
CASTROVILLE COMMUNITY OUTREACH

SUMMARY REPORT

Water Quality Enhancement of the Tembladero Slough
and Public Access for the Community of Castroville.



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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines and reports on community outreach efforts conducted as Phase 1 of the “Water Quality Enhancement for the Tembladero Slough and Public Access for the Community of Castroville Project.” This is a multi-phase watershed coordination and wetland restoration project targeted to the lower Gabilan watershed and funded through Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) implementation funds. Phase 1 focuses on watershed coordination with stakeholders and outreach with the community. These efforts have helped identify project sites for the creation or enhancement of wetlands for habitat, water quality improvements, and when feasible supporting public access values, while meeting the needs of the regional stakeholders.

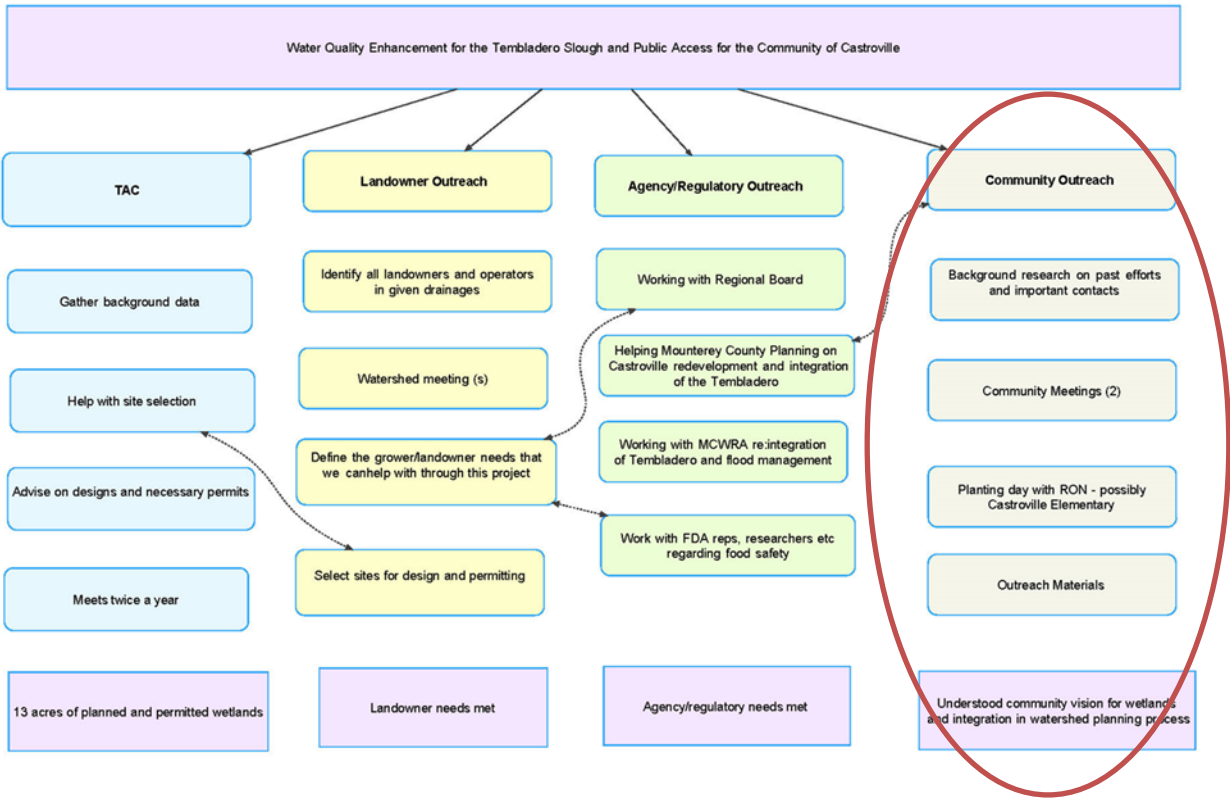


FIGURE 1. PHASES OF PROJECT ENTITLED WATER QUALITY ENHANCMENT AND PUBLIC ACCESS FOR THE COMMUNITY OF CASTROVILLE

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Community outreach was integrated into this phase because community participation will help determine the project components most important to the community, and community excitement and engagement will ensure long-term success of projects. Through public meetings, select one-on-one discussions, and a community survey, CCWG worked with community members and surrounding landowners to help develop a vision for future projects. This included identifying and designing proposed areas of open space for public recreation and identifying new opportunities for safe and enjoyable public access along parts of the Tembladero Slough.

