

**Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program
Regional Water Management Group Meeting**

**October 21, 2026
Zoom Conference Call**

RWMG Entity Attendees:

Rosa Carrillo – San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
Shandy Carroll – Monterey County Department of Housing and Community Development
Beth Febus – Big Sur Land Trust
Emily Gardner – Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Charly Liscomb – Marina Coast Water District
Heidi Niggemeyer – City of Salinas
Erika Parker – Monterey One Water
Paul Robins – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
Emily Zefferman – Resource Conservation District of Monterey County

Non-RWMG Attendees:

Patrick Grogan, City of Seaside
John Hunt – UC Davis and California Marine Sanctuary Foundation
Susan Robinson – Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Coordinator

Meeting Minutes

1. Brief Introductions: Charly Liscomb introduced himself as the new RWMG representative for Marina Coast Water District.

2. Prop 4 Watershed Resilience Draft Guidelines and Conservation Implementation Draft PSP: Susan Robinson provided an overview of the Prop 4 Watershed Resilience Grant Program draft guidelines, including funding amounts and timelines for the release of final Guidelines and for the two grant programs, Conservation Implementation (with \$60.1M in grant funds available) and Watershed Resilience (\$93M).

Susan then did a deeper dive into the Conservation Implementation Draft PSP. Eligible projects include water conservation capital projects in ag and urban areas with a primary benefit of water savings. Must be implementation projects with physical improvements. Rebates and fallowing are not eligible. The minimum grant request amount is \$3M, maximum is \$15M for an entire proposal (which can include multiple projects). Importantly, eligible applicants must be “applying on behalf of an established, multi-party collaborative group, such as a Regional Water Management Group, watershed network, regional climate collaborative, or other group that exists independently of any single project and has collectively agreed on a priority project to pursue.” Susan asked whether the Greater Monterey County RWMG should apply on behalf of project proponents who have eligible projects within the IRWM region? RWMG members liked that idea. Susan agreed to release a project solicitation by November 1st. The following RWMG members acquiesced to serving on the Project Selection Committee: Beth Febus and (maybe) Emily Zefferman.

Susan then updated the group on the latest conversations with the Central Coast IRWM Region coordinators, along with the consulting firms Dudek and Rincon (who authored the Watershed

Resilience Plan for Pajaro River Watershed), on whether and/or how to pursue Watershed Resilience “Planning-Plus” grant funds once the PSP for that grant program is released (expected Spring 2027). Susan showed examples of the “whole watershed” approach (HUC 6 and HUC 8) that the Department of Water Resources is calling for, and introduced the Central Coast Funding Area’s (CCFA’s) ideas for alternative planning regions. Three options are currently being tossed around:

- 1) Entire CCFA: One approach would consider shared climate change impacts and challenges on a Central Coast-wide basis (water supply, flood risk, wildfire, coastal resilience, etc.). This approach wouldn’t necessarily result in a “Watershed Resilience Plan” per se (unless required by DWR) but would entail evaluating existing climate-related plans throughout the region, conducting a gap analysis, addressing those gaps, conducting broad outreach, and developing an “addendum” that stitches those plans together. The resulting plan would essentially enable eligibility for future Watershed Resilience grant funds, while project development and decision-making for future grant applications would take place on the IRWM or sub-watershed basis. “CCFA direction with subregional ownership.”
- 2) Northern/Southern IRWM Regions Split: Santa Cruz, Greater Monterey County, and Monterey Peninsula IRWM Regions could potentially apply together, with a “Monterey Bay” (end-of-the-watershed) nexus. This effort could potentially leverage the Monterey Bay Climate Adaptation Action Network, which has been launched as part of the \$71M NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant, and is being led by the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation.
- 3) HUC 8 Watersheds: We could apply on a HUC 8 watershed basis, overlaying land use maps, Community Wildfire Protection Plan maps, etc. For the Greater Monterey County IRWM Region, this would involve the entirety of the Salinas River watershed – which is...big!

Discussion: Heidi Niggemeyer questioned the CCFA-wide approach, noting the real differences in water use management (groundwater basins, surface water), issues, and constituents between our regions. She felt planning on a sub-regional basis would make more sense. The City of Salinas is considering developing a “watershed resilience plan” regardless of these other efforts. (Action Item: Make sure to keep Heidi apprised of the CCFA conversation!) Heidi also brought up a factor that the CCFA has also discussed: If projects must apply for future grant funds under a single Watershed Resilience Plan, then all projects within the entire CCFA region would be competing against each other – *no one* wants that!

