

# Ventura County



VENTURA RIVER ESTUARY

*Ventura County is distinguished in Southern California by its vast areas of natural lands and highly productive farmland. Its native wildlife habitats include the largest coastal wetlands complex in the southern half of the State, stretching from Ormond Beach to Mugu Lagoon. Outdoor recreational opportunities abound along the County's rivers, throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and Los Padres National Forest, and on some of the State's most beautiful beaches.*

**POPULATION:** >835,000

**COASTLINE:** 43 miles

**CONSERVANCY PROJECTS:** >40

**CONSERVANCY FUNDING:** >\$70 million

The County's natural lands protect water quality, offer first-rate recreational opportunities, and are important to the local economy. Open lands along rivers help with management of floodwaters and coastal wetlands provide a buffer against sea level rise. Wetlands, river lands, and open mountains are home to a wide variety of wildlife, attract many thousands of annual visitors, and add immeasurably to the quality of life for the people who live here.

The Coastal Conservancy has worked for more than 30 years with the people of Ventura County to sustain the area's quality of life and economic viability. We will continue that work to:

- Restore and improve the health of rivers, streams, marshes, and beaches
- Provide outdoor recreational opportunities for a growing and diverse population and thriving tourism industry
- Keep farmland in production
- Meet the challenges posed by a rising sea and a changing climate.

# Parkways, Parks, & Flood Protection

The Santa Clara River runs for 35 miles in Ventura County and is one of the least-altered rivers in the State. The **Santa Clara River Parkway**, begun in 2000, covers 3,900 acres along 20 miles of the river. Goals for the parkway include better flood management, reduced farmland erosion, restoration of wildlife habitat in the floodplain, restoration of the historic steelhead trout migration, and construction of recreational trails along the entire length of the river.

The **Ventura River Parkway** includes the popular 1,600-acre Ventura River Preserve in Ojai and other properties that together cover almost five miles of the river. Plans are underway to integrate the City of Ventura's urban reach into the parkway and to restore the river's estuary at the coast. The **Ventura River Education and Conservation Center** will provide a home for education, research, and visitor services at the Steelhead Preserve near Casitas Springs.

The **Calleguas Creek Watershed Floodplain Restoration Plan** provides a comprehensive evaluation of opportunities to restore habitats, reduce erosion, and manage floodwaters within the creek's 343-square-mile watershed. Demonstration projects conducted with farmers and ranchers followed from the plan and showed how erosion can be controlled on creekside lands. The **Calleguas Creek Regional Park** project aims at restoring 80 acres in the watershed while providing an outdoor classroom and hands-on learning for students.

The Conservancy-assisted acquisition of the 2,983-acre Ahmanson Ranch in the Simi Hills, now the **Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve**, opened a stunningly beautiful property to the public. The wooded hills and canyons of the preserve are part of a critical wildlife corridor between the Santa Monica Mountains and ranges to the north.

The Conservancy also helped purchase **Circle X Ranch**, a former Boy Scout camp on the east side of Point Mugu State Park. The ranch contains Sandstone Peak, the highest peak in the Santa Monica Mountains, and the popular Grotto, which features a fern-studded cave and waterfall.