PROJECT AREA

Castroville is an unincorporated community in North Monterey County with a population just under 6,500 and a population density of 6,100 people per square mile, of which approximately 90% are Hispanic (Figure 2). The community is an urban center in the middle of a predominantly agricultural landscape. Due in part to this surrounding agriculture, the water that flows adjacent to Castroville in the Tembladero Slough, Espinosa Slough and other drainage ditches is some of the most polluted water in the State. There is virtually no green open space for the residents either.

Castroville lies within the Gabilan watershed (also referred to as the Reclamation Ditch Watershed). The Gabilan Watershed drains the Gabilan Range above the City of Salinas through the rich agriculture “Salad Bowl” of the Salinas Valley, through the urban area of the Cities of Salinas and Castroville, and discharges through the Tembladero Slough into Moss Landing Harbor, the Elkhorn Slough, and ultimately the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The wetlands within the Gabilan Watershed perform an array of important functions such as flood attenuation, water filtration, and provision of wildlife habitat.

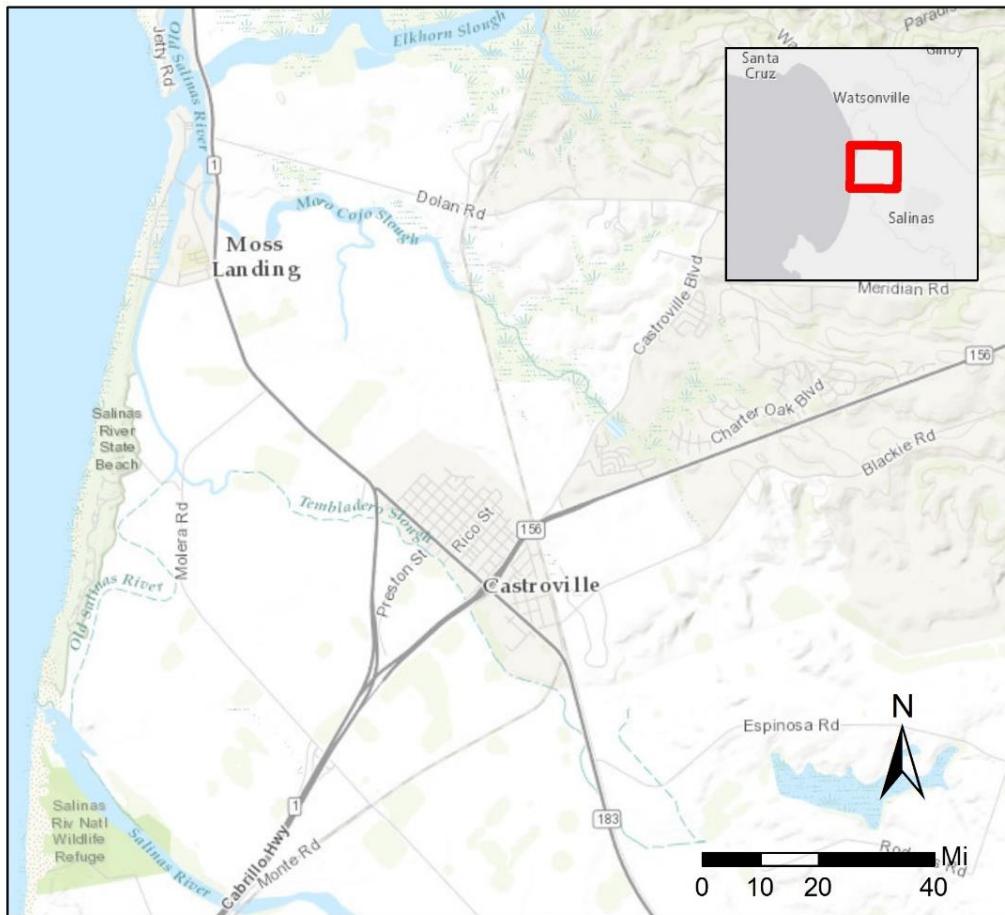


FIGURE 2. COMMUNITY OF CASTROVILLE IN MONTEREY COUNTY

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS

INFORMATION GATHERING

In early 2014, CCWG's outreach coordinator met with several community members and reviewed previous outreach efforts conducted in Castroville. She did background information gathering and met with individuals to become more familiar with: 1) the community, 2) key people to get involved in the process, and 3) past outreach and coordination efforts, such as efforts conducted during the development of the Castroville Community Plan.

MEETING WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

In March of 2014, CCWG staff met with a group of Castroville community leaders, including members from the School District, the Public Library, the North Monterey County Parks and Recreation District, the Castroville Community Services District, the County Planning Department, and the Castroville Rotary Club. During this meeting CCWG staff introduced themselves, the mission of the organization, the types of wetland projects that have previously been completed, and goals of this project. Meeting participants were informed about the IRWM project and the outreach efforts CCWG would be conducting with the community. CCWG staff requested advice on the best way to engage with the community for outreach efforts, and began to discuss the types of projects the leaders see as being beneficial for their community.