3. Prop 1 Round 2 IRWM Implementation Grant — Proposal to Reallocate Funds: California Marine Sanctuary Foundation (CMSF), the lead applicant for the Prop 1 Round 2 grant, is proposing to reallocate \$490K in grant funds to augment RCDMC’s arundo control program in the Salinas Valley. Susan provided background, explaining Elkhorn Slough Foundation’s decision to remove its \$490K acquisition project from the grant. She briefly described some alternatives that had been considered—explaining why CMSF felt it wouldn’t be feasible to begin a whole new project solicitation to the IRWM Region (i.e., considering time constraints, given that all project work must conclude, currently, by December 31, 2027). Finally, Susan described the decision to augment the RCDMC’s existing budget within the Prop 1 Round 2 grant to expand its arundo control program efforts.

Emily Zefferman described the work that would be conducted with the additional grant funds. This includes an additional 500 riparian acres of spot treatment, plus initial treatment of a 1,500-ft section along a levee bank and a 1.2-mile section along the low-flow river channel, totaling 5 acres of additional initial treatment. The additional work would address untreated gaps within the program area footprint and critical hard-to-reach areas. Benefits would include flood risk reduction, water savings of 8.8 AFY in long-term water savings, and habitat improvement for both native plants and wildlife.

A quorum was present and, including the vote that had been emailed prior to the meeting from the City of Soledad (with Susan as proxy for that vote), the Regional Water Management Group voted to approve this proposed reallocation of funds. All voted in favor; none opposed.

4. Environmental Enhancement Streamlining Program Master Permit: Paul Robins, Executive Director of the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC), provided an introduction to the newly-approved, five-year Environmental Enhancement Streamlining Program (EESP) Master Permit for conservation projects with the County of Monterey and the Coastal Commission. The effort to develop the EESP was led by RCDMC with guidance and support from Big Sur Land Trust, Central Coast Wetlands Group, Elkhorn Slough Foundation and Monterey County Housing and Community Development staff.

The EESP Master Permit is a streamlined permit approach for voluntary conservation for restoration or conservation projects anywhere in Monterey County (does not include federal lands, coastal tidelands and lagoons/estuaries, vernal pools, or cities). Master Permit allows up to five projects per year (in batches), and may include one or more of the Program's 30 conservation practices. The projects are subject to Programmatic General Conditions, and must be least impactful to water quality, sensitive habitat, special status species, and soil stability. The Master Permit coverage includes the following County permits: Construction Permit, Coastal Development Permit, Tree Removal Permit, and Encroachment Permit. It does not include: Building Permits for bridges, retaining walls, and fences over 6 ft.

Paul gave examples of practice types that are covered, along with a general timeline and outline of how the program works in practice (see slides at the end of these meeting notes for details). Partners would then work with RCDMC to follow the 9-step NRCS conservation planning and design process. The EESP can save considerable time! The process from application to construction is expected to take a year or less (vs. without EESP, might take up to four years!). There is a cost involved, to compensate RCDMC for their time. But the benefits for that cost:

- Assurance regarding timeline and costs for approval
- Projects requiring Coastal Development or other "Planning" permits will save substantial time and expense
- Investment in informing and developing an improved EESP at the 5-year renewal time.

The project proponent still needs to get all of their other permits (e.g., CDFW, Regional Board, USACE). They need minimum 60% design completed before consulting with those agencies. They are advised to get started early, in the fall. The RCD has until May 1 to present the project batch to the County. By June 1, should have approval from the County!

5. Other News and Updates:

RCDMC: Paul announced that the County gave a winter preparedness press hearing. Due to the predicted Super El Niño, the RCD has had some late sign-ups for the Stream Maintenance Program (construction of secondary channels). Paul reminded everyone about the Emergency Permit pathway; the RCD can answer questions! Paul also noted that the County Department of Public Works brought the RCD on to facilitate work addressing flooding in Bolsa Knolls, which is prone to flooding, via a vegetation management plan. Finally, thanks to a partnership between the RCD and Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA), educational materials have been developed for the general public, including five educational modules (e.g., flood risk, sediment transport); currently have two in production and three under development.

SVBGSA: Emily Gardner reported that the GSA has issued draft amendments to the Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). These are posted on the [GSA's website](#). The GSA will be meeting with the Subbasin Committees for feedback, soft deadline of 11/18/26; then to the SVBGSA board on 12/10/26, with public hearing anticipated 1/14/27.

The next Regional Water Management Group meeting will take place on December 16, 2026.



