



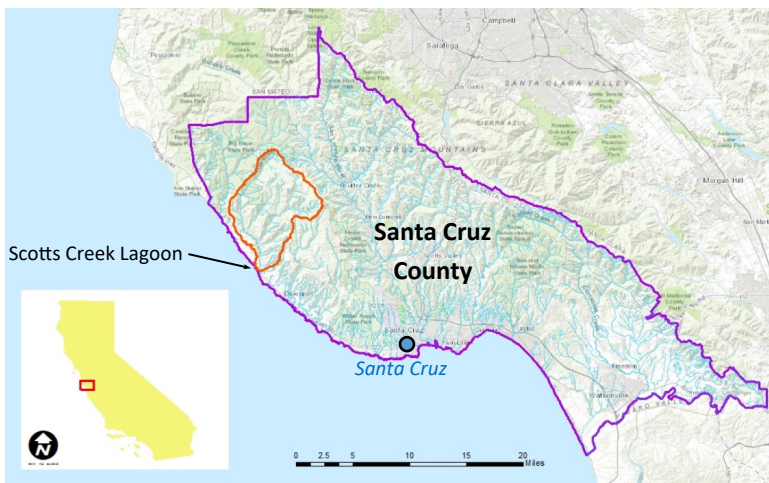
Scotts Creek Coastal Resiliency Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Scotts Creek Coastal Resiliency Project provides a new planning paradigm for major transportation projects wherein infrastructure design is predicated on understanding and addressing ecological resource needs, resulting in enhanced resiliency of both ecosystems and infrastructure.

This project offers a transferrable model of how consensus-based collaboration leads to more innovative, effective, and efficient use of public funds to support public access and safety, coastal resiliency, public trust, and ecosystem enhancement. The work accomplished thus far was made possible through a long-standing multi-agency partnership and strategic collaboration. Continued collaboration will result in:

- *Implementation of a major recovery action for endangered Coho salmon and a suite of other listed species*
- *Ecological restoration of a diverse coastal resource*
- *Protection of critical transportation infrastructure along the coast*
- *Improved community and highway resilience in the face of climate change and sea level rise*
- *Improved public coastal access*
- *Job creation to support economic recovery*



Focal Fish and Wildlife Species

The Scotts Creek lagoon and marsh ecosystem provides a mosaic of critical habitat for a variety of native biota. It supports Coho salmon and steelhead trout which are both listed as “endangered” and “threatened” respectively. It is also critical habitat for red legged frogs, western pond turtles, tidewater gobies, and other sensitive wildlife, including snowy plovers, that use the beach areas.



California Red-Legged Frog



Western Pond Turtle



Tidewater Goby



Snowy Plover



Coho salmon

PROJECT NEED & BACKGROUND

Scotts Creek is a small coastal watershed north of the unincorporated town of Davenport along Highway 1 in northern Santa Cruz County, CA. It is among the most biologically significant watersheds in the Central Coast region and in all of California, and has been a focal point of research on natural resource management, hydrology, and fisheries for decades. The natural function of the watershed has been degraded due to historic land use changes, most notably from the construction of the Highway 1 bridge over Scotts Creek. This has resulted in extensive filling of the historic estuary and significant alterations to the breaching dynamics of the lagoon. Additionally, the bridge is past its useful life span and the highway corridor is precariously positioned in relation to projected impacts from sea level rise and coastal erosion.

To address impacts to this critical coastal wetland and aging infrastructure, The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCDSCC), the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), Caltrans District 5, along with other state and federal resource agencies, are collaborating to develop a strategy to address the public access, conservation, and climate change resiliency of the Scotts Creek estuary. Planning and design phases of this project have been funded through leveraging of local and other grant funds to obtain additional resources including Proposition 1 and 68 grants from the California State Coastal Conservancy and California Department of Fish and Wildlife.



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ALIGNMENT WITH STATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES

The Scotts Creek Coastal Resiliency Project supports state and national priorities for ecosystem and infrastructure resilience:

- Highlighted as NOAA's #1 priority for Central Coast Coho salmon recovery (Nationwide Species in the Spotlight: 2016-2020)
- The Highway 1 bridge over Scotts Creek is a Tier 1 priority in the CalTrans 2021 District 5 Climate Adaptation Priorities report
- The project directly addresses the California Water Action Plan strategy that calls for implementing at least 10 large-scale habitat projects along the California coast to restore ecological health and natural system connectivity.
- The project addresses several strategies of the 2018 Safeguarding California Plan, including
 - ⇒ Climate risk considerations be incorporated into state infrastructure planning
 - ⇒ Encourage innovative design of new structures/infrastructure in areas vulnerable to sea level rise
- Coastal lagoons like Scotts Creek are a target conservation area for the Central Coast in the 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan
- Aligned with AB 1282 and the AB1282 Transportation Permitting Task Force's 2019 Final Report
- Aligned with the California Natural Resource Agency's Cutting Green Tape Initiative

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

- MOU to work jointly on design, funding, and implementation, signed in 2013 by Caltrans, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, and landowners
- Broad and long-standing support from all relevant resource and transportation agencies that form the project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Collaborated with the TAC to build consensus around the state of the science for this system focused on understanding ecosystem processes, constraints, opportunities and development of a restoration concept that integrates this science into an actionable plan (March 2015)
- Completed 60% engineering designs and associated technical studies for the ecological restoration components of the project (November 2020)
- Secured funding to complete Project Initiation Document that will result in CEQA-ready integrated bridge and restoration project designs and project costs (anticipated August 2021)
- Funding for technical studies and design work secured to-date from a broad range of state, federal, and local partners including: Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, CalTrans, NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Santa Cruz County RTC.

CALL TO ACTION

The Scotts Creek Coastal Resiliency Project is at a critical juncture and is seeking champions to move the project through the remaining stages of

CEQA and Environmental Review
100% Designs and Permits
Construction

Join us in advancing a 21st century transportation corridor centered on climate change resiliency and ecological function



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Technical Advisory Committee

California Polytechnic State University
CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
National Marine Fisheries Service
CA Coastal Commission
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Central Coast RWQCB
CA State Coastal Conservancy
County Dept of Public Works
County Dept of Environmental Health
County Parks Dept
Local biological experts
RCD
NOAA
Caltrans
RTC