

Climate Resilient Monterey Bay



SALINAS RIVER FLOOD RISK REDUCTION AND HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

SUMMARY

The Salinas River Flood Risk Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project is actively increasing channel capacity along the Salinas River to reduce flood damage to nearby agricultural lands, communities, and infrastructure while restoring ecological function. The program developed in 2016 through a public-private partnership among the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC), the Monterey County Water Resources Agency, The Nature Conservancy, and local landowners is constructing secondary channels that mimic the river's natural braided form. These channels convey floodwaters during large storm events, reduce pressure on levees, protect farmlands from inundation, and reactivate geomorphic processes. With NOAA funding, RCDMC is currently implementing three new secondary channels across 15 acres while removing invasive giant reed (*Arundo donax*) across 20 acres to further improve flood resilience and habitat conditions.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project is pursuing three core objectives. It is constructing new secondary channels to safely convey high flows, reduce flood recurrence on adjacent lands, and restore more natural sediment and flow dynamics emulating the natural braiding of a sandy-bottomed river. It is removing invasive *Arundo donax* to reduce flood hazards, improve hydraulic function, and promote the recovery of native riparian and floodplain species. It is enhancing long-term resilience by coordinating implementation among agencies and landowners, ensuring that flood protection, habitat improvement, and regulatory compliance move forward in an integrated and repeatable model for the watershed.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

RCDMC is administering and managing the project through contracting, reporting, invoicing, and regular coordination with NOAA and partner agencies. It is leading project coordination by recruiting landowners, planning annual work seasons, overseeing field crews and biologists, and aligning work with permits and project goals. The team is maintaining permit compliance by mapping channel alignments, preparing work plans, and submitting required reports to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Regional Water Board, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Flood Risk Reduction



PARTNERS



Resource Conservation District of Monterey County



Monterey County Water Resources Agency



The Nature Conservancy with local landowners



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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Biological staff are conducting pre-work sensitive species surveys, establishing exclusion zones, and providing active monitoring during construction to protect listed species. In addition, project performance is being measured through hydrologic and geomorphic modeling (via FlowWest) to evaluate the effectiveness of the secondary channels and Arundo removal in reducing flood risk and improving habitat function over the period of implementation.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Flood Risk Reduction



PARTNERS



Resource

Conservation District
of Monterey County



Monterey County
Water Resources
Agency



The Nature
Conservancy with
local landowner



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