# County of Santa Cruz

**Health Services Agency - Environmental Health**

## Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY - Call 711 http://www.scceh.org

AGENDA

November 5, 2026, 6:30 PM

| Agenda Item # | Start Time | End Time | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1<br>2<br>3<br><br><br>4 | 6:30 | 6:40 | Call to Order<br>Roll Call<br>Approval of Consent Items:<br>• September Meeting Minutes<br>Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda |
| 5 | 6:40 | 7:20 | Presentations by Public Grant Program Applicants |
| 6 | 7:20 | 7:50 | OR3: Development of California Vegetation Treatment Program |
| 7 | 7:50 | 8:05 | Discussion of Osprey Drone Disturbance Complaint |
| 8 | 8:05 | 8:20 | Update on Safe Passage Santa Cruz County |
| 9 | 8:20 | 8:30 | Staff Reports<br>Commissioner Reports and Announcements |
| 10 | | 8:30 | Adjourn |

**Public Comment**

Tim Goncharoff: Recommends Median Barrier Breaks for Wildlife Safety
Becky Steinbruner: Opposition Letter to Morgan Hill-Green Valley Reconductoring Project
Jean Brocklebank: Concern regarding 6PPD-Q detections in Santa Cruz County

**Items of Interest:**

Wildlife Collisions in Santa Cruz County: Help Map Hotspots
Potentially Lethal Concentrations of 6PPD-Q Found in Central California - ACS Publications
Santa Cruz County has healthy kelp; we shouldn't close fishing - Lookout Santa Cruz
World's largest wildlife crossing nears completion in California | Popular Science
River Otters seen in Bay Area for first time in 100 years - SFGATE

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs, or activities. This online meeting is available to anyone with a telephone. If you are a person with a disability and require special assistance in order to participate in the meeting, please contact Sean Abbey at (831) 454-2386 or TDD number (454-2123) at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting in order to make arrangements. Persons with disabilities may request a copy of the agenda in an alternative format. As a courtesy to those affected, please attend the meeting smoke and scent free.

**Commissioner and Public Participation Information**

Commissioners meet in person at the **Solarium Conference Room, 1060 Emeline Avenue**. Members of the public can join in person but are encouraged to join virtually using the link below.
PLEASE NOTE: The meeting room is on the second floor, above the Water Quality Lab entrance. The door must remain locked after hours, but staff will be able to provide access to all attendees as they arrive.

**Join the Microsoft Teams Meeting Here**

Meeting ID: 214 547 567 586 372 6
Passcode: cZ3R6Lu3

**Click the "Click here to join the meeting" link above.** If you are asked to join Teams with an application, click on "No thanks" and open in the browser. You should not need to download the application to join the meeting.

Please join the meeting a few minutes BEFORE 6:30 pm so that we can start at 6:30 pm. Staff will open the video conference at 6:25 pm. Cameras are optional for members of the public.

If you have questions, contact Sean Abbey at sean.abbey@santacruzcountyca.gov.

Meeting Roles and Rules:
Jenni Gomez, Chair, will lead the meeting. Chair Gomez will announce each agenda item, identify who will be leading an item and introduce discussion and public comment periods.
Sean Abbey, staff, will assist with roll call, note taking, and tracking who wants to speak. Please allow staff to make notes about any decisions. Sean will monitor email during the meeting.
There will be a public comment period for each item and the Chair will invite the public to participate at the appropriate time.

# County of Santa Cruz

**Health Services Agency - Environmental Health**

## Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY - Call 711 http://www.scceh.org

Meeting Minutes
September 3, 2026

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – 6:32 pm
2. **ROLL CALL**

| District | Commissioner | Status | Commissioner | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | Chris Berry | E | Kevin Butler | P |
| II | Brian Woodward | P | David Somerton | P |
| III | Liz Alter | P | Jon Jankovitz | P |
| IV | Brooke Sampson | P | Daniela Suarez | P |
| V | Jenni Gomez | R | Joanne Brown | P |

P = Present R = Remote E = Excused A = Absent

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES/2025 GRANT STATUS REPORT:** Com Brown requested her report in the minutes be revised to state the potential harm to CEQA identified in the webinar. Com Sampson requested that the Marine Mammal Center send an update once the project was completed, Com Brown was impressed with the completed by Coastal Watershed Council.
   - **Approve Minutes with Amendment from Com Brown**
     - **Motion**: Sampson, **Second**: Somerton,
     - **Abstain:** Woodward, Suarez
     - **All Other Ayes:** Minutes approved

   - **Accept the 2025 Grant Status Report:**
     - **Motion**: Woodward, **Second**: Somerton,
     - **All Other Ayes:** Minutes approved

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**
   - Commissioners requested an agendized item be created for the November meeting to discuss the public comment received regarding drone disturbance to nesting ospreys.

DRAFT

5. **PRESENTATION BY COASTAL WATERSHED COUNCIL ON 2025 GRANT:** Patrick Lopez, River Ecologist, presented on the work completed. The project used 355 community members, including 19 members experiencing homelessness to clear highly invasive species around the San Lorenzo River Levee. The goal was to remove 1,000sqft of invasives and ended up exceeding that goal at 3,109sqft. The work with homeless community members had to be relaunched in June 2026, after the Downtown Streets team program ended in October 2025. Commissioner comments are as follows:
    - **Com Somerton:** Do the non-natives start taking over again?
        - Lopez: Constant work is required to maintain the areas, which is part of the work of community members. In addition, there is work done to help establish the native plantings by mulching and watering.

6. **PRESENTATION BY WOLF SCHOOL ON 2025 GRANT:** The representative from WOLF School had to cancel and was unable to attend the meeting. Instead, Phil Kohlmetz from International Bird Rescue (IBR) presented on work of their project. Reported that patient load has been consistent with previous years, which average 300+ birds cared for from Santa Cruz County alone. IBR is still dealing with avian influenza, and their protocol has become a standard of care.
    - **Com Somerton:** I have been seeing many common Muir's that are ill or dead. Are those being sent to IBR?
        - Kohlmetz: We are seeing them and they are a common bird to receive care. The ones that make it to our facilities often recover well.
    - **Com Alter**: Are you planning for the large El Nino predicted for this year?
        - Kohlmetz: We are not actively planning but feel well positioned to respond to any emergency that happens.

7. **GENERAL STATUS UPDATE FROM CDFW WARDEN:** Lt. Juarez, Supervisor for Santa Cruz County, reported on the active work being done. It has been a busy deer season, and several deer poaching cases are being filed, including a large one that came in as a CALTIP. CDFW have been working on the Santa Cruz launch ramp and ticketed individuals with infractions such as unlicensed Bluefin Tuna take, and over limits for rockfish. CDFW have also been working with Pajaro Flood Control district to clear out homeless encampments in the flood zones prior to the rainy season. One case of a deer faun being brought from Colorado as a pet, which was released to Native animal rescue. Unfortunately, the faun had to be euthanized due to potential for spread of chronic wasting disease, which is not yet widely spread to California. CDFW is currently understaffed in the region, with several members having recently moved to work in less expensive regions. Currently just two wardens are active, but

one new warden will be coming out of field training soon, as well as a new Santa Cruz Harbor officer.

- **Com Gomez:** Regarding the faun, is there any action that could be taken preemptively to protect against spread before the testing comes back?
  - Juarez: The drop off was anonymous, so staff do not know specifically where the deer was being kept. Should the faun be positive for wasting disease, additional investigation will be completed.

- **Com Brown:** Do you anticipate more staff filling the empty positions?
  - Juarez: Likely not until 2027, but we can draw from neighboring offices should there be a high staffing demand situation.

8. **2026 PUBLIC GRANT PROGRAM:** Staff provided an overview of the current FWAC Grant Trust Fund and offered recommendations to both end the grant pause for 2026 and avoid unnecessary pauses in the future. In future grant cycles, Staff will bring a budget summary to the September meeting. That will be used to make two decisions, 1) determine if full budgeted amount should be issued, and 2) what budget should be requested for next year. Those decisions were voted as follows:

   - **Approve the Removal of the Pause on 2026 Grants**
     - **Motion:** Somerton, **Second**: Woodward,
     - **All Ayes:** The pause for the 2026 Grants has been removed.

   - **Approve Release of 2026 Grant Request for Proposals for $10,000 in grants, with Habitat Restoration as the area of interest.**
     - **Motion:** Butler, **Second**: Alter,
     - **All Ayes:** RFP approved for release on 9/4/2026

   - **Recommend Budget for 2027 Grants be $35,000**
     - **Motion:** Alter, **Second**: Sampson,
     - **All Ayes:** Staff will request a budget of $35,000 for the 2027-28 Fiscal Year.

9. **STATUS UPDATE FROM WILDLIFE CROSSING PROJECT:** Staff and Com Gomez provided an update on Safe Passage Santa Cruz. A County Press Release was completed, and the project currently has 6 participants. Com Brown suggested notifying Public Works and Animal Control about the project. Commissioners will be provided with a digital flier to distribute.

**10. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- **Staff Reports:**
  - Staff attended a training on identification and treatment of Invasive Shot Hole Borer with the intention of incorporating the training into work done for the Streamwood Program.
- **Commissioner Reports:**
  - **Com Somerton**: Recently visited Moss Landing and counted 11 dead bull sea lions, which were likely killed by Domoic Acid poisoning. Also found a dead Northern Fur Seal near Seacliff that was tagged. He notified National Marine Fisheries regarding both.
  - **Com Suarez**: Will be moving and will no longer be a commissioner.
  - **Com Sampson**: Will likely be ending role as a commissioner in the new year.

**11. ADJOURN.** **Motion to Adjourn:** Butler, **Second:** Somerton
**All Aye:** meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

**From:** Tim Goncharoff
**To:** Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission
**Subject:** Wildlife Safety
**Date:** Thursday, September 17, 2026 12:49:54 PM

****CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear Commission Members,

As a long-time resident of Santa Cruz County and someone who has worked diligently for environmental protection in the County, I'm very pleased to learn about your wildlife safety study. I have a suggestion which I hope you'll consider.

Wildlife bridges and undercrossings are great, but vastly expensive. There will never be enough of them to stop the carnage.

Among the problems are the concrete medians which have been erected for driver safety. Along corridors such as Highway 17, where the height has been doubled, they pose a particular problem.Wildlife including deer and mountain lions can no longer see over the barriers. They must leap blindly, too often causing collisions with dangerous results for drivers and horrifying outcomes for the poor animals. I believe there is an answer.

Instead of miles of unbroken medians, we could create gaps. Simply create a short break in the wall, and let the ends overlap a bit. The overlap could be as short as six feet, with a space between of no more than thirty inches. This is plenty to provide a safe refuge for a frightened animal which has crossed one lane of traffic, and can now wait, unseen, for an opportunity to safely continue to the other side. Not every stretch of road is wide enough for this, but many are. Best of all, we could build thousands of them for the cost of one wildlife bridge. Ultimately they might be built as often as every half mile.

I've debated what to call this device. Perphaps something simple like "wildlife safety gap," although others have found "lion gate" more catchy. I leave it to you.

I am hopeful that your own grant funds might cover the cost of the first test case. Your current crossing count provides an excellent opportunity to gauge effectiveness. I believe CalTrans would support an effort with such important statewide implications.

I hope you find this worthy of consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,

Tim Goncharoff

Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer

| | |
|---|---|
| **From:** | Becky Steinbruner |
| **To:** | CPUC Energy Division Director |
| **Cc:** | PG&E Tariffs; wesley.stokes@wildlife.ca.gov; alexis.harrison@wildlife.ca.gov; Sean Abbey; Michael Guth; Becky Steinbruner |
| **Subject:** | Protest Letter re: PG&E Advice Letter #7982-E Morgan Hill -Green Valley |
| **Date:** | Monday, September 28, 2026 12:59:44 AM |

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Dear CPUC Director of Energy Division,
I hereby file a formal protest letter regarding the
Morgan Hill-Green Valley 115kV Area Reconductoring Project - (City of Morgan Hill and Santa Clara County, and Santa Cruz County, T.0004271).