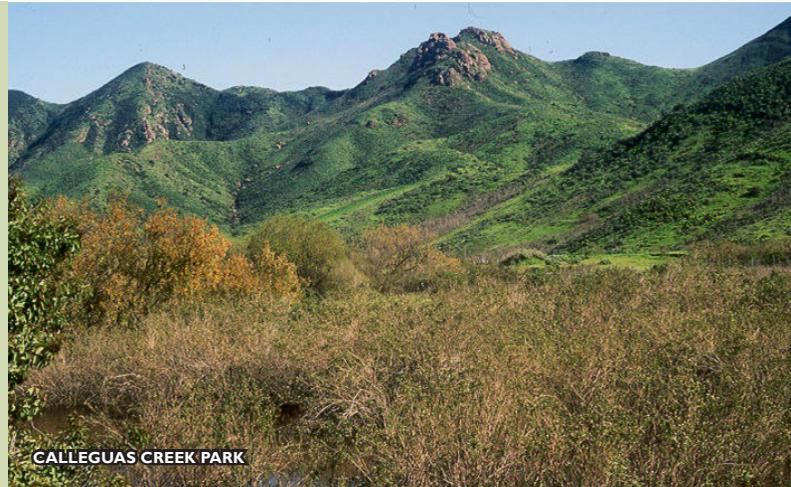
# Fisheries, Piers, & Farmland

The Conservancy has been a leader in the effort to remove **Matilija Dam**, one of the largest dam-removal projects in the country. Its removal will enable endangered southern steelhead trout to reach historic spawning habitat in the upper Ventura River watershed and allow downstream flows to carry sand that will replenish coastal beaches. The dam's reservoir has almost entirely silted in and it no longer serves a useful purpose.

The Conservancy was a principal funder for the construction of a fish ladder at the **Robles Diversion** on the Ventura River just downstream of Matilija Dam. The ladder opened nearly eight miles of spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead trout.

The Conservancy assisted with the reconstruction of **Ventura Pier** after it was damaged by storms in the late 1980s and with the restoration of the **Hueneme Beach Fishing Pier** in 2006. Both piers are popular gathering spots for coastal visitors and favorites of local anglers.

The Conservancy began the **Ventura County Farmland Preservation Program** in 1995 to underscore the value of agriculture to the County's economy and protect some of the most productive farmland in the world.



CALLEGUAS CREEK PARK



OXNARD CITY CORPS  
VOLUNTEERS AT NC CREEK  
RESTORATION



SNOWY EGRET, HUENEME LAGOON



ORMOND BEACH WETLANDS



VENTURA PIER



MATIJIJA DAM

Sam Jenriches



VENTURA RIVER NEAR OAK VIEW



SURFERS POINT

## Fisheries, Piers, & Farmland *continued*

The urban growth boundaries that followed the program have helped preserve this valuable industry.

## Coastal Wetlands & Rising Seas

The **Ormond Beach Wetlands** offer one of the most important opportunities to restore coastal wetlands in the State. These wetlands have room to grow inland as sea levels rise, ensuring the protection of areas farther inland and the endurance of wildlife habitats. The goal of the restoration is to acquire and restore at least 1,200 acres of historic wetlands and integrate them with the 3,000 acres of wetlands and dunes that surround Mugu Lagoon. The Conservancy and its partners have so far acquired 540 acres and completed a comprehensive restoration plan.

A managed retreat project at **Surfers Point**, a popular destination for surfers and other beachgoers in the City of Ventura, demonstrates a broad-based response to severe beach erosion in the face of sea level rise. The project aims to restore and improve the structure and function of the shoreline by widening the sandy beach, restoring dune habitat, improving water quality, and relocating public trail and recreation facilities.

Funding from the Conservancy is enabling the City of Port Hueneme to place an **emergency shoreline stabilization structure at Hueneme Beach** to prevent imminent loss of a public road, parking lot, and other infrastructure. Severe erosion of sand from the beach made it highly vulnerable to damage from winter storms, requiring shoreline armoring to provide both immediate and long-term protection.

The Coastal Conservancy is assisting the Nature Conservancy with the Ventura County component of the global **Coastal Resilience Project**. The project maps coastal areas to help communities understand the gradual changes that are coming with rising sea levels and identifies solutions that help nature help people.

The Conservancy-funded **Ventura County Historical Ecological Study** and related atlas, **Historical Wetlands of the Southern California Coast**, offer a detailed picture of the coastal landscape before and following European settlement. The reports serve as important guidelines for restoration efforts and provide a basis for broader public understanding and appreciation of the local natural heritage.

THE CONSERVANCY HAS WORKED IN VENTURA COUNTY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MANY ORGANIZATIONS, IN PARTICULAR THE COUNTY OF VENTURA, THE CITIES OF VENTURA AND OXNARD, THE OJAI VALLEY LAND CONSERVANCY, THE FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, THE ORMOND BEACH TASK FORCE, THE MUGU NAVAL AIR STATION, AND CAL STATE CHANNEL ISLANDS UNIVERSITY.

*“The Coastal Conservancy is visionary and has a real commitment to partnership. Working in this way has produced lasting, tangible results that have and will greatly benefit Ventura County.”*

E.J. Remson, Senior Program Manager  
The Nature Conservancy



MOUTH OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER

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.

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