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Two public meetings were held to help gather input from community members on future water quality, public access, and open space project efforts in the region. The first meeting in March of 2014 provided an opportunity for CCWG to introduce the organization, the types of projects they work on in the area, discuss issues that the community faces in regards to water quality, public access, and open space, and gather input from community members on the types of projects they would like to see in their community.

The second community meeting, held in March of 2015, discussed the outcome of the previous public meeting, results of the community survey that was administered the previous year, and allowed time for community members to further develop ideas from the previous meeting.

Both meetings were held on weekday evenings at the Castroville Community Services District Office, which is centrally located within Castroville. Spanish language translators were present to facilitate engagement with Spanish-speaking community members. Meetings were advertised through email, flyer postings around Castroville, classes at North Monterey County High School, and through the local radio station's (KUSP) Land Use Report and Blog.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER TO OUTLINE THEIR VISION FOR CASTROVILLE.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

CCWG staff, in partnership with staff from the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District, designed a public opinion survey. The survey included knowledge based questions about wetlands and water quality issues as well as opinion based questions to gather input from community members on the types of issues they care most about and the types of projects they would like to see prioritized. The survey was administered during public meetings, community presentations, through an online link, and through North Monterey County High School (NMCHS). Both staff and high school science students at NMCHS took the survey. The survey was provided in both English and Spanish.

PRESENTATIONS

Additional outreach efforts included a presentation to the Castroville Rotary Club in January of 2015, and presentations to North Monterey County Slough Crew Club in Fall of 2015 about watershed health, focusing on the waterways around Castroville, including the Moro Cojo Slough, Tembladero Slough, Castroville Slough, Elkhorn Slough, and Old Salinas River Channel. Through a separate grant, these students were also taken on field trips to learn about wetland health and water quality monitoring strategies.

COMMUNITY PLANTING DAY

CCWG staff and interns from the California Conservation Corps “Watershed Stewards Program” organized a public planting day on January 29, 2017 at the newly created wetland along Castroville Slough to help engage the public in a local wetland restoration project that will help improve water quality (Figure 3).