DWR's 2026 Watershed Resilience Grant Program Guidelines and Conservation Implementation PSP

Susan Robinson,
Greater Monterey County IRWM Program Coordinator

Regional Water Management Group Meeting
October 21, 2026

Prop 4 Watershed Resilience Program DRAFT Guidelines

Genesis of Watershed Resilience Grant Program:

IRWM + California Water Plan 2023



Major emphasis on:

- Climate Change
- Equity
- Watershed-Based Planning

Program Priorities:

- Projects that leverage funds or produce greatest public benefit
- Projects that benefit DACs/vulnerable populations (at least 40% Prop 4 funds)
- Projects that consult/utilize California Conservation Corps

Prop 4 Watershed Resilience Program

DRAFT Guidelines

Available funding:

\$60.1M: **Conservation Implementation:**

- Increase water conservation in ag and urban areas (*projects with a primary benefit of water savings*)

\$93M: **Watershed Resilience:**

- Support development of Watershed Resilience Plans and fund highest priority implementable projects identified through this planning process

Cost Share Requirement: None! (But encouraged)

Prop 4 Watershed Resilience Program

DRAFT Guidelines

Eligible Project Types:

- Water reuse and recycling for non-potable or potable reuse
- Water-use efficiency and water conservation
- Local and regional surface and underground water storage, including groundwater aquifer cleanup or recharge projects
- Regional water conveyance facilities
- Watershed protection, restoration, and management projects, including projects that reduce the risk of wildfire or improve water supply reliability
- Conjunctive use of surface and groundwater storage facilities
- Water desalination projects

Prop 4 Watershed Resilience Program DRAFT Guidelines

SCHEDULE

Public comments on Draft Program Guidelines due November 9th
Final Guidelines expected in January 2027

There will be two *Proposal Solicitations (PSPs)*:

Conservation Implementation

- Draft Guidelines are out now!
- Final Guidelines expected January 2027
- Concept proposals due January – March 2027
- Final proposals due February – June 2027 (as soon as you're approved!)
- Awards Fall 2027

Watershed Resilience “Planning-Plus”

- Draft Guidelines expected in early 2027
- Final Guidelines expected Spring 2027
- Applications due late 2027-2028
- Awards in Summer 2028

Prop 4 Conservation Implementation

DRAFT PSP

Available Funding: \$60.1M

Eligible Projects: On-the-ground water conservation projects in ag and urban areas with a primary benefit of water savings.

Must be implementation projects with physical improvements. Rebates / following are not eligible.

Award Term: 5 years

Grant Request Amount: Min \$3M – Max \$15M (for whole proposal package)

Eligible Applicants:

“Applicants must be applying on behalf of an established, multi-party collaborative group, such as a Regional Water Management Group, watershed network, regional climate collaborative, or other group that exists independently of any single project and has collectively agreed on a priority project to pursue. A project team composed of multiple agencies or organizations does not constitute a collaborative group for purposes of this requirement.”

Prop 4 Conservation Implementation

DRAFT PSP

Final PSP expected January 2027
with Concept Proposals due January – March 2027

Should the RWMG hold a project solicitation to apply on behalf of the Greater Monterey County IRWM Region?

Suggested Schedule:

- Today: Form Project Selection Committee!
- Nov 1: Release project solicitation
- Nov 30: Concept project proposals due
- Dec 1 - Jan 20: Project Selection Committee scores projects
- Dec 16: Project proponents present projects at Dec 16th RWMG meeting
- Jan 20: Hold special RWMG meeting to vote on projects
- Ready to apply!

Prop 4 Conservation Implementation

DRAFT PSP

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
about Prop 4 Conservation Implementation

Prop 4 Watershed Resilience “Planning-Plus” Grant Program

- **Draft PSP:** Expected early 2027
- **Final PSP:** Expected Spring 2027
- **Applications Due:** Late 2027-2028
- **Funding Available:** \$93M
- **Max request:** We expect max \$8M per region, with \$3M for planning and \$5M for implementation

Should we pursue this funding as a RWMG?

An argument for “YES”: Developing a Watershed Resilience Plan will make us eligible for future implementation grant funds: Plan >> future \$\$

The Central Coast IRWM Regions have been discussing ideas and options for potential collaboration...

Prop 4 Watershed Resilience “Planning-Plus” Grant Program

How would we define our boundaries?

DWR emphasizes “whole watersheds” on HUC 6 or HUC 8 scale

HUC 6



HUC 8



From DWR presentation



Prop 4 Watershed Resilience “Planning-Plus” Grant Program

Ideas from recent discussions with CCFA reps and Dudek and Rincon:

Let's propose a Central Coast coordinated, collaborative approach!