**PG&E has incorrectly claimed that this project qualifies for an exemption from the Permit to Construct process under GO 131-E.**

GO 131-E specifically states that several exemptions do not apply where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity may affect an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern that has been designated, precisely mapped and officially adopted by a government agency.

What projects, generation, load, or interconnection requests caused or contributed to the need for the Morgan Hill–Green Valley reconductoring project? Please provide factual documentation to support the need for this Project.

Does the scope or timing of the project relate in any way to the Seahawk BESS interconnection, proposed for 90 Minto Road and adjacent to the Green Valley Substation?

This Project merits formal evidentiary hearings prior to any possible approvals for the following reasons:

**1) Inadequate Public Notice**

The notice is for PG&E's Morgan Hill–Green Valley 115-kV Area Reconductoring Project, Advice Letter 7982-E. It involves roughly 15 miles of the existing 115-kV system, modifications at Morgan Hill Substation, and ends at the Green Valley Substation on Minto Road. PG&E is attempting to proceed through the General Order 131-E exemption/advice-letter process rather than obtaining a full Permit to Construct (PTC).

Under GO 131-E rules, I hereby protest PG&E's application for an exempt construction project and argue that PG&E should instead be required to file a Permit to Construct.

a) PG&E posted only two very small 8" x 16" signs on private property. One on the fence at the Green Valley Substation and a second on the large transmission tower near the end of Minto Road. Both signs are at the distant end of Minto Road and not at all visible to the hundreds of residents living along Minto Road and ancillary roads adjacent to the Green Valley Substation.

Please refer to the photos attached below. I did not find any signs posted on Paulsen Road, even though it is also within the Project envelope.

b) Anyone seeing the small signs is required to leave their vehicles and trespass on PG&E private property, or travel a private road posted with no trespassing signs.

c) Both signs are not clearly visible to the public. The small sign on the fence at the Green Valley Substation is hidden behind shrubbery, not on main substation gate. The small sing attached to the high voltage transmission tower is not facing line of sight of motorists on Minto Road private road; no one would see this small sign unless happening to look in that direction while passing the small sign.

d) Neither sign is in Spanish, despite the high percentage of Hispanic-only speakers in the area.

e) There are NO signs posted at all within the Diamond Estates subdivision located directly adjacent to the Green Valley Substation, or on the fence of the Green Valley Substation that borders the Diamond Estates Subdivision. Thus, these residents have not received proper notice of the Project.

f) There are NO signs posted that are visible to residents at Schapiro Knolls Affordable Housing Development at 33 Minto Road, even though the housing complex is adjacent to the Green Valley Substation. Thus, these residents have not received proper notice of the Project.

g) GO 131-E requires an exempt project proceeding under this procedure must have newspaper notice once a week for two successive weeks.

I specifically searched for the project name, Advice Letter 7982-E, “Morgan Hill-Green Valley 115kV,” “Area Reconductoring Project,” and combinations with the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, *Pajaronian* and *Morgan Hill Times*.

However, I cannot find an indexed copy of the 2026 newspaper publication.

Please identify the newspaper(s) of general circulation in which notice of Advice

Letter 7982-E was published, the dates of each publication, and provide copies or affidavits/proofs of publication.

h) Please provide any and all lists of mailings PG&E has sent residents within 300' adjacent to the entire Project envelope.

i) Please provide evidence that PG&E has mailed notice to the planning director of every affected city/county and to the CEC Executive Director.

j) Please provide evidence that PG&E has timely filed a Tier 2 Advice Letter with the CPUC, including the notice and its distribution list.

**2) Known and existing Osprey nesting sites must be evaluated and protected via avoidance of any work in the area during nesting and fledgling season.**
There is at least one known Osprey nest within the Green Valley Substation. Please see the photo attached below.
Ospreys are protected in California under various federal and state laws, which have been crucial for their recovery from near extinction. Their populations are monitored to ensure ongoing conservation efforts are effective.

PG&E must provide an evaluation of the Osprey nest(s) and determine if there are other nests anywhere in the Project area. NO helicopter, drone or heavy construction equipment operation should be allowed during the Osprey nesting and fledgling season.

**3) PG&E must evaluate and mitigate potential PTSD impacts on any veterans living in the Project work area caused by the construction helicopter and drone activity, and provide alternate temporary housing for them, their families and pets;**
It is well-recognized that military veterans commonly suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). VA.gov | Veterans Affairs



VA.gov | Veterans Affairs

Apply for and manage the VA benefits and services you've earned as a Veteran, Servicemember, or family member—li...

Loud construction sounds, which would include the helicopters necessary for the entire Project have significant potential of causing adverse impacts on any veterans living or working in the Project area. Loud Noise Triggers and PTSD in Veterans



**Loud Noise Triggers and PTSD in Veterans**

Managing loud noise triggers and PTSD as a veteran For many veterans and serving personnel, certain sounds can f...

**4) Baseline and Proposed Increased EMF Levels Must be Evaluated for Adverse Impacts on Residential Areas Adjacent to the Project Area.**

a) Diamond Estates subdivision is adjacent to the north of the Green Valley Substation. Baseline readings of EMF levels must be measured and publicly reported. The Project should not be allowed to move forward if EMF would be increased by any amount.

b) The Schapiro Knolls affordable housing development adjacent to the west of the Green Valley Substation is HUD-supported. Baseline readings of EMF levels must be measured and publicly reported. the Project should not be allowed to move forward if EMF would be increased by any amount.

**5) The CPUC and PG&E Must Comply with HUD-mandated Considerations, Including proper noticing and Full Environmental Analysis of Health and Safety Impacts Caused by the Project Construction, Operation and Maintenance.**

Schapiro Knolls is an 88-unit affordable housing community. It stands as the largest HUD-assisted residential complex in Watsonville, serving as a sanctuary for over 300 low-income tenants, including young children, multi-generational families, and elderly individuals.

Increasing the massive, industrial infrastructure project on a small plot directly adjacent to residents' backyards, playground, and homes creates an unacceptable environment. I ask the CPUC to consider these specific legal, constitutional, and structural arguments:

a). Violation of Constitutional Rights and Federal Civil Rights Law

Increasing EMF levels and disruptive construction noise and helicopter activity inherent to this Project is unacceptable. Expanding the hazardous industrial facility directly adjacent to the largest low-income, minority HUD community in Watsonville constitutes an existential threat to our residents' Constitutional Rights:

- Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause: Forcing a protected, marginalized demographic to bear the adverse health impacts and cumulative deterioration of their quality of life burdens of regional energy demands—burdens that would never be imposed on affluent, white neighborhoods—is a clear violation of equal protection.
- Civil Rights Act Title VI: Because the CPUC and PG&E operate using federal infrastructure funds, implementing a hazardous facility next to a minority HUD property with inadequate notice and opportunity for the residents to protest or comment constitutes discriminatory impact and environmental racism.
- Legal Precedent: This scenario mirrors landmark federal environmental justice lawsuits (such as *RISE v. St. Johns County* and *Brantley v. United States*), where courts ruled that state and local agencies cannot selectively cluster hazardous infrastructure next to minority or subsidized housing without violating civil rights protections. The CPUC and PG&E will become vulnerable to severe civil rights litigation by ignoring these precedents.

b). Failure to Address Core CEQA Environmental Justice (EJ) Mandates

Because HUD housing inherently serves low-income families, elderly individuals, and historically disadvantaged demographics, a primary and non-negotiable focus of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process must be an explicit, rigorous Environmental Justice (EJ) analysis.

- Under CEQA guidelines, the lead agency is legally required to analyze whether expanding the industrial use Project next to vulnerable populations constitutes an inequitable environmental and public health burden.
- By significantly expanding the existing facility and infrastructure within feet of hundreds of minority children and seniors, this Project fails this standard. A complete and thorough EIR must be conducted, with maximum public comment periods provided.
- The Project concentrates all structural, chemical, and physical dangers directly onto a community least equipped to absorb an industrial crisis and construction noise and disruption. This failure to adequately mitigate the disparate impact violates both the spirit and letter of California's environmental protection statutes.

c). Triggering Federal Environmental Review and Funding Risk

Because Schapiro Knolls is a HUD-assisted property, federal law strictly dictates its operational standards. Under 24 CFR Part 50 and Part 58, any upcoming federal milestones—such as a refinancing, physical rehabilitation, or a subsidy contract renewal—will trigger a mandatory HUD Environmental Clearance.

- HUD's strict environmental protocols explicitly mandate evaluating adjacent properties for explosive, chemical, toxic, industrial hazards, and nuisances.
- Because industrial electrical substations and supporting infrastructure present low-probability, high-consequence safety risks, and hazardous conditions inherent with helicopter construction activity (such as aerial collision and equipment failures leading to air-to-ground crashes Two Workers Die in Helicopter Crash on Ameren Illinois Power Line Project), HUD or its designated local housing authority must formally investigate if the facility threatens the long-term habitability of the apartments.



**Two Workers Die in Helicopter Crash on Ameren Illinois Power Line Project**

Federal investigators are probing what caused what is believed to be contractor helicopter to strike the utility...

- Critically, the CPUC and PG&E have completely failed to collaborate in this mandatory assessment. By failing to engage with federal and housing authority compliance metrics, the PG&E is actively blinding regulators to a catastrophic hazard that will cause Schapiro Knolls to fail its upcoming federal reviews. This omission directly jeopardizes the federal subsidies allowing over 300 low-income residents to afford their homes, risking the complete defunding and structural loss of Watsonville's premier affordable asset.

d). Violations of Federal Housing Law & HUD Site Acceptability Standards

Under federal law, HUD has an absolute statutory mandate to ensure that all federally assisted housing environments are "decent, safe, and sanitary." The proposed Project explicitly violates several cornerstone federal regulations, due to increased EMF levels, hazardous and disruptive construction and operational activities, and

deterioration of a decent and safe quality of life :

- The Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. § 1437 et seq.): Establishes the federal mandate to maintain safe living environments for subsidized tenants, a standard directly compromised by placing an industrial-scale hazard within feet of residential property.
- Federal Safety Enforcement Mandates: HUD is legally required to actively engage and intervene when external commercial developments threaten the safety, structural integrity, or habitability of a HUD-funded asset. By approving this Project, the CPUC forces a head-on conflict with federal statutory requirements.

e). Violations of Federal Acoustic Comfort Standards (Noise Pollution)

There must be an acoustic evaluation of the Project's impacts on adjacent residential areas, particularly on the Schapiro Knolls housing complex. This analysis must include any and all construction noise.

There already exists a constant and audible low-frequency noise emanating from the Green Valley Substation. The Project would cause an increase in the constant, low-frequency hum directly conflicting with federal environmental protections:

- HUD Noise Regulation (24 CFR Part 51, Subpart B): Federal law establishes strict statutory limits on noise exposure for HUD-assisted residential properties to ensure a livable acoustic environment.
- Chronic Health Impacts: The constant 24-hour low-frequency noise will penetrate the walls of Schapiro Knolls, causing severe sleep disruption, elevated stress, and negative mental health impacts for the 300+ residents living adjacent to the facility. This unrelenting acoustic assault violates HUD's explicit noise attenuation mandates.

f). Demanding Strict Fire and Structural Compliance

The federal government relies heavily on local code enforcement to protect its housing assets. HUD properties must strictly adhere to Title 24 of the California Fire Code and all updated life-safety building standards. In this scenario, HUD and regional authorities possess the framework to demand that PG&E comply with strict clean air quality and health and safety mandates, including operational equipment explosions and diesel exhaust during construction activities.

g). Mandatory Tenant Relocation Rights and Liability Costs

If the CPUC approves this significant Project located so close to Schapiro Knolls that it violates federal safety thresholds, or if a catastrophic helicopter crash or power transformer explosion occurs, HUD will be forced to step in directly to protect residents. Under federal fair housing and safety laws, this triggers Mandatory Tenant Relocation Rights.

