

Climate Resilient Monterey Bay



LOWER WATSONVILLE SLOUGH ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT

SUMMARY

The Pajaro Storm Drain Maintenance District (PSDMD) is acting as the local sponsor for a United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Feasibility Analysis and Initial Project Design to reduce flood risk under the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986. The project focuses on improving ecosystem function and hydraulic connectivity within the Pajaro Lagoon and surrounding wetlands while maintaining consistency with the original purpose of the Pajaro Flood Control Project. The feasibility study is ongoing, with extensive hydrologic and hydraulic modeling informing the design of alternatives that enhance tidal marsh and slough habitat, reduce mechanical breaching of infrastructure, and provide climate adaptation, flood risk reduction, and recreational benefits for economically disadvantaged residents. PSDMD is using NOAA Climate Resilience Grant funding as local match to facilitate implementation, secure permits, finalize real estate agreements, coordinate utility relocation, and conduct supplemental environmental monitoring.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project is designed to restore and enhance wetland and floodplain ecosystems while improving flood management and community resilience. Key objectives include: expanding and restoring wetlands and tidal marshes to improve ecosystem function; elevating infrastructure to reduce flooding and road closures; providing recreational and educational opportunities for local residents; ensuring compliance with environmental and design standards from USACE, Caltrans, and local authorities; and developing long-term monitoring, adaptive management, and maintenance protocols to support sustainable outcomes. A central objective is also to coordinate effectively with federal, state, and local agencies to secure land, permits, and easements needed for project success.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project is currently progressing through several interrelated tasks. Wetland and floodplain restoration is underway, including slough restoration and raising infrastructure at Beach Road to improve inundation management and reduce mechanical breaching of the river mouth. PSDMD coordinates closely with USACE for final design and construction, providing local match funds and performing in-kind work to support permitting, easement acquisition, and supplemental environmental monitoring.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Flood Risk Reduction



PARTNERS



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

[Pajaro Storm Drain Maintenance District](#),
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Land acquisition is ongoing, focusing on two key parcels for estuarine wetland restoration. One parcel is owned by the County of Santa Cruz and is being transferred to PSDMD, while the other is owned by California State Parks, requiring negotiation to balance fee title and easement preferences. Additional temporary or permanent easements may be required depending on final design outcomes.

Project implementation activities include completing the feasibility analysis, 30% and final design plans, bid documents, environmental permits, and property acquisition (December 2025 – June 2027). Contractor selection and bidding occurs from January to March 2028, followed by full project implementation from March to December 2028. Concurrently, PSDMD develops and implements project monitoring, adaptive management, compliance, and maintenance protocols, which continue through June 2029. These activities ensure that the restored wetlands and floodplains provide lasting environmental, flood risk reduction, and community benefits.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Flood Risk Reduction



PARTNERS



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
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