- CCFA is coterminous with DWR Central Coast hydrologic unit
- Build upon 20+ years of IRWM

1. Entire CCFA

- Regional direction and coordination at CCFA level; project development at the subregional IRWM level
- Address **shared CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES**: wildfire, water supply, flood management, coastal resilience...
- HUC-8 could be used as an analytical layer, not automatically the organizing principle

2. Northern/Southern IRWM Regions split

- Santa Cruz, GMC, and Monterey Peninsula – “Monterey Bay Area,” nexus with NOAA-funded “Monterey Bay Climate Adaptation and Action Network” (MBCAAN)
- SLO and Santa Barbara

3. HUC 8 Watersheds

- Overlay land use maps, Community Wildfire Protection Plan maps, etc.

Prop 4 Watershed Resilience “Planning-Plus” Grant Program

The Approach: CCFA regional direction with subregional ownership

Elevate the work that’s been done (not create a whole new plan):

- Review existing plans and studies (IRWMPs, CAPs, LHMPs, GSPs, SLR analyses, flood modeling, etc.), synthesize, conduct gap analysis, project inventories, bundle projects that cross boundaries
- Address gaps in planning
- Conduct outreach as needed (DWR emphasis on equity)
- Existing plans and analyses are tested against Watershed Resilience Plan requirements so only real gaps get new work.

The End Product: “A regional project pipeline”

- A focused addendum, or a full Watershed Resilient Plan only if DWR requires it
- Priority projects bundled into fundable packages
- Clear sponsors and near-term readiness work

How the Work Would Be Phased

1

PHASE 1

Planning and participation approach

- Coordinate with DWR and regional partners
- Recommend boundaries and decision structure
- Confirm WRP vs. addendum pathway
- Develop grant scope, schedule, and budget

2

PHASE 2

Regional addendum or WRP development

- Synthesize plans, gaps, and project inventories
- Complete missing climate vulnerability analyses
- Engage partners, Tribes, and community networks
- Bundle strategies and anchor projects

3

PHASE 3

Implementation support

- Advance scopes, costs, and benefit narratives
- Coordinate proposals and grant applications
- Maintain a shared pipeline and grant calendar
- Track outcomes and refresh priorities

A full regional WRP would be pursued only if DWR determines an addendum cannot satisfy program requirements

Prop 4 Watershed Resilience “Planning-Plus” Grant Program

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
about Prop 4 Watershed Resilience “Planning-Plus”

Questions?

Comments?

Thoughts?

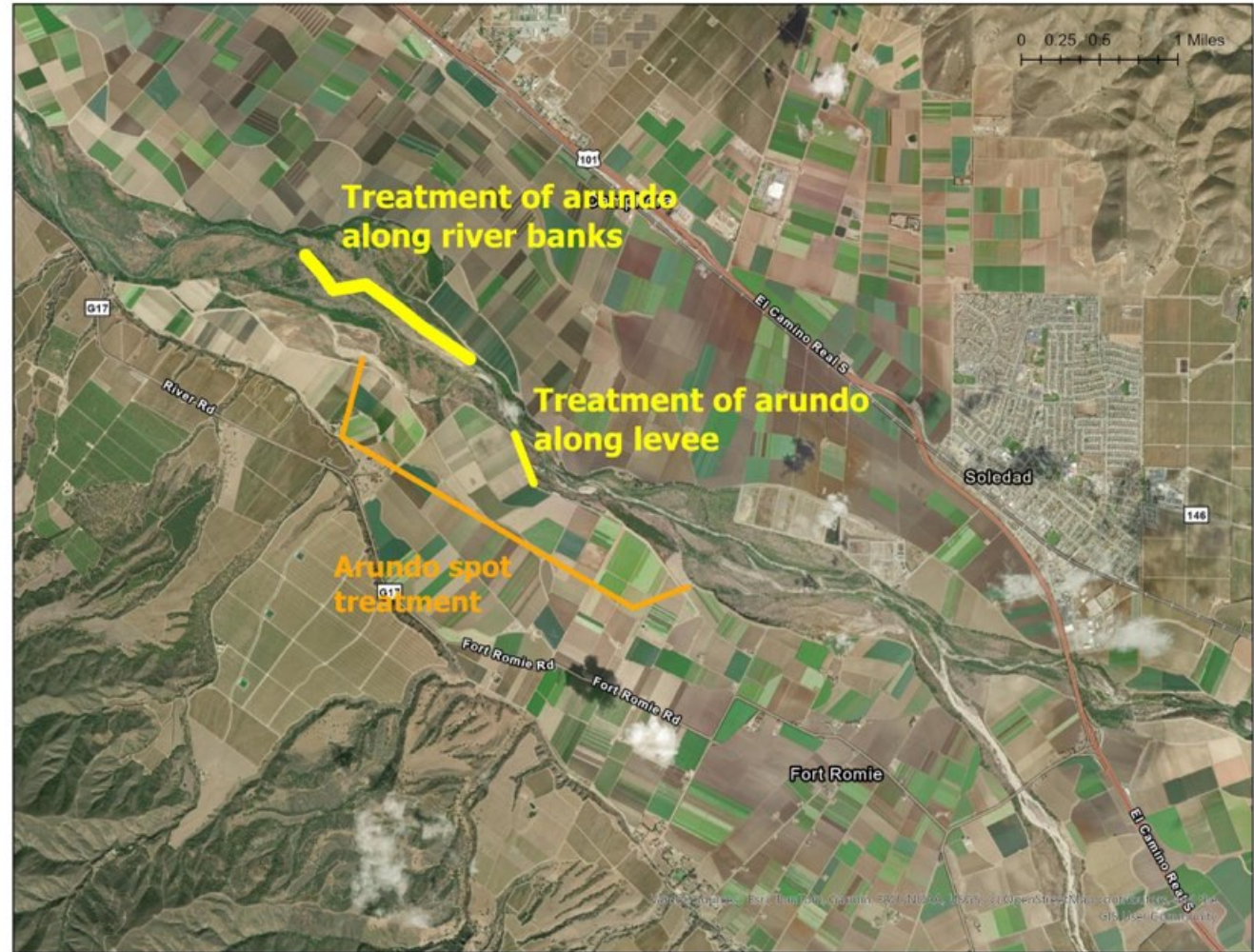
Proposal for reallocation of DWR IRWM Round 2 funds