FIGURE 3. RESTORATION SITE NEXT TO THE CASTROVILLE SLOUGH FOR VOLUNTEER PLANTING DAY

RESULTS OF OUTREACH

COMMUNITY LEADERS MEETING

Identified Challenges and Opportunities for Improvement

- No coastal access: Castroville is isolated by Hwy 1, Hwy 156, and train tracks
- Limited public access to adjacent waterways
- Poor water quality
- Lack of publicly accessible open space
- Degraded waterways
- Flooding

Projects Ideas and Discussion

- New Trails: People use the bike trail for exercise and commuting, but the community needs to have safe and scenic walkways. A trail to the high school from town would be very valuable. Many students walk or take their bikes to the high school which is a big safety problem without safe trails.
- Education and engagement should be a large component of projects.
 - Involve schools with projects: Watsonville Wetlands Watch provides an excellent example of integrating education with wetland restoration
 - Provide community workshops involving planting
 - Include more community members for taking ownership of their local waterways and open spaces
 - Specific groups to engage: soccer teams could adopt an area that gave them access to a soccer field. This would help engage young men and woman. CHISPA could also be another way to get community involved.
- Potential locations for open space or public recreation:
 - The Torres property-privately owned (located near the middle school).
 - Hambi property (vacant lot near Hwy 156)
- Natividad Creek Park serves as a good model for integrating sports fields, riparian habitat, and flood management.
- Increased recreational space within the community will provide youth with more opportunities to engage in recreational activities and help keep them out of trouble.
- Challenges:
 - Long-term maintenance of open space areas
 - Permitting within the Coastal Zone
 - Increased need for housing, which limits space
 - Funding

- Potential funding sources for new open space and public access areas:
 - Grants
 - Tax measure: Castroville Community Services District has open space authority but would need funding
 - Public use fee to access open space (parking, field, or trail fee)

Outreach Process Discussion

- When is the best time to have public meetings?
 - Evenings or weekends. It is hard for people to take time off work to go to meetings in the middle of the day. If doing several meetings one could be on a weekday evening and one on the weekend.
- Best way to spread word?
 - The chamber of commerce can send out notification emails. Also, advertise through the library and Parks and Recreation District.

COMMUNITY/PUBLIC MEETING RESULTS

In total, approximately 25 members of the public attended the community meetings held in July of 2014 and March of 2015. These meetings provided CCWG an opportunity to introduce ourselves to attending community members and inform them about the types of projects CCWG works on in the area. Most importantly, these meetings allowed community members to inform CCWG staff about the issues their community faces in terms of water quality, lack of open space and recreation and the types of projects they see as priorities. Through several activities, including a mapping activity and drawing activity (see Figure 4), community members provided CCWG with a vision of how they would like to improve certain aspects of their community (Figures 5 and 6).

Summary of Key Ideas

- Habitat Ponds
- Walking trails next to sloughs
- General habitat enhancement
- Running trails
- Soccer fields
- Publicly accessible open space
- Environmental education programs
- Interpretive signage
- Small parks

Volunteer Opportunities

- Planting Days at restoration sites
- Clean-up Days along waterways
- Donations for Restoration Projects

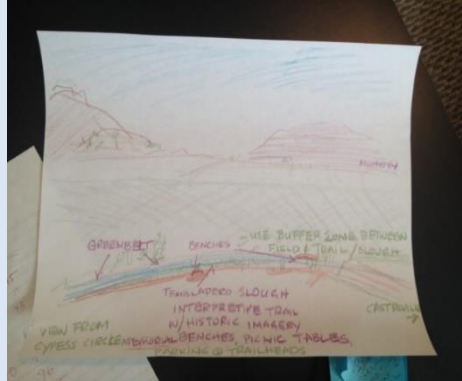


FIGURE 4. COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHARE THEIR VISION FOR CASTROVILLE THROUGH MAPPING AND DRAWING

CASTROVILLE COMMUNITY MAP- PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES
MAP 1

