

Climate Resilient Monterey Bay



MONTEREY BAY PRESCRIBED FIRE AND CULTURAL BURNING EXPANSION

SUMMARY

This project will implement “good fire” and integrate Indigenous knowledge across several burns on four properties in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties — Basin Ranch, Glen Deven Ranch, Mitteldorf Preserve, and Mt. Madonna Center — in partnership with the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County (ETMC), Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT), Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC), and Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association (CCPBA). The work will reduce catastrophic wildfire risk, advance cultural stewardship, and restore ecological function in high-hazard, fire-prone coastal mountain landscapes. By reintroducing planned (or “prescribed”) fire, improving fuel conditions, and supporting long-term resilience, the project will protect nearby communities, critical infrastructure, and culturally significant landscapes while expanding Tribal-led and co-managed fire practices in a region historically shaped by Indigenous fire.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Planned burns will reduce the likelihood of high-severity wildfire near vulnerable communities and infrastructure in the Carmel Valley, Arroyo Seco, Big Sur coast, Boulder Creek–Watsonville foothills, and Carmel Highlands regions. ETMC is a core partner on several of the planned burns and will co-develop plans and participate in burn activities to achieve cultural and land management priorities, including the protection of culturally significant plants, food species, and habitats. The project also will improve forage conditions on working lands, control invasive vegetation such as French broom, enhance native grasslands and redwood understory health, and strengthen safe access for emergency response. Together, these objectives are expanding the use of prescribed and cultural fire as ongoing, climate-adapted management tools.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

This work is anchored in partnership with each organization leading different aspects, contributing knowledge, and offering support across several project elements. RCDMC is administering the effort, coordinating partners, securing permits, resolving implementation barriers, and conducting outreach to build public support and literacy around prescribed and cultural fire. Baseline ecological and cultural resource assessments conducted by BSLT and ETMC will guide the development of burn designs and ensure protection of sensitive sites.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Wildfire Risk
Reduction



PARTNERS



Resource Conservation
District of Monterey
County



Central Coast Prescribed
Burn Association (CCPBA)



Big Sur Land Trust



Esselen Tribe



This work is part of Climate Resilient Monterey Bay (CRMB), an initiative through the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation. CRMB is Federally funded as part of the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge through the Inflation Reduction Act and administered by the Office for Coastal Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



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Partners are preparing burn units through roadwork, burn planning, pre-burn vegetation treatment, unit delineation, cultural-resource flagging, and neighbor notification. Prescribed fire will be implemented on all four properties, with approximately 100+ acres targeted initially and additional acreage possible as conditions allow. CCPBA will be leading the burn logistics and operations, training components, oversight, etc. Post-fire actions include mop-up, patrol, data collection, photo monitoring, coordination with neighbors and fire authorities, and long-term tracking of vegetation response and cultural-resource outcomes. Together, these activities are establishing a replicable model for multi-partner good-fire stewardship across the Monterey Bay region.

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