Resource Conservation District of Monterey County

October 2026

Increased Scope of Arundo Control

- Arundo spot treatment on 500 riparian acres
- Initial arundo treatment
 - 1500 ft of levee bank + 1.2 miles of river bank
 - Total of ~5 net acres initial treatment
- Cost
 - *Arundo control contractor costs= \$352,000*
 - *Personnel time for annual permit compliance tasks, biological surveys, biological monitoring, contracting, arundo mapping, project coordination*





Untreated arundo along levee



Example of worker separating arundo from native vegetation, which is required to prevent overspray and damage to native plants

Arundo along river banks in proposed treatment area (bright green vegetation)





Example of initial arundo treatment along dry river bank

Benefits of Proposed Arundo Control

- Supports overall Salinas River Arundo Eradication Program
 - High priority for diverse stakeholders
- Proposed initial treatment areas comprise untreated gaps within overall footprint
 - Current top priority areas for the program
- Spot treatment prevents re-infestation of treated areas
- Flood risk reduction
- Water savings – 1.76 ft/yr for 5 acres = **8.8 acre-feet per year in long-term water savings**
- Habitat improvement for native plants and wildlife



ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT STREAMLINING PROGRAM (EESP) MASTER PERMIT FOR MONTEREY COUNTY

Greater Monterey County IRWM Meeting

October 21, 2026

Paul Robins, Executive Director for RCD of Monterey County

OUTLINE

- Overview
- Description
- Procedures
 - Timeline, PCN, and PGC

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Streamlined permit approach for voluntary conservation for environmentally beneficial projects (restoration or conservation) anywhere in Monterey County*
- Master Permit allows up to **five projects per year**
- Projects may include one or more of the Program's **30 conservation practices**.
- Eligible projects will fit within the footprint, grading volume, maximum grading depth, and other practice-specific constraints
- Projects subject to Programmatic General Conditions
 - Least impactful to water quality, sensitive habitat, special status species, and soil stability

**Excludes Federal lands, Coastal tidelands and lagoons/estuaries, Vernal Pools, and Cities*

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Master Permit coverage **includes**:
 - Construction Permit
 - Coastal Development Permit
 - Tree Removal Permit
 - Encroachment Permit
- Permit **does not include**
 - Building Permits for bridges
 - Retaining walls
 - Fences over 6-ft