- HUD would be legally required to issue Emergency Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8) and deploy emergency relocation funding to permanently move all 300+ vulnerable tenants out of this federally designated zone of danger.
- By CPUC approval of an unsafe project, the CPUC and PG&E are directly creating a crisis that forces the mass displacement of an entire community, uprooting working families, and shifting millions of dollars in emergency relocation liabilities onto public housing authorities.

In conclusion, I protest the Morgan Hill to Green Valley Reconductoring Project and demand the following:

1) The complete Advice Letter 7982-E, including all attachments, maps, environmental screening, exemption analysis, distribution list, declaration/proof of posting, and proof of newspaper publication;

- 2) The CPUC verification of whether PG&E has complied with every requirement of GO 131-E § VIII.B, including both on-site and off-site posting for the entire length of the 15-mile Project;
- 
- 3) Complete documentation from PG&E and the CPUC for the exact exemption(s) under § III.B.2 that PG&E is relying upon.
- 
- 4) Provide the complete list/map of poles and structures being replaced, relocated, enlarged or added, including old versus new height, width, footprint and conductor specifications. GO 131-E defines an "upgrade" to include reconductoring with greater transfer capability where supporting structures are replaced.
- 

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Steinbruner
3441 Redwood Drive
Aptos, CA 95003
831-685-2915
e-mail: KI6TKB@yahoo.com

**From:** Jean Brocklebank
**To:** Sean Abbey
**Subject:** Worrisome chemical found in Bay Area, Santa Cruz creeks
**Date:** Wednesday, October 28, 2026 10:38:29 AM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello Sean ~

Please share the following article with members of the Fish & Wildlife Commission, in case Chris Berry has not already submitted it for the November 5th meeting.

Thank you,
Jean Brocklebank

https://www.sfchronicle.com/climate/article/salmon-tires-pollution-california-22490213.php?

**Worrisome chemical found in Bay Area, Santa Cruz creeks**

By Kurtis Alexander, Staff Writer
Oct 26, 2026

Six years ago, scientists in the Pacific Northwest untangled a mystery about why salmon were dying in the region, often in astonishing numbers — with as many as 90% of the migrating adult coho salmon perishing in parts of Puget Sound.

The culprit turned out to be a toxic chemical from tires washing into waterways.

Now, some of the same researchers that made the 2020 discovery have confirmed that this tire-derived compound is present, at worrisome levels, in salmon-bearing watersheds in California.

A study published last month in the journal Environmental Science and Technology Letters finds that at least 10 rivers and creeks in the Bay Area and Santa Cruz region have had potentially lethal concentrations of the chemical 6PPD-quinone after stormwater flowed into them.

While salmon are much less plentiful in these waterways than they are in Oregon and Washington, five of the California rivers and creeks that logged harmful levels of the toxic substance are federally designated as “critical habitat” for endangered coho. These include Marin County’s Corte Madera Creek, San Mateo County’s San Pedro Creek and Santa Cruz County’s San Lorenzo River.

The study didn’t track fish fatalities, but coho salmon are particularly sensitive to 6PPD-quinone, and local fish experts say the chemical is probably exerting a toll on California’s small coho population.

“It’s highly likely that fish have died as a result of this,” said Chris Berry, watershed compliance manager for the city of Santa Cruz, which is conducting a $50 million program to

help restore salmon in Santa Cruz County. “We’re putting a big effort into recovering coho and to see something like 6PPD (quinone) pose another challenge for coho is really unsettling.”

Coho, like other types of salmon, have struggled with drought, dams, pollution and over-development of their watersheds, among other things. California’s coho population today is less than 5% of its historical count, experts say.

The compound 6PPD-quinone was discovered to be a menace to coho only after the scientists in 2020 linked it to another chemical, 6PPD. This industrial material is commonly added to plastics and rubbers, including vehicle tires, to increase durability. As tires wear and shed particles, the 6PPD can react with ozone, the scientists noted, to create the more toxic 6PPD-quinone.

The newly created 6PPD-quinone builds up on roads and spills into rivers and creeks when it rains. While coho salmon spend much of their lives at sea, they swim inland, up freshwater channels to spawn, inevitably encountering runoff from roads that can contain 6PPD-quinone.

“There’s always been a question of whether 6PPD-quinone would be an issue for California,” said Ed Kolodziej, one of the authors of the new study and a professor of sciences and mathematics at the University of Washington campuses in Seattle and Tacoma. Kolodziej helped author the 2020 paper that originally identified 6PPD-quinone as a problem. “The coho are certainly off the coast there (in Central California). I know people off Santa Cruz in the ocean catching coho salmon.”

Kolodziej’s research team came to California last November, as a storm approached, and took water samples before and after the rain. These samples were sent to a lab for testing, and the results came back showing that 6PPD-quinone levels generally rose with the stormwater runoff.

Forty-six out of 59 storm samples, representing at least 10 waterways, had concentrations of 6PPD-quinone that exceeded 11 nanograms per liter, which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers harmful to aquatic life.

Branciforte Creek, a tributary of the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz County, recorded 230 nanograms per liter, the highest concentration of any of the waterways designated as coho habitat. Carbonera Creek, another tributary of the San Lorenzo River and designated coho habitat, also had extremely high levels of the compound.

“This shows that the situation is quite urgent,” said Rebecca Sutton, senior scientist at the San Francisco Estuary Institute, who works to keep California watersheds healthy for fish and other wildlife. Sutton helped with the 2020 study that brought 6PPD-quinone to light.

Steelhead trout, which also swim in some of the California watersheds that tested at high levels for 6PPD-quinone, can be harmed by the compound as well. The Central Coast runs of steelhead are classified as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Studies are underway to determine how much, if any, of a health risk the chemical is to humans, whether from direct exposure or by eating fish.

The state of California began taking steps to address 6PPD-quinone after the incriminating

findings were published six years ago. While there are no restrictions on the parent material, 6PPD, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control has listed the substance as a “priority product” and is requiring tire manufacturers to begin considering the use of alternatives. Washington state is also taking steps to try to phase out the compound.

“Getting this chemical out of tires is definitely the solution that fixes this problem everywhere at once,” Kolodziej said. “But that takes time.”

In the meantime, he and others recommend measures to prevent and treat stormwater runoff along roads, such as installing catch basins and rain gardens, particularly in areas where salmon are vulnerable.

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# County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health

## Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-3154 TDD/TTY -Call 711 www.scceh.com
EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us

GRANT INFORMATION**: PROPOSAL**
*This information **will** be included in public documents*

Project Name: CDFW CALTIP PROGRAM Date: 9/14/26

Applicant name or Organization: John Robinson

Project Description:

CALTIP or " Californians Turn in Poachers and Polluters" is a confidential secret witness program that encourages the public to provide the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Enforcement Division (Wardens) with factual information leading to the arrest of poachers and polluters. Citizens report these potential violations by calling a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week telephone hotline. You do not have to give your name. Calls are immediately referred to local enforcement agencies and /or local Wildlife Officers. The program has offered rewards of up to $3,500 for tips which lead to a citation or arrest in more egregious cases. A reward may be requested by either the reporting party or by the Wildlife Officer involved in the case on behalf of the reporting party.

| Funding Requested | $1,500.00 |
|---|---|

| ITEMIZED BUDGET ITEMS | Requested Funds | Matching Funds | Total Amount |
|---|---|---|---|
| CALTIP Rewards | $1,500.00 | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| TOTAL AMOUNTS | $1,500.00 | | |

Each item description should be sufficient to clearly define the full item. In addition to funds being requested, note any matching funds committed to the proposed project.

For each section, provide a brief written response.

Background of the issue being addressed

See attached

Project Goals

See attached

Project Logistics: how will the project be completed?

See attached

Project Completion Timeline

See attached

Applicants Background.

See attached

**Santa Cruz CALTIP**

**Habitat restoration/related elements**

From 2024 to 2025, the number of Statewide CALTIP reports (hotline and online) has grown 25%. This trend is continuing in 2026.

2025 – Santa Cruz - 83 of 5313 CALTIP statewide calls 1.56% of calls

Of these 83 calls

**25.5%** HABITAT DESTRUCTION, STREAMBED ALTERATION, AND POLLUTION RELATED

8.6% Boulder Creek Habitat related calls

16.9% County-wide other than Boulder Creek

**27.7%** MISC. ANIMAL CALLS

Feeding Wildlife, Exotic Animals for Sale, Road Kill, Trapping, Poisoning

**22.9%** Fishing Related Calls

Inland and Ocean Related Fishing Calls

**23.9%** Hunting Related Calls

Primarily Waterfowl and Deer Hunting

## Background of the issue being addressed



CALTIP or " Californians Turn in Poachers and Polluters" is a confidential secret witness program that encourages the public to provide the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Enforcement Division (Wardens) with factual information leading to the arrest of poachers and polluters. Citizens report these potential violations by calling a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week telephone hotline. You do not have to give your name. Calls are immediately referred to local enforcement agencies and /or local Wildlife Officers. The program has offered rewards of up to $3,500 for tips which lead to a citation or arrest in more egregious cases.

A reward may be requested by either the reporting party or by the Wildlife Officer involved in the case on behalf of the reporting party. It is only 1-3% of the individual's reporting these violations who actually request a reward. The vast majority are more interested in protecting the State's natural resource and seeing violators brought to justice. Many times the interface does not stop there. Wildlife Officers often relate that the reporting party remains in contact providing continued observation and/or information and at times putting themselves at risk.

Reward request cases are reviewed quarterly by the volunteer CALTIP Rewards Committee and evaluated as to their merit, considering the involvement of the reporting party, the impact on the resource (species or habitat), if the activity was cruel or inhumane, the impact on the local community, if the tip was a major breakthrough, if it was a one time or continuing activity, and the risk to the reporting party.

Poaching is the illegal taking of fish and wildlife. It can involve hunting or fishing out of season, the taking of more fish or game animals than the law allows, or the illegal commercialization of species including abalone, sturgeon, bears, reptiles and many others. It can also include trespassing, hunting or fishing in closed areas such as a Game Reserve or Marine Life Protected Areas. All species of wildlife in California are affected. Equally devastating crimes include pollution of industrial, agricultural, household waste, illegal marijuana gardens, habitat destruction, and the insidious practice of transporting and introducing non-native undesirable fish (like northern pike and white bass) into California's lakes and rivers.

Just as much of a concern is Internet crime, which can involve the illegal sale, trading and bartering of wildlife and plant life. Illegal commercialization of wildlife is a multi-million dollar industry right here in California, and is valued at hundreds of millions worldwide. The illegal black market trafficking of wildlife could be eliminated if people would simply refuse to purchase wildlife parts.

Poachers/polluters devastate nature by breaking laws designed to assure proper wildlife management and species survival. Poaching is an insult to the vast majority of hunters and anglers who obey these laws. Because poaching is a crime of secrecy and stealth, its full impact in California is impossible to fully identify. However, enough poaching is documented to realize that it exacts a very heavy toll.

## Project Goals

The CALTIP objective is to substantially reduce poaching and polluting in California and to have the public's participation and support in the program. Too successfully fight poaching and pollution, Fish and Wildlife Officers must have help from legitimate sports persons, hunters, anglers, and concerned individuals who witness or become aware of a poaching or polluting incident. CDFW Has made an effort to promote CAlTIP not only to the hunting/fishing enthuses, but the overall outdoor recreationalist as well. The mission is to strengthen and sustain the CALTIP program as Californians premier confidential reporting mechanism for

poaching and pollution violations, ensuring a robust funding for rewards, increased public participation, and enhanced protection of fish and wildlife resources within California. County Commission contributions have enabled the CALTIP Rewards Committee to fairly reward tipsters for their services to fish, wildlife and the habitat.

