

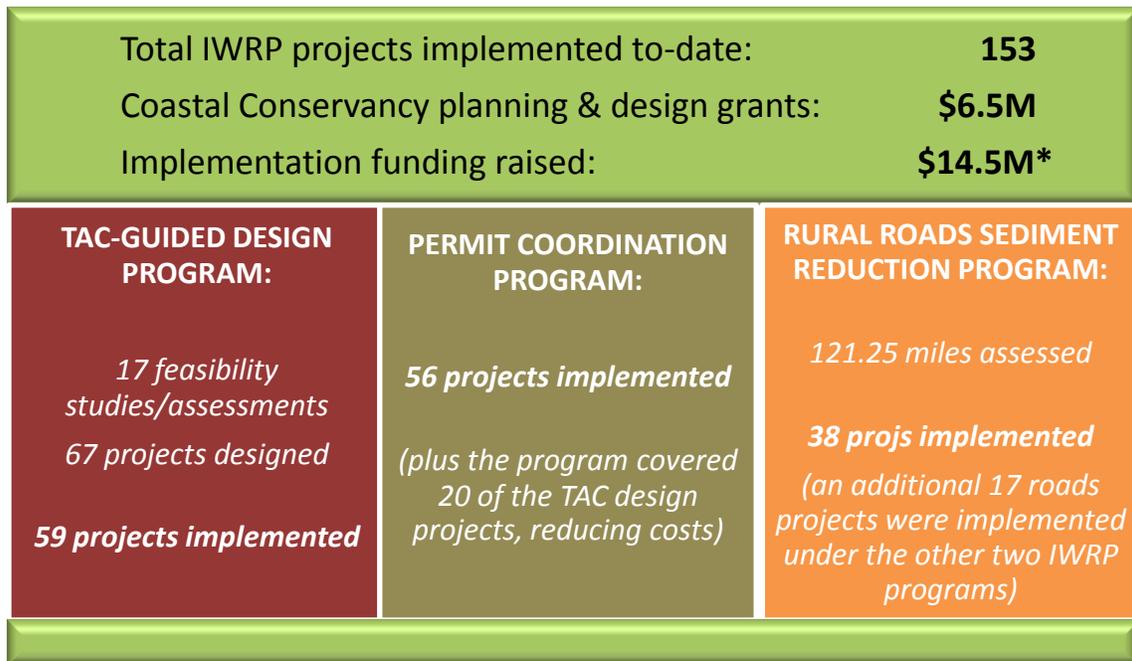
## Ten years of IWRP: Overview & Accomplishments 2003-2013

### What is IWRP?

The Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP) brings together federal, state and local resource and funding agencies to select and oversee the design and implementation of high priority projects to restore watersheds and improve water quality. IWRP grew out of a series of watershed assessments and plans done in Santa Cruz County in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Staff from the Coastal Conservancy, the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, the City and County of Santa Cruz, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Coastal Watershed Council recognized the need for a coordinated, countywide process for identifying, funding, and developing key projects to improve fish and wildlife habitat. The first phase of IWRP was established in 2003 with a \$4.5M grant from the Conservancy. In 2008, IWRP was expanded to include San Mateo and Monterey Counties. The Coastal Conservancy has played a pivotal role in IWRP, providing critical funding for designs and permits for selected projects, technical assistance to develop projects with resource agency guidance, and leveraging funds for implementation. The Conservancy's \$6.5M investment over the last 10 years has resulted in raising over \$14.5M to implement more than 150 restoration projects - protecting natural resources while boosting local economies and creating much-needed jobs.