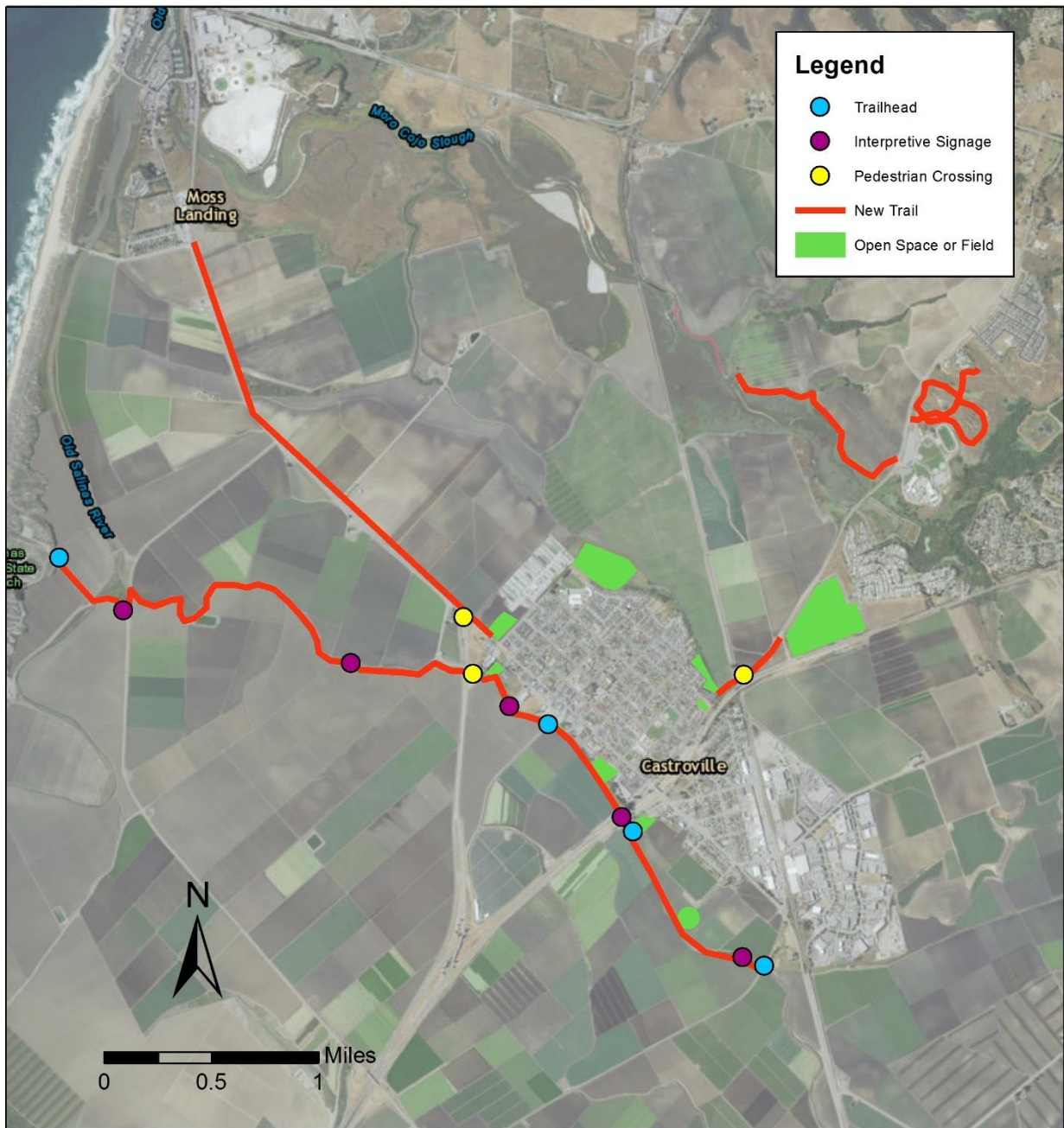


FIGURE 5. OUTPUT OF MAPPING ACITIVITY, FOCUS ON POTENTIAL TRAIL AND OPEN SPACE LOCATIONS

CASTROVILLE COMMUNITY MAP- PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES
MAP 2