## Project logistics: how will the project be completed

1) A citizen witnesses or becomes aware of a Fish and Game violation or act of polluting.
2) He/she calls CDFW-CALTIP (888-334-2258) with factual information. Or may submit anonymous tips to CDFW using tip411 an Internet based tool from Citizens Observe.com that allows the public to text message an anonymous tip to wildlife officers. Additional, CDFW has a CALTIP smartphone App which enables the public to share an anonymous tip and/or photograph with the officer, both of which lets the officers converse anonymously with the tipster.
3) A officer investigates the report (often with the continued assistance of the reporting party) and depending on the circumstances, may either issue a warning, write a citation or make an arrest. If the information supplied by the caller leads to a citation or arrest the caller is eligible for a reward.
4) The reporting party may request a reward or the officer involved in the case may make a recommendation for a reward on behalf of the caller.
5) The case is then review by the CALIP Rewards Committee. Reward amount are determined by noting the circumstances and the assistance rendered by the caller. The Rewards Committee determines if a reward will be paid and for how much.
6) The CALTIP rewards fund comes entirely from donations. No State funds are used, the Rewards Committee both receives and administers these funds, not the CDFW.

## Project Completion Timeline

Since 1981, The Department of Fish and Wildlife CALTIP program has provided a way for the public to anonymously report (poaching and pollution). Through the ongoing support and use of the program and it's partnership between the community and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, CALTIP will continue to provide an endless resource and timeline for the public to report these violations and maintain the essentials for wildlife and its habitat well into the future. The Department of Fish and Wildlife receives approximately 6,000 CALTIP hotline and online reports a year of potential poaching or polluting and is increasing yearly. 2026 marks the 45$^{th}$ anniversary of the CALTIP program.

## Applicants Background

The CALTIP program was directed and operated from it's inception by the CALTIP Citizens Review Board and then followed by the CALTIP Foundation. As of June 30, 2013 the 45 year old CALTIP program dedicated to supporting efforts to bring poacher and polluters to justice merged with the California Wildlife Officers Foundation (CALWOF), a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that supports Wildlife Officers in times of special needs, further described at www.calwof.org. The merger of CALTIP and CALWOF stemmed from a shared appreciation and the goals of the two organizations were similar and an interested desire to work together to strengthen the capacity of those who protect Californians natural resources. The California Wildlife Officers Foundation board of directors has created a subcommittee (CALTIP Rewards Committee) that reviews the CALTIP cases.

# County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health

## Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-3154 TDD/TTY -Call 711 www.scceh.com
EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us

GRANT INFORMATION: **PROPOSAL**
*This information **will** be included in public documents*

Project Name: Resolving Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Santa C Date: 10/14/26

Applicant name or Organization: International Bird Rescue

Project Description:

We respectfully request renewed support for a small portion of the costs of necessary, clinic and medical supplies, and veterinary care costs, to provide temporary emergency treatment for ~320 native, wild, aquatic birds (many that live in riparian habitats) rescued from Santa Cruz County and transferred to us by local organizations for care.

| Funding Requested | 7,500 |
|---|---|

| ITEMIZED BUDGET ITEMS | Requested Funds | Matching Funds | Total Amount |
|---|---|---|---|
| Veterinary & rehabiltaton staff salaries/wages | 4,500 | 113,156 | 117,656 |
| Clinical and Medical Supplies, incl. food | 1,000 | 16,680 | 17,680 |
| Utilities for stable clinic & rehab environment | 2,000 | 17,330 | 19,330 |
| Depreciation and insurance | | 11,238 | 11,238 |
| Travel and transit | | 2,032 | 2,032 |
| Facilities, vehicles, and equipment | | 13,283 | 13,283 |
| Outside services (lab work), general expenses | | 521 | 521 |
| | | | |
| TOTAL AMOUNTS | 7,500 | 188,183 | 195,683 |

Each item description should be sufficient to clearly define the full item. In addition to funds being requested, note any matching funds committed to the proposed project.

For each section, provide a brief written response.

Background of the issue being addressed

Experts agree that birds are in a global crisis of survival. Threats are mostly human-caused, including habitat disruption/loss, starvation, cruelty, pollution (incl. plastics, oil, chemicals), fishing, and deadly Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) virus. Our area is important to hundreds of species of aquatic birds because of our central location on the Pacific Flyway migratory route. Negative impacts here, like repeated Brown Pelican crises, have concentrated effects in regional and global biodiversity.

Project Goals

1: Address multiple elements of CA Fish & Game Code. 2: Provide residents & wildlife with immediate, effective, ethical, & free-to-the-public solutions to the problem of native aquatic birds harmed by human impacts. 3: Maintain peak readiness to respond to unpredictable crises, e.g., ’24 & ’25 Pelican Crises, & ’26 Common Murre Starvation Event. 4: Act as the regional “referral hospital,” annually treating 90+ species & 2,000+ cases (320 from Santa Cruz County) that are beyond the capacity or skills of others.

Project Logistics: how will the project be completed?

We efficiently and effectively rescue so many wild birds because of our world-class protocols, developed through 55 years of direct, hands-on, professional experience:
1. Rescue: transport by volunteers, citizens, and other rescue agencies to our Center
2. Triage Assessment: by professional vet staff (vital signs, blood work, treatment plan)
3. Medical Intervention: after the first 24 hrs in care so that initial capture trauma abates
4. Recovery: treated birds go to recovery area where their progress is closely monitored
5. Rehabilitation: birds heal wounds & gain strength in predator-proof aviary enclosures
6. Release: back into the wild at species-appropriate locations

Project Completion Timeline

This project is annual and ongoing. Our fiscal year begins October 1 and runs through Se

Applicants Background.

We are a regional and global conservation organization, founded in 1971 right here in the Bay Area in response to a massive oil spill that covered 50 miles of coastline on all sides of San Francisco Bay, effecting between 7,000 and 15,000 birds. Since then, we have become a global leader in addressing man-made disasters affecting marine wildlife, such as oil spills and debris, and have pioneered life-saving techniques to address ongoing, daily, human impacts on aquatic birds. See attached for more detail.

**Supplemental Information for the**
**Santa Cruz County Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission:**
***Resolving Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Santa Cruz County***

## 1. Funding Request and Project Description

International Bird Rescue respectfully requests renewed support of $7,500 from the Santa Cruz County Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission. The goals of this project are to:

1. Addresses multiple elements of CA Fish and Game Code (13103 b, c, and i)
2. Provide residents and wildlife with immediate, effective, ethical, and free-to-the-public solutions to the problem of native aquatic birds harmed by human impacts.
3. Maintain peak readiness to respond to unpredictable-yet-inevitable crises, such as the 2024 and 2025 Brown Pelican Crises.
4. Act as the regional "referral hospital," annually treating 90+ species and over 2,000 cases (320 from Santa Cruz County in FY26) that are beyond the capacity or skills of others.

**As the "referral hospital" for over a dozen Northern California Counties**, we treat the most challenging cases that are beyond the capacity or skills of other regional wildlife centers and clinics, and receive hundreds of birds from other local rescues and rehabilitation centers and from the general public for treatment, including from our trusted partners at Native Animal Rescue of Santa Cruz County ***as described in these news stories from KSBW, CBS, Santa Cruz Local, and on our Blog:***




https://www.ksbw.com/article/starving-common-murres-found-on-santa-cruz-beaches/73610044

https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/dead-sea-birds-murres-bay-area-beaches-warming-ocean/

https://santacruzlocal.org/2026/01/03/santa-cruz-county-remains-a-hotspot-for-fishing-related-bird-injuries/

https://www.birdrescue.org/uptick-in-starving-in-common-murres-raises-concern/

**Our SF Bay-Delta Wildlife Center admitted over 2,200 native aquatic birds in FY26, a 25% increase over last year,** and released them back into the wild once they are successfully rehabilitated. During this same period, **we rescued 320 birds from Santa Cruz County: a 15% increase compared to the prior year**. Locations of rescue include Santa Cruz, Aptos, Capitola, Watsonville, Pajaro Dunes, Davenport, Ben Lomond, and Soquel.

We treat over 90 different species of aquatic birds such as Common Murres, Snowy and Great Egrets, Green and Great Blue Herons, Brown Pelicans, and **endangered and near-threatened species** such as Western Snowy Plovers. Common causes of injury include orphaned, starvation from loss of habitat, fishing hook and line entanglements, and blunt force traumas from human cruelty or hit by vehicles.

**The patients we treat are critical to riparian conservation. They are the living, natural, native resources that habitat conservation and other activities seeks to support.** Our scientific data provides strong evidence that the patients that we successfully rehabilitate lead lives that are long and productive, participating in normal species behavior such as producing and rearing offspring, and propagating future generations. These outcomes are important components of a balanced ecosystem.

**2. Meeting the Requirements of Section 13103 of the Fish & Game Code**

Our work addresses **multiple elements** of California Fish and Wildlife Code Section 13103. **The proposed project is a direct expression of 13103(b): "Temporary emergency treatment and care of injured or orphaned wildlife."** The individual animals we return to the wild propagate future generations. When we work with Animal Control Officers and Game Wardens, we also address element **13103(c):** "Temporary treatment and care of wildlife confiscated by the department as evidence."

Our Avian Rehabilitation and Research, and our Wildlife Emergency Preparedness and Response programs protect and restore local wildlife populations, especially when human impact has negatively affected those populations and individual animals. Research leads to innovations and new standards in wild animal care (**13103(i)**). In addition, our public education and outreach efforts reach over 100,000 people annually through numerous social media channels and real-time events (**13103(a)**).

**3. Project Need**

Birds are sensitive indicators of changes in our environment, and their health is failing. Experts around the world agree that aquatic birds are in crisis:

- *"Since the 1970's, [North America] has lost **3 billion birds**" (Science, 2019)*
- *"H5N1 high pathogenicity avian influenza (also known as HPAI or "Bird Flu") is currently causing **unparalleled mortality of wild birds** and mammals worldwide with threats to population levels for some species already under multiple anthropogenic [human-caused] pressures. [The current and evolving variants are] expected to continue to spread and cause further negative conservation impacts"* (The United Nations-led *Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds*, 2023).

Most negative impacts are human-caused; they include injury from fishing (hooks, nets, and lines), human cruelty, illegal shootings, habitat disruption and loss, starvation, pollution (including plastics, chemicals, and oil spills), and **climate change induced hazards such as drought, algae bloom toxicity, and the accelerated spread of infectious diseases.**

California is especially important to hundreds of species of aquatic birds (many that are endangered or threatened) because of its central location on the Pacific Flyway: a major North-South migratory route along the coasts of North and South America. Immediate impact here has concentrated, long-term effects on the global wildlife population.

**Despite these challenges, intervention makes a difference. It is why International Bird Rescue is a first-line responder in the crises facing birds at the local, regional, and international levels.**

**4. Organizational Qualifications and Mission**

Most people know us from our decades of responding to the world's worst oil spills: Exxon Valdez in 1989, Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, and the Treasure Spill in South Africa in 2000 (which affected over 20,000 lives). **We also provide daily rescue and rehabilitation** to birds harmed by human impact, and have **given second chances to over one quarter-of-a-million avian lives**. We research best practices at our crisis response hospitals and share them worldwide, **and have pioneered life-saving techniques to address ongoing human impacts on aquatic birds.**

**Our mission is to inspire people to act towards balance with the natural world by rescuing waterbirds in crisis. We dream of a world in which each person, every day takes action. Our goals are to:**

A) Minimize and mitigate human and industrial impact on wildlife
B) Conserve local, regional, and global biological diversity
C) Inspire environmental stewardship

We are a founding partner in the State of California's Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN), as well as a member of the Global Oiled Wildlife Response System (GOWRS), a consortium of leading experts trying to solve the challenges of oiled wildlife. Other partners include local, state, and federal Fish and Wildlife departments, multiple Audubon Society chapters, local Animal Control agencies, and dozens of fellow rescue and rehabilitation partners.

