstruction of the half-mile-long **Santa Cruz Wharf** in the 1980s and later improvements to serve its two-million annual visitors.
- Rehabilitation of the historic **Carmelita Cottages** to a low-cost hostel that serves more than 10,000 visitors annually in the Beach Hill neighborhood near downtown Santa Cruz.
- Acquisition of **Hooper's Beach** and a 66-acre addition to **New Brighton State Beach** in Capitola.



UPPER SAN LORENZO RIVER



SANTA CRUZ WHARF



NEARY LAGOON



INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL ALONG SOQUEL CREEK

Alpine Journal

Dave Thomas

Mike Fernwood

Susan Pearce



WADDELL BEACH FROM SKYLINE TO THE SEA TRAIL



ON THE OCEAN WITH O'NEILL SEA ODYSSEY



SKYLINE TO THE SEA TRAIL



PLEASURE POINT



WATSONVILLE SLOUGHS

Trails, Recreation, & Education *continued*

- Remodeling of the **O'Neill Sea Odyssey** education center at Santa Cruz Harbor and support for its hands-on **California Ocean Stewards** educational program.
- The **Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History's On the Spot** program, which encourages wildlife viewing, offers coastal recreation and educational opportunities, and inspires stewardship of the coast.
- Construction of Pajaro Valley's **Wetlands Educational Resource Center**, which serves over 4,000 students per year.

Natural Areas Restoration

The Conservancy has provided considerable assistance to restore the County's natural lands, lakes, lagoons, and waterways that harbor a wide variety of wildlife and native plants, including many that are listed as rare and endangered.

- To help coho salmon and steelhead trout get to and from spawning grounds, migration barriers have been removed in the watersheds of **Valencia, Corralitos, and Soquel creeks**.
- Restoration of **Antonelli's Pond** and **Neary Lagoon** in Santa Cruz, **Moran Lake** in Live Oak, **Soquel Creek Lagoon** in Capitola, and **Valencia Lagoon** in Aptos have benefitted wildlife while improving parks and coastal sites popular with visitors.
- **Watershed plans** prepared for several County waterways have sparked projects to improve habitats for coho salmon and other wildlife and reduce erosion of neighboring lands.
- **Watsonville Slough Farm** offers research and educational opportunities to demonstrate how healthy natural lands and productive working lands can coexist.
- The **Integrated Watershed Restoration Program** brings government agencies and landowners together to improve water quality and wildlife habitats using a non-regulatory, voluntary approach. More than 100 projects in the County have been designed and carried out since the Conservancy provided the program's startup funding in 2003.

Climate Change

The Conservancy is devoting significant resources to help coastal communities prepare for sea level rise and other effects of climate change.

- The **Monterey Bay Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment** will help communities along the bay identify the likely effects of sea level rise and strategies for adaptation.
- A study is underway to determine how to **capture stormwater** in the County and store it in underground aquifers to improve the reliability of water supplies that are affected by changing rainfall patterns.

"It is impossible to overstate the value of having the Coastal Conservancy as a restoration partner in Santa Cruz County. The Conservancy provided the impetus for developing strong partnerships and leveraging significant local, State, and federal resources for the restoration and stewardship of the County's tremendous natural resources."

Chris Coburn, Executive Director
Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County

Suzanne LaGasa

Richard Masoner/Cyclisticroads

Lee Jaffe



MAIN BEACH IN SANTA CRUZ ON THE 4TH OF JULY

The Coastal Conservancy is a State agency, established in 1976, that protects and improves natural lands and waterways, helps people get to and enjoy coastal areas, and sustains local economies along California's coast. The Conservancy works along the entire length of the coast, within the watersheds of rivers and streams that extend inland from the coast, and throughout the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The Conservancy is non-regulatory and achieves its goals by joining forces with local communities, nonprofit organizations, other government agencies, businesses, and private landowners.

CONSERVANCY PROJECTS :

- Protect, restore, and improve natural areas and wildlife habitat
- Help people get to and enjoy the outdoors by building hiking and biking trails, acquiring and improving parks and beaches, and creating campgrounds and hostels
- Keep our waterways clean and healthy for people and wildlife
- Help communities revitalize their waterfronts
- Support floodwater management and integrate flood-control projects into the life of a community
- Conserve commercial fisheries, working farmland, and forests.

CONTACTS :

Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer
(510) 286-0523 sam.schuchat@scc.ca.gov

Trish Chapman, Central Coast Regional Manager
(510) 286-0749 trish.chapman@scc.ca.gov

Deborah Ruddock, Legislative Liaison
(510) 286-4168 deborah.ruddock@scc.ca.gov

Dick Wayman, Communications Director
(510) 286-4182 dick.wayman@scc.ca.gov



1330 Broadway, 13th Floor
Oakland, California 94612-2530
(510) 286-1015

Visit our website: <http://scc.ca.gov>