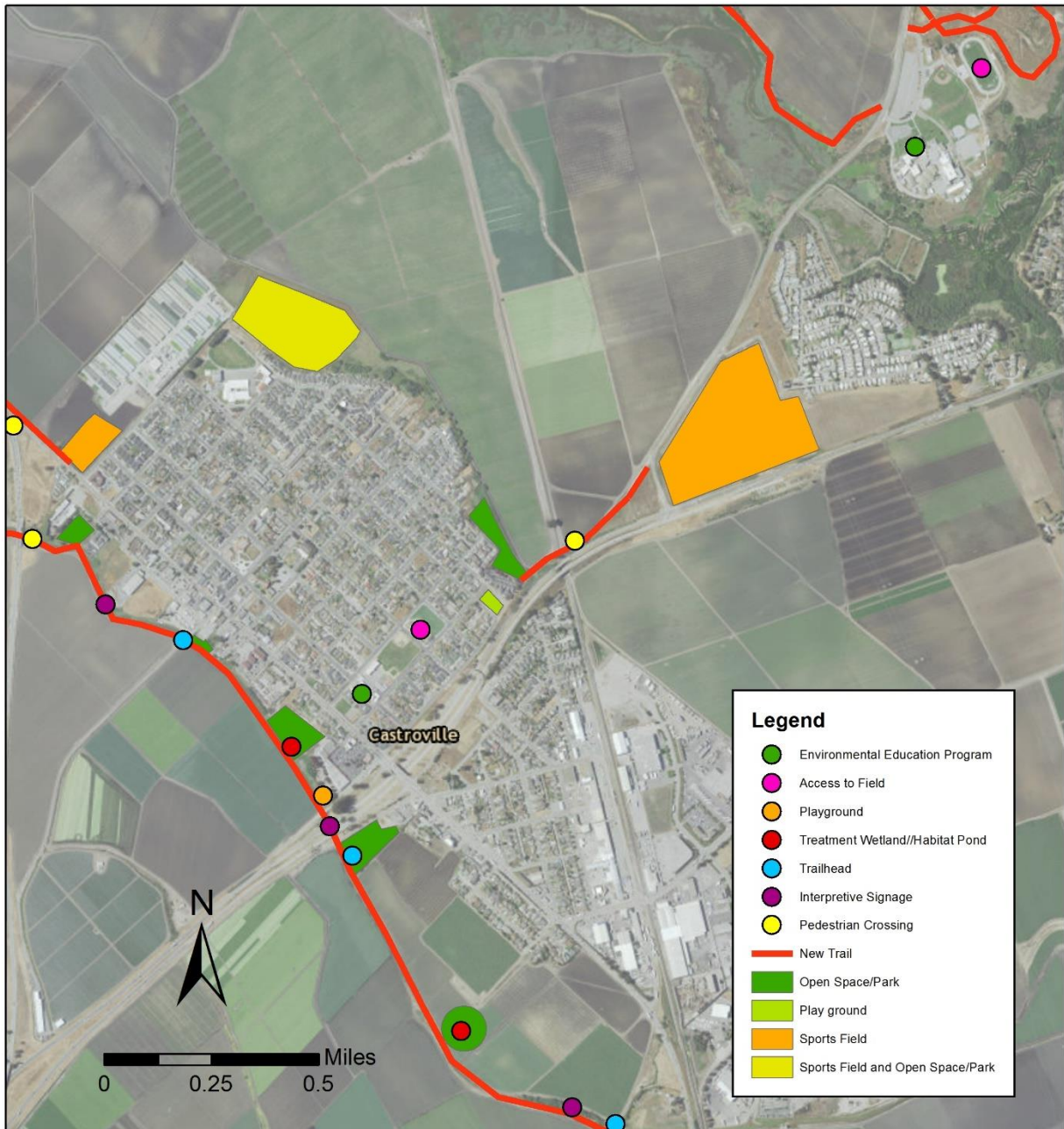
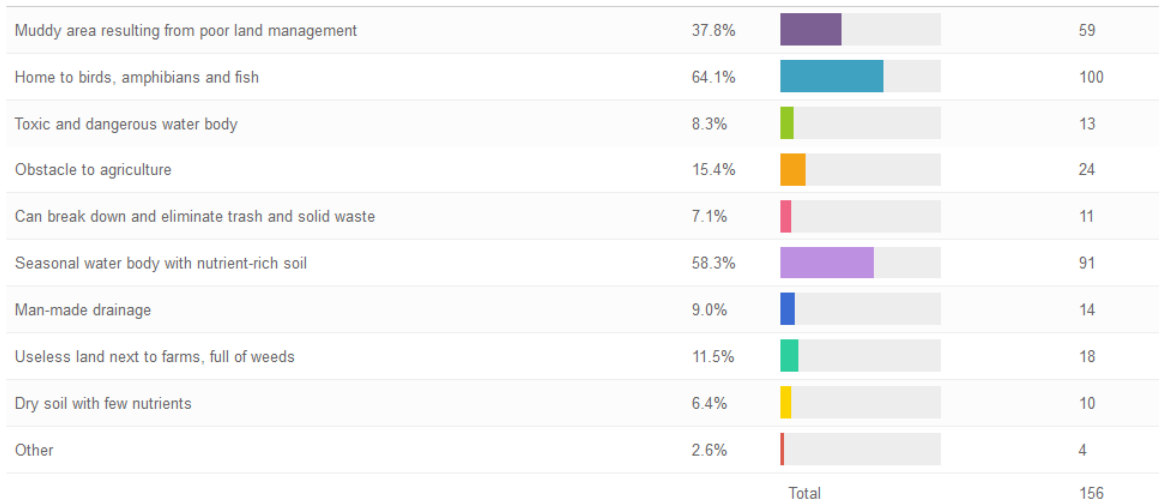


