PAJARO RIVER CONFLUENCE AREA PROJECT

SUMMARY

The Pajaro River–Salsipuedes Creek Confluence Area Restoration Project is being advanced by the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) as a complementary effort to the broader Pajaro River Flood Risk Management (PRFRM) Project. The project is focused on restoring approximately 30–50 acres of floodplain at a critical confluence area that currently serves as a hydraulic choke point and increases flood risk to disadvantaged communities and regional infrastructure. Through land acquisition, floodplain reconnection, levee reconfiguration, and either wetland or agricultural reactivation, the project is designed to reduce flood hazards while providing ecological benefits, economic parity through discounted farm leases, and long-term climate resilience.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project seeks to reduce flood risk for vulnerable communities upstream and adjacent to the Pajaro–Salsipuedes confluence by expanding flood accommodation space and redesigning levee infrastructure. In parallel, the project aims to restore channel, floodplain, and riparian ecosystem functions that improve hydraulic throughput, sediment and debris storage, and habitat quality. Another objective is to expand equitable economic opportunity by offering discounted agricultural lease rates to disadvantaged and low-income growers on flood-compatible land. The program also intends to align agricultural restoration with community food systems through potential partnerships with El Pajaro Community Development Corporation and local food suppliers.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

PRFMA is currently securing parcels at the confluence through a combination of NOAA grant funding and previously acquired parcels under the larger PRFRM Project. With NOAA Climate Resilience funds, the project is designing a levee setback system around the property perimeter, including the elevation of the Highway 129 roadbed to maintain emergency and transportation access during flood events. Two alternative land uses are being evaluated through active community engagement: full conversion to restored floodplain and riparian habitat, or a hybrid use where flood-compatible agricultural production continues under discounted lease terms while still allowing flood overtopping.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Flood Risk Reduction

PARTNERS

PAJARO REGIONAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency

CMSF

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.

NOAA

Last Updated: 12/9/2025

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Design and permitting activities are underway and include grading plans, habitat feature installations, channel and riparian restoration designs, and supporting environmental compliance. Construction activities will include levee demolition and reconstruction, channel reconnection, agricultural soil preparation or habitat planting, and roadway elevation. In parallel, PRFMA is conducting capacity-building and outreach with agricultural partners, NRCS, El Pajaro Community Development Corporation, and MBCAAN to inform design decisions and ensure that economic and community-oriented outcomes are integrated into the final restoration approach.

Expected benefits now being advanced include improved upstream flood protection, increased sediment accommodation and large woody debris retention, enhanced ecological function at a key watershed junction, added transportation resilience along Highway 129, and provision of discounted agricultural land for disadvantaged growers with potential integration into community-oriented food initiatives.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Flood Risk Reduction

PARTNERS

PAJARO REGIONAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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