**Leveraging the Conservancy's investment in IWRP**

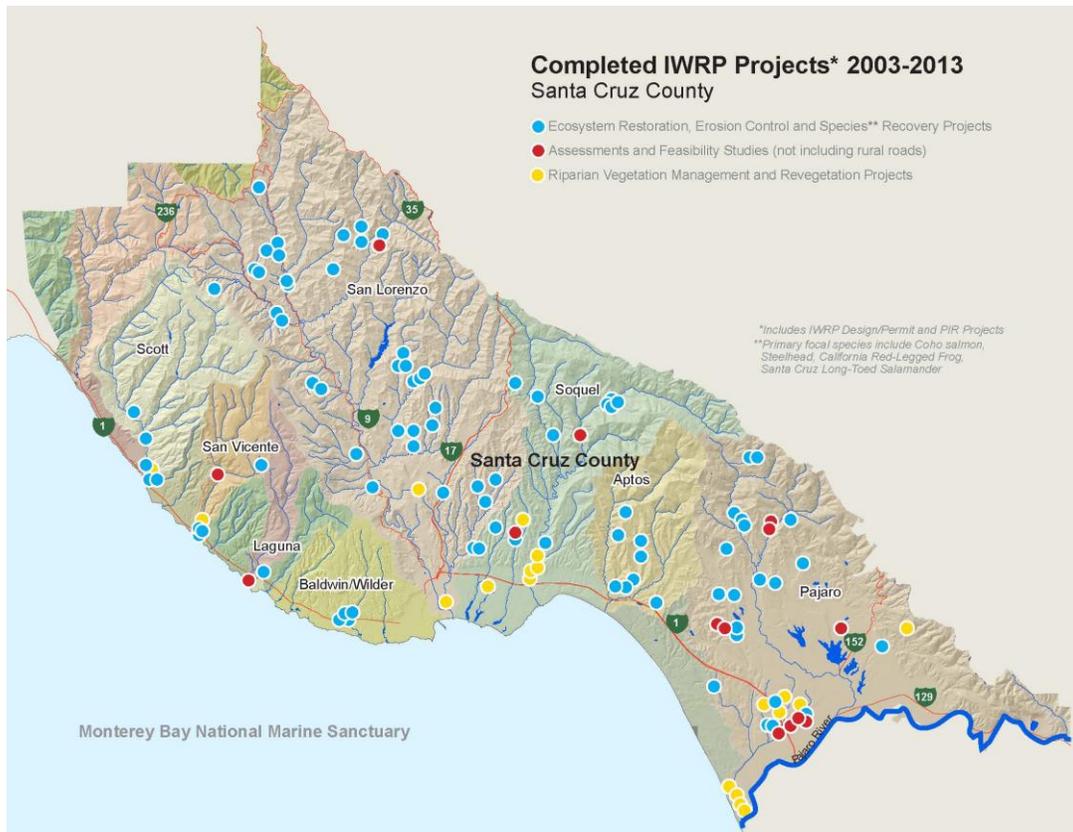


<b>*FUNDER</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)	\$9,163,623
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	817,955
US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	530,925
County of Santa Cruz	528,421
California Department of Transportation (CalTrans)	400,000
California Department of Water Resources (DWR)	387,597
Private Landowners	264,959
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire)	256,750
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)	243,059
County of San Mateo	196,000
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	188,948
American Rivers	184,000
Watsonville Wetlands Watch	161,211
Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP)	143,158
California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks)	118,446
Other	987,079

*(includes Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, City of Watsonville, The Nature Conservancy, Cal Poly, Friends of San Mateo County Parks, Moore Family Foundation, Santa Cruz County Fish and Game Commission, Santa Cruz County Community Foundation, Mount Hermon Outdoor Science School, California Conservation Corps, Fish Passage Forum, Americorps Watershed Stewardship Program, San Francisco Estuary Institute)*

**TOTAL FUNDS LEVERAGED FOR IMPLEMENTATION: \$14,573,130**

## **Progress To-Date: 2003-2013**



*There have also been a number of projects completed in San Mateo and Monterey Counties (see Exhibit 5 for a list of projects in each county).*

### **Key outcomes of IWRP**

In addition to the simple project metrics listed above, there have been a number of other important restoration-related outcomes of the IWRP process:

#### 1) Focus on listed species recovery

IWRP has been able to assist several agencies with projects to aid in recovery of listed species, specifically the Central California Coast steelhead and Coho salmon, the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (SCLTS), and the California red-legged frog (CRLF). The TAC has formed subcommittees to focus on these species. Some of the outcomes that have resulted:

- Removal or modification of all of the man-made fish passage barriers on Corralitos Creek, the West Branch of Soquel Creek, and both the mainstem of Aptos Creek and its tributary Valencia Creek.
- Successful implementation of the first Coho recovery projects south of the Golden Gate.
- Provided design and permit support to Cal Fire for Coho recovery projects on the Soquel Demonstration Forest and participated in the Calfire *Wood for Salmon* working group.
- Restoration of breeding ponds and movement corridors for CRLF in the Watsonville Sloughs.

