

# Climate Resilient Monterey Bay



## RESILIENT PAJARO ESTUARY PROGRAM

### SUMMARY

The Resilient Pajaro Estuary Program, led by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, focuses on the acquisition and restoration of wetlands across multiple waterfront agricultural properties at the mouth of the Pajaro River. The program includes the fully acquired 247-acre Beach Ranch and planned acquisition of conservation easements on the 63-acre Malatesta Ranch and 111-acre West Beach Ranch. Together, these properties encompass 2.8 miles of shoreline and 70 acres of coastal wetlands. Restoration efforts aim to enhance estuary function, provide accommodation space for floodwaters, protect inland farmland, roads, residences, and park infrastructure, and establish a nature-based buffer to reduce climate-related risks such as storm surge, sea level rise, and saltwater intrusion.

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the program are to restore tidal wetlands and estuarine habitat, reduce flood risk, and enhance climate resilience for both the ecosystem and surrounding communities. Additional goals include preserving productive agricultural land through strategic easements, preventing future harmful development, and establishing a model for integrating climate adaptation, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture. The project also prioritizes community engagement and cultural stewardship, incorporating input from disadvantaged communities and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, whose ancestral lands encompass the project area.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project is actively implementing a range of restoration and acquisition activities. At Beach Ranch, restoration involves grading the site, dismantling drainage infrastructure that dewater wetlands, rerouting utilities and access roads, and revegetating with high marsh vegetation and hedgerows. Wetlands on Malatesta Ranch and West Beach Ranch will be restored through rolling conservation easements that immediately retire farming on frequently flooded areas and establish a framework for future tidal wetland expansion as sea level rise continues. These easements also prevent development and enable the Land Trust to implement water quality and habitat restoration projects. Restoration activities include monitoring and reporting to ensure that ecological and community benefits are realized, while also providing a scalable model for coastal climate adaptation on working agricultural lands.

### ADAPTATION STRATEGY

#### Flood Risk Reduction



### PARTNERS



**LAND TRUST**  
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Land Trust of Santa Cruz  
County



Central Coast Wetlands  
Group



The Nature Conservancy



Watsonville  
Wetlands Watch

Watsonville Wetlands  
Watch



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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Community engagement is ongoing, with the Land Trust coordinating with existing partners, MBCAAN outreach to disadvantaged communities, and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band to ensure cultural considerations are integrated into restoration design and implementation. Tribal representatives provide guidance on site access for ceremonies and actively participate as partners in restoration activities.

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