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION COVERED PRACTICES

EESP Master Permit covers construction activities for 30 practices

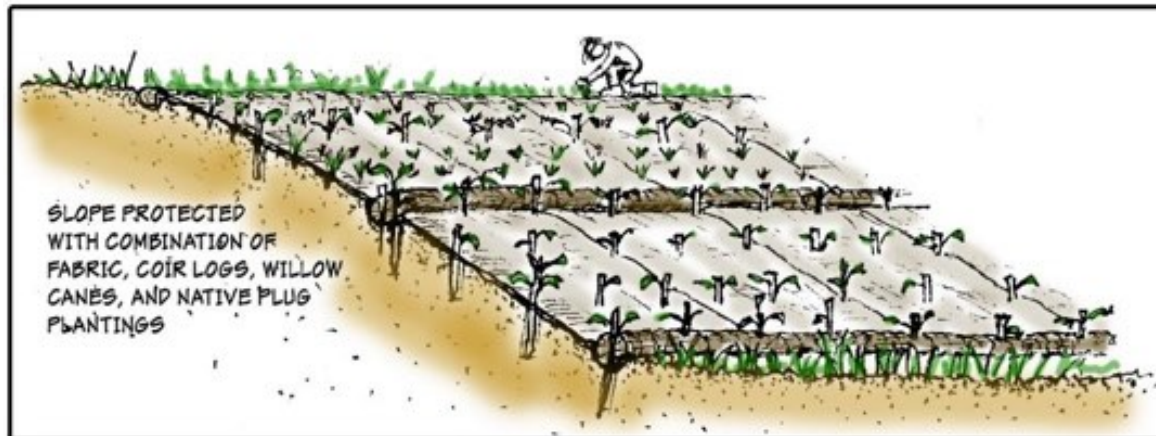
Practices were grouped into 4 categories/areas within the county

1. General Watershed Protection
2. Upland Watershed Protection Practices
3. Riparian and Instream Projects
4. Wetland Projects

PRACTICE TYPES

1. GENERAL WATERSHED PROTECTION

- Restoration of Rare and Declining Habitat
- Critical Area Planting



Before Arundo Treatment

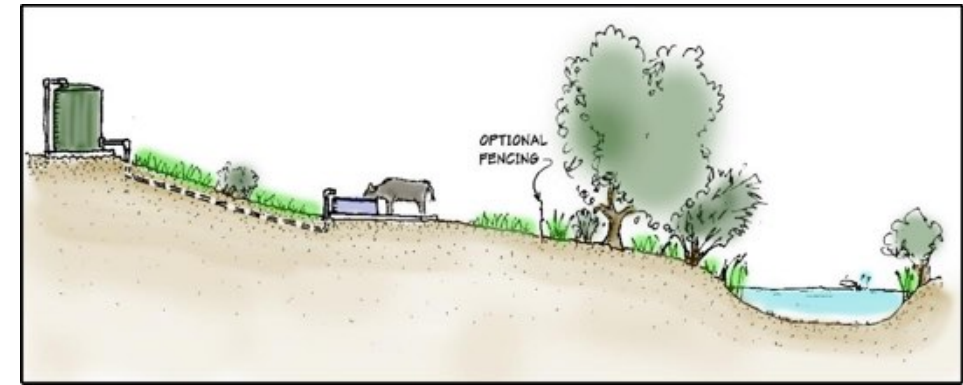
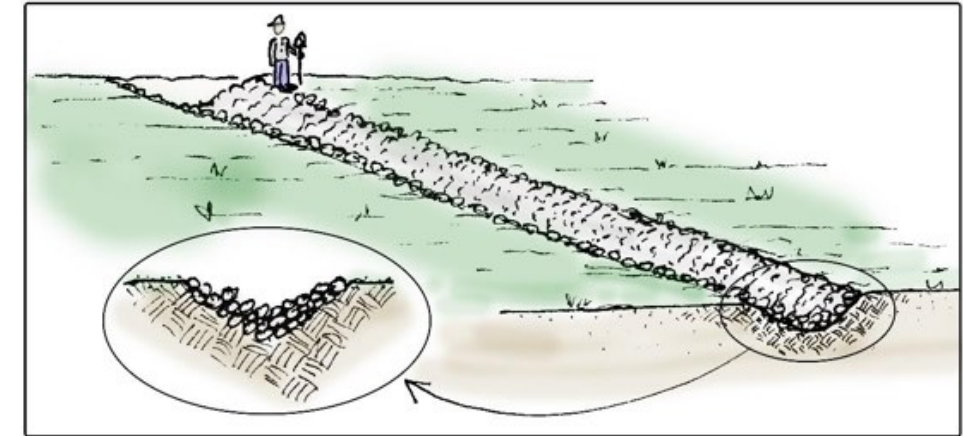