**5. Project Budget and Funding**

Our $7,500 request is based on Santa Cruz County community demand for our services, and the need for financial support to keep our work sustainable. Commission funds will partially offset the cost of service we provide *for free* to the people and wildlife of the County, and represents a reasonable and very modest portion of the project's annual costs of over $195,000 in FY27, which are matched by others. We have successfully managed prior grants from the Commission, and completed all reporting.

We have strict financial controls that ensure that any invoice submitted to one funding agency is not submitted to any other agency. Our financial records are audited annually, and we consistently achieve "clean" audit opinions. While it is difficult to say in advance during the granting process with exact certainty what each future invoice will contain, examples of some typical food and supplies (and their costs) include:

Enroquin tablets, 68mg x 250: $247.55/bottle
Clavacillin tablets (Clavamox), 62.5mg x 210: $64.52/bottle
Nitrile exam gloves, 100 count: $6.43/box
Meloxidyl, 1.5mg/ml x 200ml: $105.02/bottle
Clindamycin, 300mg quad x 100 count: $43.50/bottle
Peruvian Smelt, 30lbs/case x $2.65/lb x 42 cases: $3339.00
IQF Pacific Herring, 16kg(35.3lb)/case x $1.56/lb x 42 cases: $2312.86

Since 2019, Fish and Game commissions in the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Napa, Solano, Sonoma, Marin, Monterey, Santa Clara, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Santa Barbara provided modest financial support of between $1,500 and $20,720 annually to help ensure that our ability to be an effective, efficient, regional resource is sustainable. Without such support, we will be unable to continue to conserve vulnerable, natural aquatic/riparian resources, and unable to maintain our readiness to respond to unpredictable-yet-sadly-inevitable environmental crises like oil spills and species crashes.

**6. Permits Status**

We are one of the few organizations that possess the federal permit to band birds. Throughout a bird's time with us, from their initial triage assessment to their release, we record data and track their progress using RaptorMed software. In addition, treated birds are banded so that other scientists, volunteers, and enthusiasts can track them in the wild, and in case a treated bird returns to us for further care. Data from the banding effort, as well as our internal data, are analyzed by our veterinary care team as part of ongoing research, and the results freely shared with fellow professionals and partners.

**7. Contact Info**


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Phil Kohlmetz, Grants Coordinator | Direct: 707-704-0350 | Email: grants@birdrescue.org |
| International Bird Rescue | Office: 707-207-0380 | https://www.birdrescue.org |

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# Starving common murres found on Santa Cruz beaches

Wildlife experts say warming ocean temperatures are causing common murres to wash up on Santa Cruz beaches, weak and hungry.

KSBW ACTION NEWS 8 Updated: 7:18 PM PDT Sep 3, 2026 Editorial Standards ⓘ

Jazmon DeJarnette
Reporter

**SANTA CRUZ, Calif. —** Weak and starving common murres, seabirds that spend most of their lives at sea, are increasingly washing up on beaches in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties, with warming ocean temperatures making it harder for them to find food.

Native Animal Rescue sent 15 murres to International Bird Rescue last week and is currently caring for six more.

Advertisement

"They were all pretty hungry, but did quite well when we started feeding them," said Amy Redfeather, wildlife technician for Native Animal Rescue. "So we think that that was all that was wrong with them, is that they were getting pretty hungry and getting weak and getting washed up onto beaches."

Since August 15, International Bird Rescue has received 47 murres, 35 of which came from Monterey and Santa Cruz counties.

In a statement, the organization said, "Common murres were among the seabird species affected by a California starvation event that occurred earlier this year. Changing ocean conditions can influence where fish gather and how available they are to seabirds, making it more difficult for birds to find enough food to survive."

Beachgoers expressed their concern for the struggling birds.

"I hope we can find a way to take better care of them and keep them fed and alive for other generations to enjoy," one person said.

Another added, "If you love it, then try to protect it and educate yourself. Learn what you can do, learn what's already being done, and contribute to that effort."

Wildlife experts recommend contacting a wildlife rehabilitation specialist if you find a murre on the beach.

"The most important thing you could do, is if you're feeling courageous, wrap it up in a towel or sweater and call a wildlife rehabilitation specialist," said Redfeather.

For those uncomfortable handling the birds, Native Animal Rescue or the SPCA can be contacted for assistance.

Experts are hopeful the situation can be addressed.

"It's hopefully something that is waning and hopefully something that we can get a grip on and help fix," said Redfeather.

International Bird Rescue plans to release the birds once they have fully recovered.

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NEXT STORY

# Lompico Pond Water Quality and Habitat Stewardship

*2026 Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission Grant Application*

**Applicant: Valley Women's Club of San Lorenzo Valley**

**Funding requested: $427.97**

## Project Description

The Valley Women's Club proposes two practical improvements at Lompico Pond: installation of one pet waste station and placement of approximately one cubic yard of rock at an existing erosion area below the adjacent road.

The pet waste station will provide cleanup bags, a covered waste receptacle and a standard cleanup sign near the existing green waste bins and pond trail. It will address observed disposal of bagged dog waste in the green waste bins and provide an appropriate garbage disposal option.

The rock will supplement volunteers' existing erosion-control efforts, with the goal of reducing soil loss and sediment movement toward the pond. Project volunteers will transport the rock in two pickup trips and provide installation labor and materials.

## Background of the Issue Being Addressed

### An established community stewardship effort

Lompico Pond, officially Lake Lompico, is a small, County-owned pond surrounded by redwoods and mixed evergreen vegetation. It supports native insects, birds and other wildlife and serves as a neighborhood gathering place.

Community restoration planning began in 2022, including consultation with County Environmental Health staff, the Resource Conservation District and a local vegetation specialist. October 2022 recommendations established priorities for invasive-plant management, erosion prevention and continuing maintenance. Work began on a monthly basis that year, under the direction of the the Valley Women's Club (VWC) Habitat Restoration Committee and a pond-depth survey using field measurements, GPS and GIS analysis was also completed.

Monthly volunteer sign-in sheets dating from April 2023 are available. Activities include invasive-plant removal, native planting, watering, trail maintenance, cleanup and erosion-control work. Volunteers also launched a turtle raft in 2025. The VWC have confirmed support and sponsorship of this application.

### Pet waste disposal

Project volunteers have observed dog waste around the pond, as well as bagged dog waste being placed in the County-provided green waste bins. GreenWaste's Santa Cruz County sorting guide directs pet waste and compostable plastic bags to the garbage stream.[1] A dedicated pet waste station will make proper disposal convenient where visitors already dispose of waste. Volunteers will explain that pet waste belongs in garbage even when its bag is labeled compostable.

### Local water-quality concerns

County monitoring at Lompico Creek at Carrol Avenue provides local evidence supporting pollution prevention. Selected 2026 results include:[2]

| Sample date | E. coli, MPN/100 mL | Enterococcus, MPN/100 mL | County status |
|---|---|---|---|
| July 7, 2026 | 108 | 416 | Health Advisory |
| August 10, 2026 | 121 | 670 | Health Advisory |
| September 21, 2026 | 218 | 85 | Health Advisory |

These results document bacterial concerns but do not identify their sources. The application does not attribute these results to dogs or to the pond. County Environmental Health identifies pet waste among several potential sources of bacterial contamination.[3] The County's Evaluation of Urban Water Quality also recommends encouraging pet owners to collect and properly dispose of waste.[4]

County watershed information places Lompico Creek within the Zayante Creek drainage of the San Lorenzo River watershed.[5] Lompico Creek is a known fish bearing stream. County-hosted monitoring results document juvenile steelhead in Zayante Creek and historically in Lompico Creek.[6] An April 2026 community observation of juvenile steelhead in Lompico Creek was also submitted to CNDDB.

EPA identifies improperly disposed pet waste as a source of bacteria, parasites, nitrogen and phosphorus. Excess nutrients can encourage algal growth and reduce oxygen available to aquatic life.[7,8] Proper collection therefore complements broader watershed and habitat protection.

### An existing erosion problem

Site photographs document an erosion area below the adjacent road and its downhill route toward the pond. Volunteers have already placed available logs, branches and rock to address soil movement. Published workday records document similar erosion-control work in January 2024.[9] Additional rock will supplement these efforts at the roadside erosion area.

## Project Goals

1. | Install one durable pet waste station near the existing green waste bins and pond trail.
2. | Encourage prompt collection and proper garbage disposal of pet waste.
3. | Reduce incorrect disposal of pet waste in the green waste bins.
4. | Supplement existing erosion-control efforts with approximately one cubic yard of rock.
5. | Incorporate station servicing and erosion-area monitoring into established monthly volunteer workdays.

## Project Logistics and Maintenance

The VWC will coordinate purchasing, expenditure records and grant reporting through its pond stewardship effort.

Project volunteers will install the station according to manufacturer instructions. The proposed location is near the existing green waste bins, with placement allowing continued trail access, bin collection and station servicing. The selected equipment uses a roll-bag dispenser, round covered can and standard cleanup sign. Refill specifications will be retained with maintenance information to facilitate future purchases.

Project volunteers will collect approximately one cubic yard of gabion rock in two pickup trips and place it at the identified erosion area. The work will supplement existing measures using on-site materials. Installation materials will be donated.

Station servicing will be incorporated into monthly workday activities alongside weeding, planting and watering. Volunteers will replenish supplies and empty the receptacle, disposing of collected pet waste in participating volunteers' household garbage bins. Replacement waste bags will be provided by project volunteers. Use will be checked to determine whether additional servicing between workdays is needed.

Volunteers will also inspect the erosion area during workdays and following significant rainfall when feasible, documenting visible changes and any need for follow-up maintenance.

## Project History and Completion Timeline

| Period | Milestone or activity |
|---|---|
| 2022 | Community planning, expert consultation, invasive-plant recommendations, early restoration work and pond-depth mapping. |
| Late 2022 onward | Monthly volunteer stewardship; retained sign-in records begin in April 2023. |
| January 2024 | Documented erosion-control work using on-site logs, rocks and branches. |
| 2025 | Volunteer turtle raft project completed. |
| Within 30 days after funding becomes available | Purchase the station and rock; organize donated materials, volunteer transport and installation. |
| Within 60–90 days after funding becomes available | Install the station and place rock during suitable site and weather conditions. Record expenditures, volunteer hours and completion photographs. |
| Ongoing | Service the station and monitor the erosion area through monthly stewardship activities, with additional checks as needed. |
| By the grant reporting deadline | Submit expenditure records, photographs and a summary of completed work and volunteer contributions. |

## Applicant's Background and Capacity

The VWC's Native Habitat Restoration Program sponsors the Lompico Pond restoration effort. Several years of recurring workdays and attendance records demonstrate sustained volunteer participation.

Completed work includes invasive removal, native planting, pond-depth mapping, erosion-control efforts, trail care and the turtle raft project. This proposal adds modest equipment and materials to an established stewardship program with an existing maintenance routine.

## Itemized Budget

| Item | Requested funds | Volunteer or donated contribution |
|---|---|---|
| One matte-green pet waste station with roll-bag dispenser, round can, post and standard sign; $337.97 less $50 discount | $287.97 | — |
| Approximately one cubic yard of gabion rock | $140.00 | — |
| Installation materials | $0.00 | Donated |
| Rock transport | $0.00 | Two volunteer pickup trips |
| Station installation and rock placement | $0.00 | Volunteer labor |
| Total requested | $427.97 | Materials, transport and labor donated |

The requested amount uses the supplied station cart price and the rockery price reported by project volunteers. Taxes and shipping are not separately included in these supplied figures. Historical stewardship hours demonstrate project capacity; they are not counted as matching contributions to this grant.

## Evaluation and Documentation

Project completion will be documented with purchase receipts, photographs of the installed station and rock placement, and records of project volunteer hours.