- Developed and launched the IWRP SCLTS recovery program as a collaboration between the RCD of Santa Cruz County, CDFW, USFWS, and various private landowners. The first three projects were constructed in 2012 and the preliminary data suggest SCLTS, CRLF and the California tiger salamander are already benefitting.

2) Focus on the Middle Watsonville Sloughs and Lower Pajaro River

Working with a diverse array of partners including the IWRP TAC, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, Pajaro Valley Water Management District, City of Watsonville, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and private farmers, IWRP has been pivotal in helping diverse interests find common ground and strike a balance between high value crop production on working lands, restoration of critical coastal wetlands, and protection of water quality/supply. Examples of projects include:

- Restoration and acquisition of hundreds of acres of wetlands and uplands along the Middle Watsonville Sloughs via the Watsonville Sloughs Farm, the Bryant-Habert Wetland Restoration, Manabe Wetlands, and LMC Wetlands projects.
- Integration with the Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan through implementation of pilot groundwater recharge projects in the lower Pajaro River and Sloughs; leadership in developing a watershed-scale, multi-objective planning process for College Lake; and development of a state-of-the-art hydrologic and hydraulic model for the Watsonville Sloughs Watershed.

3) Focus on rural roads sediment reduction

The extensive network of rural roads in all three counties is a major contributor of sediment to fish-bearing streams. The RCD of Santa Cruz County established the Rural Roads Sediment Reduction Technical Assistance Program to help private road associations assess erosion issues and design and implement solutions. As of 2008, the program had prevented an estimated 7,600 tons of sediment from entering the waterways (updated information is being collected for work since then). IWRP helps support this program and has expanded it to San Mateo and Monterey Counties. A road-related erosion control guide is being developed for the three counties and all three RCDs have hosted training workshops for road associations, contractors and County staff.

4) Resolution of long-standing resource conflicts

The IWRP TAC process has evolved into a respected process for mediating conflicts between resource agencies and landowners, and providing technical assistance to develop projects that all parties can support. Examples of past and current projects include: the Branciforte Dam removal, the Watsonville Fish Ladder and Bypass Flow Agreement, restoration of the Molino Pond and pending 1707 Dedication of Riparian Water Rights, addressing long-standing and intractable instream flow and water rights issues on Pescadero Creek, and facilitating the first-of-its-kind collaborative design process with Caltrans and the IWRP TAC for the Scotts Creek Bridge Re-build.

5) Helping landowners navigate the permit process

IWRP has been a critical testing bed for a variety of innovative tools to provide incentives for

public and private partners to implement ecosystem restoration projects. One of the greatest barriers to restoration is the difficulty in navigating the permit process. IWRP has developed a number of ways to make this easier while still ensuring environmental protections are maintained.

- *Santa Cruz County Partners in Restoration Program*: through IWRP, the RCD created the first countywide permit coordination program to allow certain types of restoration projects to use a streamlined process, saving money and time. The RCD oversees the projects and reports to the regulatory agencies. Based on the success of this program, IWRP recently worked with the agencies to expand the size and types of projects covered under the program and re-authorize the permits for an additional 10 years.
- *NOAA Restoration Center's Programmatic Biological Opinion (BO)*: working with NMFS and NOAA RC staff, the IWRP team was able to draft and finalize the first programmatic BO to cover a wide suite of salmonid restoration activities across the entire jurisdiction of the NMFS Santa Rosa Field Office, greatly reducing staff time in reviewing fishery restoration projects. This has been so successful that the Arcata Field Office replicated the BO for its jurisdiction in 2012 and the Coastal Commission recently used it as the basis for its recent programmatic consistency determination changes.
- *Coho Help Act*: working with Cal Fire and the Wood for Salmon Working Group, NMFS, and other partners, IWRP was able to play a pivotal role in framing the rationale and process for developing a streamlined permit process for Coho recovery projects on timber lands.
- *Single point of contact*: the IWRP Coordinator helps identify the best strategy for meeting environmental compliance requirements and helps shepherd permits through by reviewing applications and serving as a single point of contact between landowners and regulatory agencies. This helps the landowner navigate the complex permit process and reduces the staff burden on the regulatory agencies.