After Arundo Treatment

PRACTICE TYPES

2. UPLAND WATERSHED PROTECTION

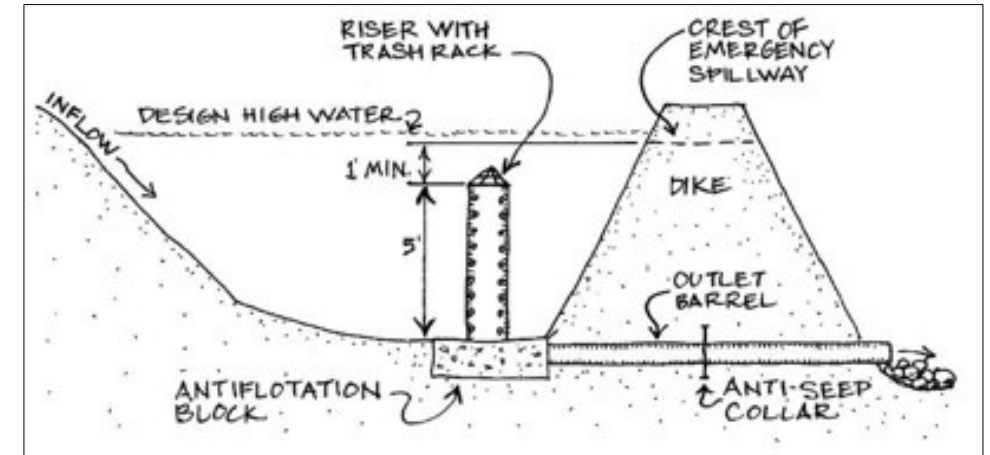
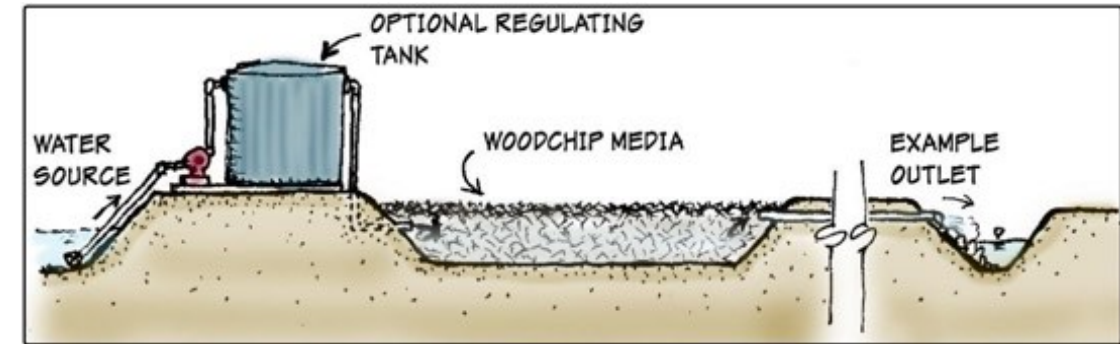
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- Road Improvement (incl. Relocation/Closure)
- Lined Waterway
- Underground Outlet



PRACTICE TYPES

2. UPLAND WATERSHED PROTECTION (CONT'D.)

- Water and Sediment Control Basin
- Bioreactor
- Infiltration Basin
- Firebreak
- Grade Stabilization Structure



Before



After

PRACTICE TYPES

3. RIPARIAN AND INSTREAM PROJECTS

- Stream Habitat Improvement
- Streambank Protection
- Aquatic Organism Passage
- Stream Crossing
- Channel Bed Stabilization



Before fish passage barrier removal

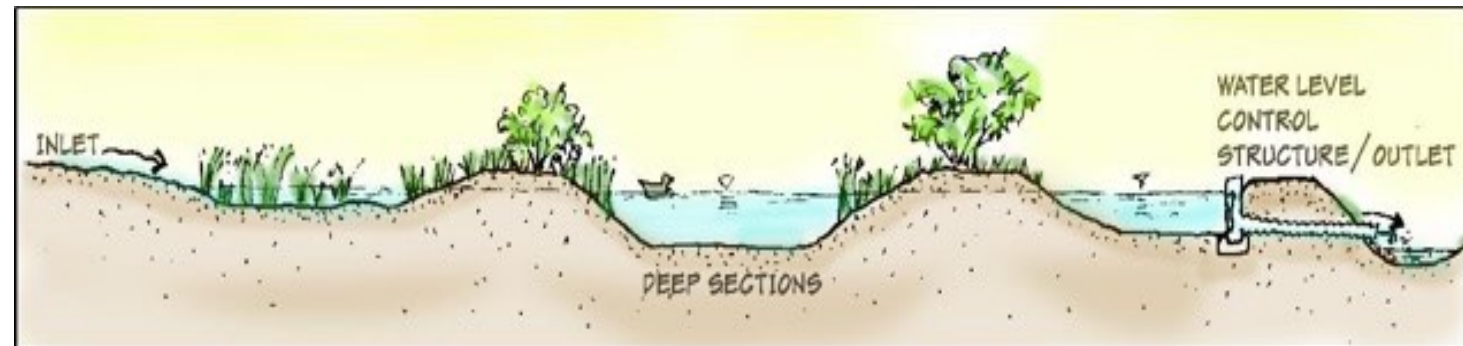


After fish passage barrier removal

PRACTICE TYPES

4. WETLAND PROJECTS

- Wetland Restoration
- Wetland Creation
- Wetland Enhancement
- Wetland Wildlife Habitat