Follow-up observations will address station use, supply availability, servicing needs, incorrect disposal in the green waste bins and visible erosion conditions. These observations will guide maintenance. The project does not include water-quality sampling or promise a measurable change in stream bacteria, nutrient concentrations or fish abundance.

**References**

1. | GreenWaste. Santa Cruz County: What Goes Where Guide.
https://www.greenwaste.com/wp-content/uploads/Sorting-Guide_Santa-Cruz-County_engSp.pdf
2. | County of Santa Cruz Environmental Health. Surface Water Quality, Lompico Creek at Carrol Avenue results and freshwater status legend, reviewed October 2, 2026.
https://scceh.com/NewHome/Programs/WaterResources/SurfaceWaterStewardship/WaterQualityMonitoring/SurfaceWaterQuality.aspx
3. | County of Santa Cruz Environmental Health. Recreational Water Quality Monitoring.
https://www.scceh.org/NewHome/Programs/WaterResources/WaterResources%E2%80%93Links/RecreationalWaterQualityMonitoring.aspx
4. | County of Santa Cruz Environmental Health Services. Evaluation of Urban Water Quality: San Lorenzo River Watershed Management Plan Update. August 2001, printed pages 3 and 51.
https://www.scceh.org/Portals/6/Env_Health/environmental_water_quality/san_lorenzo_river_watershed_management_plan.pdf
5. | County of Santa Cruz Environmental Health. Santa Cruz County Watersheds.
https://scceh.com/NewHome/Programs/WaterResources/FisheriesWatershedManagement/SantaCruzCountyWatersheds.aspx
6. | D.W. Alley & Associates. Initial Summary of Steelhead Sampling Results in Santa Cruz County Streams and the Pajaro Lagoon in 2023. December 2023, Table 1.
https://scceh.com/Portals/6/Env_Health/water_resources/Fishery%20Info/2023%20Summary%20Report.pdf
7. | U.S. EPA. Sources and Solutions: In and Around the Home.
https://www.epa.gov/nutrientpollution/sources-and-solutions-and-around-home
8. | U.S. EPA. Basic Information on Nutrient Pollution.
https://www.epa.gov/nutrientpollution/basic-information-nutrient-pollution
9. | SLV Native Habitat Restoration Program. Erosion Control Enhances Lompico Pond Revival. January 27, 2024.
https://slvhabitatrestoration.org/erosion-control-enhances-lompico-pond-revival/
Additional supporting records: October 2022 invasive-plant recommendations; background attachment to the unsubmitted November 2022 pond grant proposal; CNDDB survey submission STO26F0001; volunteer sign-in sheets; site photographs; and the supplied station pricing screenshot.

## Site photographs and proposed improvements

### Pet waste station

**EXISTING CONDITIONS — SITE PHOTOGRAPH**




**PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS — CONCEPTUAL RENDERING**




Conceptual illustration only. Final placement and appearance may vary based on site conditions.

Erosion-control rock

**EXISTING CONDITIONS — SITE PHOTOGRAPH**



**PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS — CONCEPTUAL RENDERING**



Conceptual illustration only. Final placement and appearance may vary based on site conditions.

# County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health

## Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-3154 TDD/TTY -Call 711 www.scceh.com
EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us

GRANT INFORMATION: **PROPOSAL**
*This information **will** be included in public documents*

Project Name: Restoration readiness for Santa Cruz kelp fore Date: 10/13/2026

Applicant name or Organization: Joshua Smith, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, UC Santa Cruz

Project Description:

See attached Appendix A.

| Funding Requested | $6369 |
|---|---|

| ITEMIZED BUDGET ITEMS | Requested Funds | Matching Funds | Total Amount |
|---|---|---|---|
| Undergraduate Research Assistant | $4,764.00 | | $4,764.00 |
| Fringe @0.75% | $36 | | $36 |
| Materials and supplies | $255 | | $255 |
| Indirect costs at 26% | $1314 | | $1314 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| TOTAL AMOUNTS | $6369 | | 6369 |

Each item description should be sufficient to clearly define the full item. In addition to funds being requested, note any matching funds committed to the proposed project.

For each section, provide a brief written response.

Background of the issue being addressed

See attached Appendix B.

Project Goals

See attached Appendix C.

Project Logistics: how will the project be completed?

See attached Appendix D.

Project Completion Timeline

See attached Appendix E.

Applicants Background.

See attached Appendix F.

**Project title:** Restoration readiness for Santa Cruz kelp forests: understanding ecological change during a historic El Niño

## **Appendix A.** *Project description*

Just offshore, Santa Cruz County supports some of California's most persistent kelp forests (**Figure 1**). These underwater forests are part of our community's identity and economy: they support fisheries, recreation, tourism, wildlife viewing, and essential habitat for sea otters, fishes, and other native wildlife (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, n.d.). Yet compared with the kelp forests of nearby Monterey, the forests in our own backyard have received surprisingly little scientific attention. We know that they have persisted through past periods of extreme ocean warming, but we do not yet know why. The strengthening 2026-27 El Niño gives us a rare and urgent opportunity to find out.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecasts a greater than 90% probability that this will become a very strong El Niño and a 75% probability that it will reach historic strength, exceeding previous events in the record dating to 1950 (NOAA Coral Reef Watch, 2026). We established four monitoring sites along the Santa Cruz coast before the anticipated peak of the event, giving us the unusual ability to measure how these forests respond in real time.

We will ask three fundamental questions: Why have Santa Cruz kelp forests been so persistent? Will this El Niño push them beyond their limits? If they begin to decline, what type of restoration would give them the best chance of recovery?

The project will produce the first coordinated assessment of kelp growth, food production, recruitment, and sea urchin behavior across four Santa Cruz County sites. Results will be translated into a practical Santa Cruz Kelp Forest Restoration Readiness Brief that identifies early signs of trouble and proactively guides when, where, and how restoration should be considered. Grant funds will primarily provide paid support for a UCSC undergraduate research assistant.

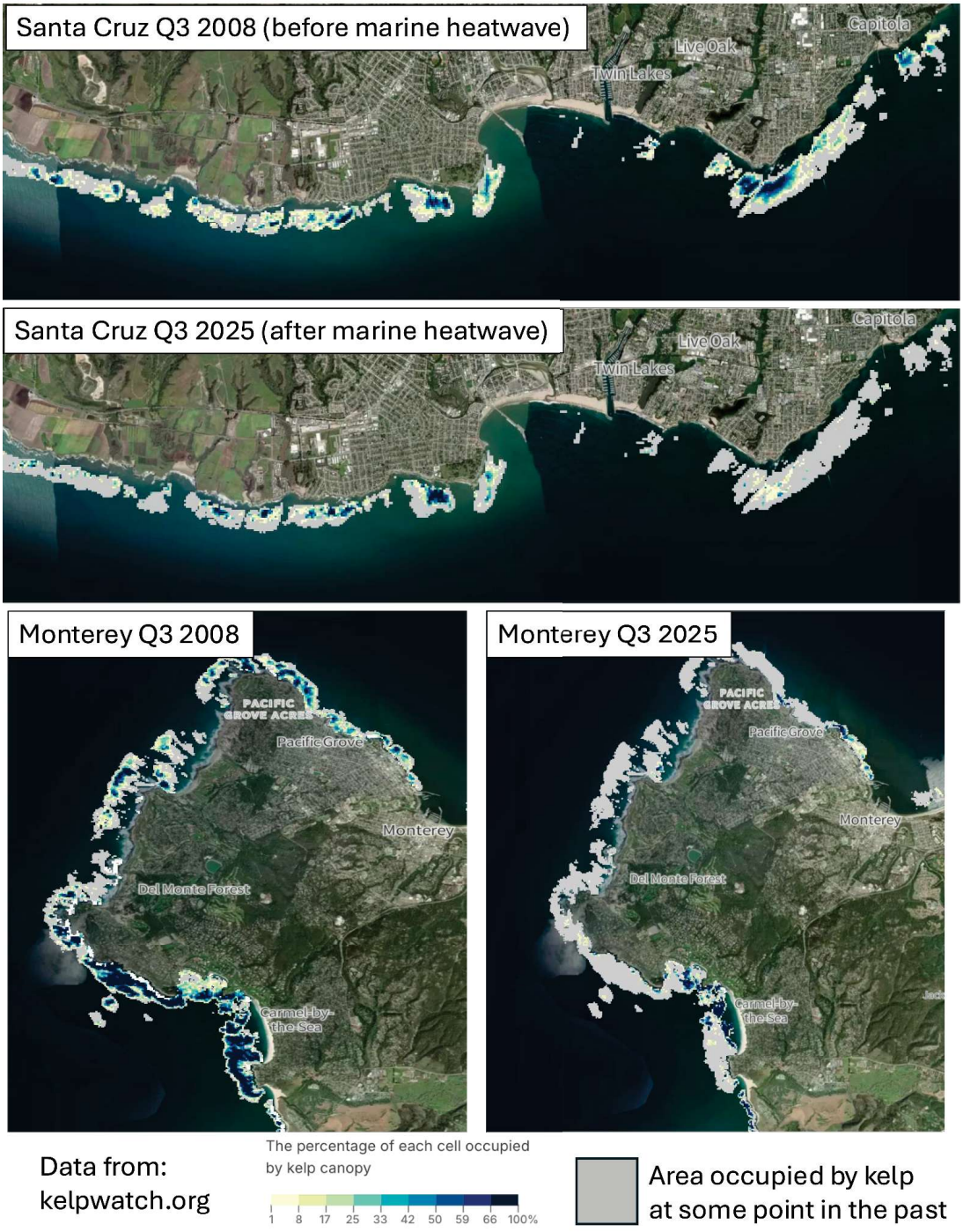



**Figure 1.** Kelp forest canopy cover in Santa Cruz (top two panels) and Monterey (bottom two panels) during quarter 3 before the marine heatwave (2008) and after (2025). Colored areas indicate kelp canopy extent during the given quarter and year. Gray areas indicate occupiable area where canopy was present at some point in the time series, but not during the given quarter and year. Kelp forests in Santa Cruz have remained remarkably persistent, while those in Monterey have experienced substantial loss.

## **Appendix B.** *Background of the issue being addressed*

Kelp forests are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth. Like forests on land, they create complex, three-dimensional habitat. Their canopy and underwater structure provide food, shelter, and nursery grounds for fishes, sea otters, seabirds, and hundreds of other species.

Kelp forests also benefit people. They support commercially and recreationally important fishes and attract divers, paddlers, boaters, anglers, surfers, photographers, and wildlife watchers. Kelp beds are closely associated with some of Santa Cruz County's most recognizable wildlife, particularly southern sea otters, which use them for resting, foraging, and raising young. Healthy kelp forests therefore support both native species and the recreational and tourism activities that are deeply rooted in Santa Cruz as a coastal community.

Despite this importance, we know surprisingly little about the kelp forests directly offshore of Santa Cruz. Much of the region's long-term underwater research has occurred around the Monterey Peninsula, where clearer water and easier diving conditions have supported decades of study. Santa Cruz forests are more difficult to work in because of waves, currents, limited visibility, and challenging access. As a result, they have often been visible from shore but largely overlooked underwater. That gap matters because Santa Cruz may hold important clues about kelp resilience.

During the extreme ocean warming and sea urchin outbreaks that began in 2014, kelp forests disappeared across large portions of northern California and declined substantially in other regions (Smith et al. 2024). Santa Cruz kelp forests, in contrast, remained remarkably persistent. Understanding why could help protect these forests locally and reveal lessons that can be applied to kelp conservation and restoration elsewhere in California.

One promising explanation involves the relationship between kelp productivity and sea urchin behavior. Sea urchins do not always actively consume living kelp. In a healthy forest, they often remain hidden in cracks and crevices, feeding on pieces of kelp that naturally break away and drift across the seafloor (Smith & Tinker 2022). This supply of detached kelp keeps urchins fed without requiring them to graze the living forest.