#### 6) Development of new, local funding sources for conservation

After the infamous 2008 Bond Freeze, the IWRP steering team and local partners realized that the long-term viability of IWRP was contingent on developing a suite of local funding mechanisms. IWRP and the RCD of Santa Cruz County took the lead in developing new local funding sources as well as ensuring that existing local sources be used for local projects in a coordinated way to best benefit the natural resources and help support local economies.

Examples include:

- *Regional Early Mitigation Planning with Caltrans and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission*: with no local mitigation banks and a significant plan for future infrastructure improvement, the IWRP TAC asked the RCD to take a lead in developing the first Countywide EMP program to facilitate collaborative planning and link local mitigation funds to implementation of IWRP projects.
- IWRP was written into the draft Habitat Conservation Plan for the City of Santa Cruz's Water Program as the local implementation vehicle for off-site mitigation.

- The IWRP TAC is working with CEMEX to collect past-due fine monies and put them into an escrow account to be managed by the RCD and IWRP TAC for fisheries projects along the North Coast.
- Healthy Lands and Healthy Economies: based on IWRP's track record, the RCD is one of three local agencies spearheading a three-county initiative to develop robust economic tools to value ecosystem services and develop new conservation funding mechanisms that benefit both the resources and the local communities.

7) Watershed education and community involvement

While the primary focus has been on restoration projects, IWRP has also been involved in some education and community projects:

- Santa Rita Riparian Restoration: this was the first urban stream restoration in the Salinas watershed, converting an eyesore ditch to a community resource and source of pride.
- Developed *Watershed Cruzin'*, a watershed activity guide for grades K-12 to get students involved in watershed restoration and monitoring. Companion piece to Coastal Commission's coastal activity guide and transferable to other regions.
- The RCD worked with the County of Santa Cruz to install road signs identifying every stream and watershed boundary in the county, helping to raise awareness of which watersheds people live in.

8) New collaborative conservation partnerships

Over the past 10 years, IWRP, through the RCDs, has increased stakeholder engagement in conservation. The list of landowners and partners that have been involved in IWRP includes private rural road associations and timber companies; rural landowners; large businesses such as CEMEX and Driscoll Berries; public and private water companies; not-for-profit entities such as Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, American Rivers, and land trusts; and public agencies such as the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California State Parks, and the US Bureau of Land Management, local city and county governments, and the Regional Transportation Commission. While this list is not exhaustive, it illustrates the breadth and depth the relationships IWRP and the RCDs have developed in Santa Cruz, San Mateo and Monterey Counties.

**Awards and Recognition**

- **2013 James Irvine Foundation Leadership Award.** Karen Christensen, Executive Director of the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, was awarded this honor in part for her work in spearheading IWRP. IWRP was one of the marquis programs highlighted as an example of effective public-private partnerships, trust building, and creative action to find common ground and develop solutions to difficult resource problems.
- **2011 Coastal America Award.** Nominated by the USFWS Coastal Program for work in the Watsonville Sloughs and awarded for excellence in collaborative conservation by President Obama and the Executive Branch.

- **2008 American Fisheries Society Western Division Riparian Challenge Award.** Nominated by the US Bureau of Land Management, IWRP received this award for being a model for effective partnership building and on-the-ground conservation.