PROGRAM PROCEDURES

Timeline

- Project proponent requests RCD inclusion in annual EESP batch (early-early...)
- RCD determines project fit for EESP and creates EESP agreement with proponent
- Permitting Agency consultations occur early (~October-December)
- Design completed before spring
- Relevant state and federal agency permit applications submitted
- RCDMC notifies the County of the planned projects by submitting a Pre-Construction Notification (PCN) by May 1st (includes copies of other agency notifications and permits)
- County has 30 days to respond, otherwise the project is considered authorized to move forward
- Construction can begin on June 1st

PROGRAM PROCEDURES

- Partners will work with RCDMC to follow 9-step NRCS conservation planning and design process
- RCDMC is responsible for completion and submittal of the Pre-Construction Notification (PCN)
- The PCN provides the County with sufficient project information and will include
 - Project and site description with photos
 - Anticipated construction activities and timeline
 - Potential presence of sensitive species
 - Results of required cultural resources investigations
 - List with quantification of Conservation Practices
 - List of all relevant Programmatic General Conditions (PGCs) used to guide the design, plan construction activities, and that will be observed during construction
 - Construction Management Plan
 - Success criteria

HOW CONSERVATION PLANNING WORKS

A NINE-STEP PROCESS



PROGRAMMATIC GENERAL CONDITIONS (PGCs)

☐ Protections for

- Air Quality Resources
- Paleontological, Archaeological, Historical, Tribal, and Cultural Resources
- Biological Resources (including Hazardous Materials Spill Prevention)
- Native Plants (and Post-Construction Conditions)
- Fire Prevention

☐ Limitations on

- Earthmoving and Vegetation Removal
- Herbicide Use
- Work in Streams, Wetlands, Floodplains, and Permanently Poned Areas
- Construction Timeframe
- Construction Equipment
- Earthwork in Fort Ord

☐ Standards for

- Engineering Design
- Erosion Control
- Least Environmentally Damaging Alternative

☐ Restrictions on

- Projects Requiring Building Permits
- Projects in Coastal Zone
- Projects impacting Vernal Pools

EXAMPLE PROJECT PROCESS —WITHOUT EESP

Increase 0.1-ac stormwater detention basin to 1.0-ac basin adjacent to Elkhorn Slough

- Serves as stormwater detention from 35.5 ac of ag land (strawberries)
- Owner saw increasing basin as opportunity to improve water quality entering Elkhorn Slough and extend hydroperiod for increased habitat benefits
- Project began as part of IWRP in February 2020 with TAC input and oversight including County Development Review Committee
- Project funded by NRCS's RCPP program (followed conservation planning, national environmental oversight, and design guidelines)
- RCDMC consulted with all environmental agencies and most waived jurisdiction
- Only required permits were County grading permit and Coastal Development Permit. (Project activities had to be authorized through Project Biologist)

EXAMPLE PROJECT PROCESS —WITHOUT EESP

- Permitting Timeline: **October 2020 to June 2024**
 - Oct 2020 – submitted Construction Permit and CDP application
 - Jul 2021 – submitted updated CDP application
 - Feb 2022 – County began CEQA Initial Study
 - Nov 2023 – Draft Initial Study circulated
 - May 2024 – MND adopted and Draft COAs issued
 - June 2024 – Received CDP (and County Construction Permit)
 - RCDMC worked with four different County Planners over 4 years
- Project constructed in July 2024

EXAMPLE PROJECT PROCESS—WITH EESP

- If this project had been submitted under EESP...
 - Timeline known—1 year ish
 - CEQA already completed
 - CDP coverage
 - Protection measures known

RCDMC - EESP COVERAGE AGREEMENT

- Define responsibilities
 - Range from 'Proponent handles all other permitting and environmental documentation' to 'RCD assists with other permit requirements' depending on proponent needs
 - Set timelines of design completion and information submission for timely RCD preparation of PCN to County
- Set cost expectations and payment timeline (base estimate below)
 - 40 hours for the PCN and cumulative impacts memo,
 - Maybe another 10-20 hours for the coordination (so ~\$5K in year 1), and
 - Another 20-40 hours for construction oversight (minimal, but we should be aware of how things are going) and 5 years of post-construction annual reports (~\$2-5k over 5 years)

THIS LOOKS COMPLICATED... WHY BOTHER?

Primary benefits

- Assurance regarding timeline and costs for approval
- Projects requiring Coastal Development or other 'Planning' permits will save substantial time and expense
- Investment in informing and developing an improved EESP at 5-year renewal time

QUESTIONS?

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