Warm, nutrient-poor water can slow kelp growth and reduce the amount of detached kelp available as food. If that food supply becomes insufficient, hungry urchins may leave shelter and begin actively grazing living kelp. Once that happens, a feedback loop can begin: lower kelp production leads to more grazing, increased grazing causes further kelp loss, and a productive forest can be transformed into an urchin barren.

This distinction is critical for restoration. If kelp decline is caused by a lack of young kelp, restoration might focus on propagation or outplanting. If young kelp are present but are being consumed by actively grazing urchins, planting more kelp without addressing grazing is unlikely to work. If the forest remains productive and urchins remain hidden and well fed, expensive intervention may not be necessary at all.

Restoration is most effective when it addresses the process responsible for habitat loss. Without that knowledge, limited conservation funds can be spent treating a symptom rather than its cause. By studying a forest while it is still intact, and while it is being tested by an extraordinary climate event, we can identify the warning signs that appear before widespread loss.

The timing of this work is especially important. El Niño events cannot be recreated experimentally at the scale of an entire coastline. Once a forest has declined, researchers can document what was lost, but they cannot go back and measure the conditions that preceded that loss. Because our team began collecting baseline data before the anticipated peak of El Niño, we now have an opportunity to follow these forests from initial exposure through resistance, possible decline, and recovery. That opportunity will not exist after the event has passed.

## **Appendix C.** *Project Goals*

The overarching goal is to understand what keeps Santa Cruz kelp forests healthy and identify when active restoration may become necessary.

The project has four specific goals:

1. **Discover why Santa Cruz kelp forests persist.** We will compare forests at four sites to identify the conditions associated with high kelp growth, successful recruitment, abundant food for consumers, and low grazing pressure.
2. **Measure the effects of El Niño as they occur.** We will determine whether unusually warm conditions reduce kelp growth and the supply of detached kelp available to sea urchins.
3. **Detect early signs of trouble.** We will test whether declining food availability causes sea urchins to lose condition, leave shelter, and begin actively grazing living kelp before forest loss becomes visible from the surface.
4. **Translate the science into restoration guidance.** We will identify the conditions under which natural resilience is likely to be sufficient, the warning signs that may justify intervention, and the restoration approaches best matched to different causes of decline.

The project will also provide a paid, mentored research opportunity for a UCSC undergraduate. The student will gain experience with real-world ecological research during an event that cannot be reproduced in a classroom or laboratory.

## **Appendix D.** *Project Logistics: How Will the Project Be Completed?*

In 2026, our team established monitoring at four locations spanning the Santa Cruz County coastline: Terrace Point, West Cliff, Steamer Lane, and Soquel Point. Together, these sites capture important differences in wave exposure, kelp composition, sea urchin populations, and other local conditions. This allows us to examine not only whether El Niño affects Santa Cruz kelp forests, but why some locations may respond differently from others.

At each site, UCSC scientific divers will repeatedly measure:

- how quickly kelp grows and produces new tissue;
- how much kelp tissue is lost and becomes food for other animals;
- whether young kelp and sea urchins are successfully arriving and surviving;
- whether sea urchins remain hidden and feed on detached kelp or emerge to graze living plants;
- changes in sea urchin condition; and
- changes in the surrounding seafloor community.

These measurements connect the entire sequence of events that could lead to forest loss. Rather than simply documenting whether kelp canopy increases or decreases, we will observe how the process begins: changes in growth, food production, recruitment, consumer condition, and grazing behavior. This provides information that satellite images and surface observations cannot capture.

Grant funds will primarily support a UCSC undergraduate research assistant. Under close mentorship from the project team, the student will conduct field research, prepare sampling materials, enter and quality-check data, and assist with analysis and communication of the findings.

The project is ready to proceed and offers strong value for the County's investment. The four monitoring sites are established, baseline measurements are underway, permits and field methods are in place, and the research team has the necessary diving expertise and equipment. UCSC and project partners are providing faculty supervision, scientific-diving infrastructure, equipment, and complementary support for the broader research program. County funds will provide the student capacity needed to process time-sensitive samples, maintain a high-quality dataset, and turn the results into locally useful guidance.

The primary public product will be a **Santa Cruz Kelp Forest Restoration Readiness Brief**. Written for a general audience, it will explain:

- what makes Santa Cruz kelp forests unusually persistent;
- which indicators provide the earliest warning of decline;
- when natural recovery is likely and when intervention may be warranted;
- which restoration approaches are appropriate for different causes of forest loss; and
- what should be monitored to protect these forests in the future.

Results will also be shared with the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission through a presentation or written update. Because California is currently developing a statewide Kelp Restoration and Management Plan (CDFW KRMP, n.d.), the project will provide timely information from an important but understudied part of the coast.

The project can be scaled if partial funding is awarded. The underlying monitoring program will continue through complementary support, while the number of paid undergraduate hours will be

adjusted to the available award. Any level of County support will therefore produce meaningful additional work without placing project completion at risk.

## **Appendix E.** *Project Completion Timeline*

**January-February 2027:** Recruit and train the undergraduate research assistant. Continue field monitoring during the anticipated peak of El Niño. Process fall and winter samples and organize the baseline dataset.

**March-June 2027:** Continue monitoring kelp growth, food production, recruitment, sea urchin condition, and grazing behavior. Process samples, maintain the project database, and compare responses among the four Santa Cruz sites.

**July-August 2027:** Complete data quality control and preliminary analysis. Identify early-warning indicators and restoration decision points. Prepare the Santa Cruz Kelp Forest Restoration Readiness Brief, public-facing materials, and final report to the Commission.

## **Appendix F.** *Applicant's Background*

Dr. Joshua Smith is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UC Santa Cruz and leads the Nearshore Ecology Research Group. His research focuses on why kelp forests persist, what causes them to collapse, and how they recover.

Dr. Smith earned his Ph.D. at UC Santa Cruz and completed postdoctoral research at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis and the Monterey Bay Aquarium. He has led interdisciplinary research teams studying kelp forest resilience, sea urchin behavior, sea otter ecology, and the mechanisms that can be leveraged to improve restoration. His published research has shown that changes in sea urchin behavior can drive transitions between kelp forests and urchin barrens and that local ecological conditions help explain why some forests persist through multiple disturbances while others are lost.

The Nearshore Ecology Research Group has the monitoring sites, permits, equipment, scientific-diving experience, analytical expertise, and local partnerships required to complete this project. Most importantly, the team has already begun collecting the baseline information needed to understand the effects of El Niño. This project will bring sustained scientific attention to the kelp forests in our own backyard at precisely the moment when that information is most urgently needed.

## References

California Department of Fish and Wildlife. *Kelp Restoration and Management Plan (KRMP)*.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. 2026. *El Niño–Southern Oscillation Conditions and Alerts*.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. *Kelp Forests: Importance, Pressures, and Conservation*. Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Smith, J.G., Malone, D., and Carr, M.H. 2024. Consequences of kelp forest ecosystem shifts and predictors of persistence through multiple stressors. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 291:20232749.

Smith, J.G. and Tinker, M.T. 2022. Alterations in the foraging behavior of a primary consumer drive patch transition dynamics in a temperate rocky reef ecosystem. *Ecology Letters* 25:1827–1838.

# County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health

## Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-3154 TDD/TTY -Call 711 www.scceh.com
EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us

GRANT INFORMATION: **APPLICANT**
*This information **will not** be included in public documents.*

Project Name: Community-Driven River Health Days Date: 10/23/26

Full Name: Sam Adelson

Organization: Coastal Watershed Council
*If applicable*

Email Address: sadelson@coastal-watershed.org Phone (831) 464-9200

Mail Address: 107 Dakota Ave., Suite 4
*Street Address* *Apartment/Unit #*

Santa Cruz, CA 95060
*City* *State* *ZIP Code*

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To receive grant funds, applicants must be registered as vendors with Santa Cruz County. If you have received a grant in the past, you should have a Santa Cruz County Vendor Identification #

Vendor ID #: 111771

Is your Vendor ID mail address the same as the one listed above? YES ☒ NO ☐

If you do not have a Vendor ID, or your mailing address has changed, you will need to attach a completed W-9 form to your application. If you are unsure about your Vendor ID information, please contact County General Services at GSDSupportingDocs@santacruzcounty.us.

**REPORTING REQUIREMENT:** If your grant application is approved, you will be required to write a summary report stating how the funds were expended and the success of the project. The report should be roughly ½ - 1 page in length and is due by August 15th after funding is approved. If the grantee does not plan to request funding in the following year, a progress report may be completed within a year of receiving the funds.

# County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health

## Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

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EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us

GRANT INFORMATION**: PROPOSAL**
*This information **will** be included in public documents*

Project Name: Community-Driven River Health Days Date: 10/23/26

Applicant name or Organization: Coastal Watershed Council

Project Description:

The Coastal Watershed Council (CWC) is working to benefit native fish and wildlife habitat along the lower San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz through the removal of highly invasive species and seeding of biodiverse native plants. CWC achieves these restoration targets through inclusive community engagement, mobilizing diverse groups ranging from elementary school students to unhoused community members.

| Funding Requested | 6000 |
|---|---|

| ITEMIZED BUDGET ITEMS | Requested Funds | Matching Funds | Total Amount |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel (project mgmt, volunteer recruitment, field training) | 4500 | 62942 | 67442 |
| Materials (tools, gloves, volunteer snacks, etc. | 1000 | 9229 | 10229 |
| Native Plants | 500 | 500 | 1000 |
| Contracted services (native seed collection, hauling, security, etc.) | 0 | 10300 | 10300 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| TOTAL AMOUNTS | 6000 | 82971 | 88971 |

Each item description should be sufficient to clearly define the full item. In addition to funds being requested, note any matching funds committed to the proposed project.

For each section, provide a brief written response.

## Background of the issue being addressed

Originating from spring-fed headwaters in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the 29-mile-long San Lorenzo River drains a 138-square mile watershed to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. In its final 2.5-mile stretch, the river is channelized by a levee constructed in the 1950s that straightened and narrowed the river, drastically impaired the coastal estuary, and left poor, compacted soils along its banks where invasive species have thrived. Today, the riparian ecosystem in this watershed faces compounded pressures from historical habitat loss, nonpoint source urban pollution, and impacts associated with unhoused encampments along the river corridor.

## Project Goals

In 2026-27, CWC's goals for San Lorenzo River habitat improvement include: 1) Remove over 2,000 square feet of highly invasive species (as ranked by Cal-IPC), 2) Create 10 new native seed plots to improve biodiversity, 3) engage over 200 volunteers in habitat enhancement, including elementary school students, at least 20 unique individuals experiencing homelessness, and others. Volunteers will learn about why invasive plants pose a threat to native biodiversity and how native plant presence helps support thriving fish populations and ecosystem functionality.

## Project Logistics: how will the project be completed?

CWC partners with the City of Santa Cruz and community groups to implement River Health Day volunteer events. CWC's River Ecologist develops an annually approved habitat enhancement plan and recruits volunteers to execute it. CWC brings broad-based communities together through targeted outreach, including hands-on events for elementary-aged Watershed Rangers, weekly stewardship sessions for unhoused neighbors, monthly public workdays for community volunteers, and scheduled group events for local community partners. Activities address seasonal ecological needs, such as installing and maintaining native seed plots and invasive species management to increase biodiversity along the San Lorenzo River. CWC staff measure project outcomes, including square footage of invasive species removed, native seed survivorship, total volunteers engaged, and pounds of debris collected.