The value of IWRP has also been recognized in numerous other ways. In 2010, California Resources Secretary Lester Snow highlighted IWRP at *The Future of Natural Resources* summit as a model for integrated natural resource management. Based on its track record for implementing high priority, multi-benefit projects, the Department of Water Resources showcased IWRP and the Northern Santa Cruz County Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program at the 2013 IRWM Strategic Planning Conference. IWRP was also highlighted by the Priority Action Coho Team (CDFW and NMFS) as a model recovery program, providing local knowledge and the skills and technical expertise to identify, design, and construct critical fisheries projects. Finally, NOAA's 2012 Central California Coast (CCC) Coho Recovery Plan and forthcoming CCC Steelhead Recovery Plan both list IWRP as a critical implementation partner along the central coast.

#### **What our partners are saying about IWRP:**

*"The City's participation in the IWRP process has brought tremendous value to the Watsonville community. It has allowed us to restore and preserve 25 acres of wetlands, create public access and educational opportunities, and to develop stronger partnerships with other agencies. None of this would have been possible for our economically disadvantaged community; we simply did not have the resources to implement these projects. I highly recommend additional funding support for the IWRP; this funding will be leveraged multiple times by the efforts of the partners in this process."*

**~ Steve Palmisano, Interim Director of Public Works, City of Watsonville**

*"IWRP design and funding has been the critical resource for restoration and enhancement of anadromous fish habitats in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Without IWRP, virtually no fisheries habitat restoration projects would have occurred over the past 10 years in the Santa Cruz Diversity Stratum. Central California Coast Coho salmon are the most endangered of the Pacific salmonids and Santa Cruz County is the southern extent of their range. To date, little funding outside of IWRP has been directed towards the conservation and restoration of their freshwater habitats south of the Golden Gate. Thank you, Coastal Conservancy."*

**~ Jonathan Ambrose, Biologist, Protected Resources Division, National Marine Fisheries Service**

"IWRP has been one of the most valuable tools helping the USFWS's Coastal Program and Endangered Species Program get high priority projects designed, permitted and constructed for our trust resources. We greatly appreciate the conservation value of this effective collaborative model and look forward to continuing our role on the IWRP TAC."

**~ Shawn Milar, North-Central Coast Coordinator, US Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Program**

*"The work of the IWRP TAC has been essential in the design and delivery of IWRP projects resulting in the success of many important restoration projects here in Santa Cruz County. The projects completed under IWRP to date have not only complimented the work and mission of NRCS but have also resulted in strengthening critical partnerships and led to the implementation of significant ecosystem and watershed restoration projects. NRCS is a very proud,*

*supportive, and involved member of this collaborative program and TAC. IWRP is one of the most significant programs that I have been associated with in my nearly 40 years with NRCS.”*

**~ Rich Casale, CPESC #3, District Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

*“IWRP has allowed early coordination of agency and landowner objectives which has led both to more comprehensive solutions and eliminated wasteful reiterations of design. It has also simplified meeting logistics by clustering projects together. Current leadership has also provided expeditious coordination bringing project to completion that otherwise would be stuck in process.”*

**~ Marcin Whitman, Senior Hydraulic Engineer, California Department of Fish & Wildlife**

*“Without IWRP, the County of Santa Cruz would not have been able to implement the number of fish passage and sediment control projects that have been successfully completed since 2006. The design and permit funds made it possible to begin work on the projects while the IWRP TAC provided valuable input that shaped the scope and direction of several projects. IWRP was fundamental to the County of Santa Cruz in obtaining implementation funding which supported the County’s match funding and commitment to implementing the projects.”*

**~ Kristen Kittleson, Fishery Resource Planner, County of Santa Cruz**

*“IWRP design and permit funds have been a key reason that many natural resource conservation projects have been so successful in the Watsonville Slough System over the past several years. This program has been instrumental in guiding project design, supporting discussion and collaboration between diverse stakeholders, and providing a critical mechanism to support permitting of high priority habitat restoration and water quality improvement projects. As a non-profit organization with the mission to protect, restore, and foster appreciation of the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley, we greatly value this program and service.”*

**~ Jonathon Pilch, Restoration Director, Watsonville Wetlands Watch**