## Project Completion Timeline

While an ongoing program, the goals and budget in this proposal span from July 2026 to June 2027

## Applicants Background.

Coastal Watershed Council is a local nonprofit with a mission to preserve and protect coastal watersheds through community stewardship, education, and monitoring. For over 30 years, CWC has protected watersheds by connecting community action with environmental science. Over the past decade, CWC has focused its efforts along the lower San Lorenzo River, leading grassroots habitat restoration that directly engages the community—including elementary-aged Watershed Rangers, unhoused neighbors, and local civic groups. CWC's proven track record of volunteer-led conservation consistently improves the river ecosystem, restores native riparian habitat, and deepens community investment in and connection to the San Lorenzo River.

# County of Santa Cruz

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GRANT INFORMATION: **PROPOSAL**
*This information **will** be included in public documents*

Project Name: Safe Passage Santa Cruz: Culvert Blitz Date: 10/23/2026

Applicant name or Organization: Mountain Lion Foundation (Fiscal Sponsor)

Project Description:

California's Room to Roam Act (AB 1889) requires counties to address wildlife connectivity in their next General Plan update on or after Jan. 2028, yet Santa Cruz County lacks field-verified data on wildlife movement. This volunteer-led project, fiscally sponsored by the Mountain Lion Foundation, will survey as many of the County's ~4,000 culverts and bridges as possible and recommend site-specific restoration actions, including replacing impassable structures, removing barriers, restoring entrance habitat, and installing directional fencing. Professional biologists trained by the UC Davis Road Ecology Center and CA Department of Fish & Wildlife will collect standardized data. A fall 2026 "culvert blitz" is underway; a larger spring 2027 effort, some using wildlife cameras, will follow.

| Funding Requested | $4,756.57 |
|---|---|

| ITEMIZED BUDGET ITEMS | Requested Funds | Matching Funds | Total Amount |
|---|---|---|---|
| Biologist Gas Mileage Reimbursement-see attachment | $3,250.00 | $0.00 | $3,250.00 |
| Culvert Field Kits - see attachment (n=3) | $366.57 | $0.00 | $366.57 |
| Copies (paper field data sheets)- see attachment | $340.00 | $0.00 | $340.00 |
| Browning Spec Ops Elite Trail Camera- see attachment (n=5) | $800.00 | 5 Cameras -MLF | $1,600.00 |
| Professional Biologist Labor (Minimum) | $0.00 | $100-$150/hr | $200,000.00 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| TOTAL AMOUNTS | $4,756.57 | $200,800.00 | $205,556.57 |

Each item description should be sufficient to clearly define the full item. In addition to funds being requested, note any matching funds committed to the proposed project.

For each section, provide a brief written response.

## Background of the issue being addressed

Roadkill negatively affects all wildlife in Santa Cruz County from the majestic mountain lion down to the tiny Santa Cruz long-toed salamander. The Room to Roam Act (AB 1889) requires cities and counties to identify and analyze wildlife connectivity within their jurisdictions and remediate barriers, restore critical areas, and improve crossing opportunities to facilitate safer wildlife crossings, which can also result in improved public safety and reduced roadkill. Meeting AB 1889 requirements depends on obtaining accurate, field-verified information about where wildlife can feasibly move across the landscape, information most counties, including Santa Cruz County, do not yet have. Assessing existing County assets like culverts and bridges is one piece of a larger effort with multiple entities to piece together a fragmented landscape to facilitate safe passage for wildlife.

## Project Goals

Deliver field-verified data to support wildlife connectivity evaluations across Santa Cruz County's existing network of culverts and translate it into feasible opportunities to restore and improve wildlife connectivity.
Goals:
1) Survey existing wildlife passage conditions. Assess as many of the County's ~4,000 culverts and bridges as possible by end of 2027, generating site-specific data to support AB 1889 compliance. Provide usable data the County, Agencies, and Partners need to help identify specific areas for wildlife connectivity improvements under AB 1889.
2) Prioritize restoration opportunities. As possible, recommend site-specific restoration actions—e.g. replacing impassable structures, removing barriers to movement, restoring entrance habitat, and installing directional fencing—producing usable data to support project design and obtaining implementation funding.

## Project Logistics: how will the project be completed?

The project will be completed by volunteer professional biologists who donate their time and expertise to survey culverts and bridges. Standardized survey training is provided by Fraser Shilling, Director, UC Davis Road Ecology Center and Sarah Estrella, Connectivity Specialist, CA Department of Fish & Wildlife. Data will be collected using standardized ESRI Survey123 forms developed with project partners. Work began on October 14, 2026, after training 15 professional biologists. We are in the middle of a fall "Culvert Blitz Pilot" involving biologists assessing as many culverts as possible between 24-240 inches in diameter before the winter rains. Already, multiple culverts have shown wildlife sign and some culverts were noted near an existing USFWS wildlife undercrossing. A larger "Culvert Blitz" will follow in Spring 2027 with trail cameras deployed at some selected sites: 1) either where animal sign is observed or 2)where partners suggest additional data is needed to inform goals.

## Project Completion Timeline

Work will be completed Oct. 2026- Dec. 2027

## Applicants Background.

The fiscal sponsor for the project is the Mountain Lion Foundation. This non-profit advances research on mountain lions and their ecosystems, and promotes science-based policies that protect wildlife, habitat and ecological connectivity. MLF also helps communities live safely alongside wildlife through education and practical solutions, while building partnerships and capacity needed for lasting conservation impact. Fraser Shilling is a leading researcher in transportation ecology, environmental sustainability, and GIS-based decision-making. Sarah Estrella is a wildlife connectivity expert at CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. Chrissie Klinkowski is a wildlife biologist and biology project manager, skilled at managing large projects and working with diverse partners to achieve project goals.

**Safe Passage Santa Cruz Culvert Blitz Budget Details**

**Datasheet Paper Copies Detail**

1000 x $.34/copy = $340.00

**Gas Mileage Reimbursement Detail**

$3,000 included for gas mileage reimbursement given the high cost of gas ($5-$7/gallon) and biologists traveling to Santa Cruz County from all over the state. Costs use the maximum allowed for the Federal reimbursable volunteer mileage rate of $.14 per mile.

**Trail Camera Detail**

5 Trail Cameras, SD cards, batteries, and lock boxes. Costs reflect discounted rate provided for the project due to a match. Note: 5 cameras are being matched /loaned to the Project by Mountain Lion Foundation. Note: All usable materials shall be donated to the Mountain Lion Foundation after the Culvert Blitz project is completed.

- Browning Trail Camera Strike Force Pro Nano Dual Lens 46 MP $95/each.
- 6 pack Browning AA alkaline batteries $3.60/each.
- Browning 64 GB SD card (Class 10) $22.00/each.
- Security/Camera LockBox $25.00/each.
- Setup per camera = $145.60.
- **Total for 5 Cameras = $728 plus shipping = $800.00.**

**Culvert Field Kit Detail**

3 kits for biologists to share, kept in Santa Cruz Co.
1 kit = $122.19.
**Total for 3 Kits = $366.57.**
Note: All Usable Materials Donated to Mountain Lion Foundation after project completed.

- Carpenter Square 8/12-$5.99 x3=$17.97.
- Jk Safety Vest-$9.99 x3=$29.97.
- Mammal Tracks and Sign: A guide to North American Species (Second Addition) by Mark Elbroch-$49.95x 3=$149.85.
- Headlamp - $25.00/ headlamp x3 =$75.00.
- Clipboard -$8.95 x3=$26.85.
- 3 pack of large gloves- $20.97.
- Bag $7.99 x3= $23.97.
- Tape Measure= $21.99 (total)

**Labor Match**

Donated labor ($100-$150/hr. for professional biologist labor). Based on current pilot project, work involves at least 1 hour per culvert + 30 mins to 3 hours travel. At that rate and assuming all 4000 assets are assessed, if you assume 1 hour per culvert, that is a minimum of $400,000 and up to $600,000 of donated professional biologist labor. Using an assumption of 2000 assets to meet in the middle, the valuation of labor donated is $200,000 but that is expected to increase and does not take into account any professional dollar amounts per hours volunteered by planning committee or advisory committee.

**Actual Culvert Photos**







# County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health

## Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

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GRANT INFORMATION**: PROPOSAL**
*This information **will** be included in public documents*

Project Name: 44th Annual Salmonid Restoration Conference Date: April 27 - 30, 2027

Applicant name or Organization: Salmonid Restoration Federation

Project Description:

The Annual Salmonid Restoration conference offers an unparalleled opportunity for sponsors with a vested interest in the recovery of California's native salmonid populations to engage in technical education. The four-day conference, which will be held in Santa Barbara from April 27 - 30, 2026 will highlight regional and topical issues that affect salmonids and their diverse habitats by offering exemplary field tours, technical workshops, concurrent sessions, and a plenary session on the state of salmonid recovery in California. Field tours include all-day visits to dynamic, habitat restoration sites. Concurrent sessions focus on biological, physical, and policy-specific issues that affect habitat restoration and recovery of native populations of wild anadromous salmonids.

| Funding Requested | $2,000 |
|---|---|

| ITEMIZED BUDGET ITEMS | Requested Funds | Matching Funds | Total Amount |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conference Scholarships | 2000 | 2000 | 4000 |
| Personnel- SRF Staff | | 40000 | 40000 |
| Conference Proceedings | | 2000 | 2000 |
| Facility & Catering Contract | | 100000 | 100000 |
| Transportation | | 2000 | 2000 |
| AV + Registration Costs | | 2000 | 2000 |
| Mileage | | 3000 | 3000 |
| Lodging | | 4000 | 4000 |
| TOTAL AMOUNTS | $2,000 | 155000 | 157000 |

Each item description should be sufficient to clearly define the full item. In addition to funds being requested, note any matching funds committed to the proposed project.

For each section, provide a brief written response.

## Background of the issue being addressed

Anadromous fisheries in California are in a steady state of decline. The once abundant runs of salmon, steelhead, and trout in California have dwindled to small populations. Chinook and Coho salmon are extinct in much of their historic range and are listed as threatened / endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The salmonid restoration field emerged to improve habitat conditions and enhance native salmonid recovery efforts. It is vital that restoration practitioners, landowners, and agencies that are entrusted to uphold public trust values have an opportunity to learn from each other's habitat restoration successes and failures so that together we can advance salmonid recovery efforts. The 2027 Conference will focus on a broad range of salmonid and watershed restoration topics of concern to restoration practitioners, watershed scientists, fisheries biologists, landowners, and

## Project Goals

● Improve salmonid habitat restoration efforts;
● Teach California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and NOAA Fisheries protocols and methodologies to help recover salmon populations;
● Educate resource professionals about restoration techniques that address limiting factors to salmon;
● Engage the watershed community about the need and mechanisms to protect and restore wild salmon populations.
● Provide scholarships to people from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds to. SRF uses an internal committee to support scholarship program for the annual conference.

## Project Logistics: how will the project be completed?

The production and coordination of the conference is accomplished by identifying tour, workshop, and session coordinators, building a strong conference agenda, working with co-sponsors and restoration partners, conducting targeted outreach, and coordinating conference logistics. SRF also produces a Conference Proceedings, videotapes the Plenary and other sessions, and offers an educational poster session and restoration job fair as part of the conference.

SRF produces the largest salmon watershed restoration conference in California. Our conference history has demonstrated success based on our track record of developing pertinent curriculum to advance watershed restoration in California. The SRF conference successfully engages a broad spectrum of the watershed restoration field including agency personnel, practitioners, scientists, planners, consultants, watershed groups, tribal members, students, and landowners.

## Project Completion Timeline

The conference will be held April 27-30, 2027. We begin planning ~10 months before the conference.

## Applicants Background.

SRF was formed in 1986 to help stream restoration practitioners advance the art and science of watershed restoration. Our organization promotes restoration, stewardship, and recovery of California native salmon, steelhead, and trout populations through education, collaboration, and watershed capacity building. Our goals are to restore and recover California salmonids, improve water quality in California watersheds, and enhance watershed restoration efforts in California. To accomplish these goals SRF coordinates workshops and tours to highlight water conservation techniques, programs, and strategies to improve instream flows for both humans and fish.