FIGURE 6. OUTPUT OF MAPPING ACTIVITY, FOCUS ON OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN TOWN

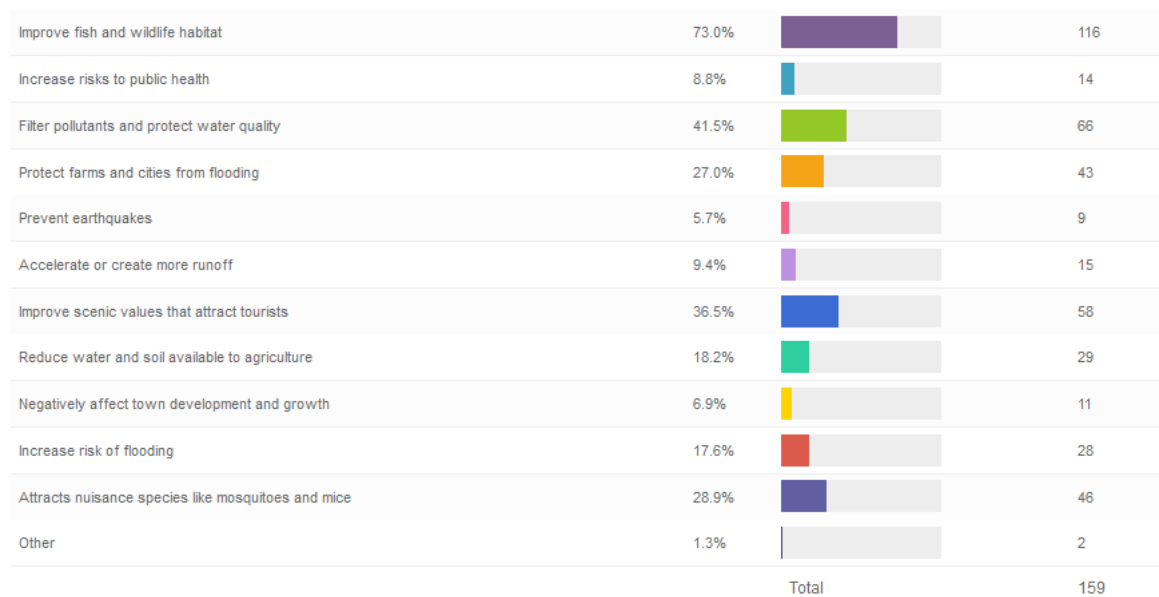
SURVEY RESULTS

Knowledge based questions:

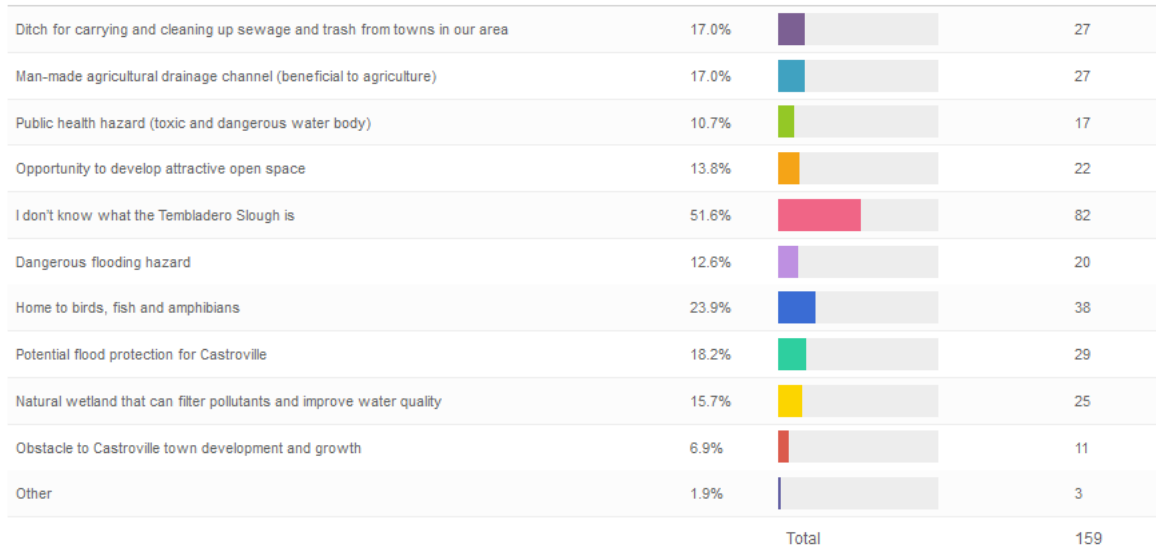
1. Which of the following describes a wetland?



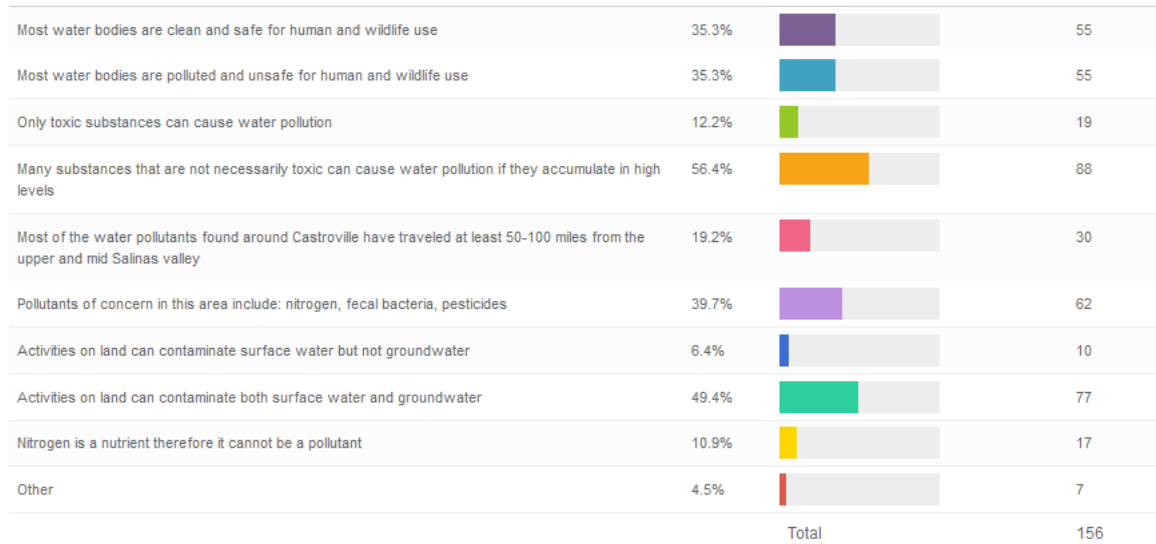
2. Which of the following can result from restoring and enlarging wetland areas?

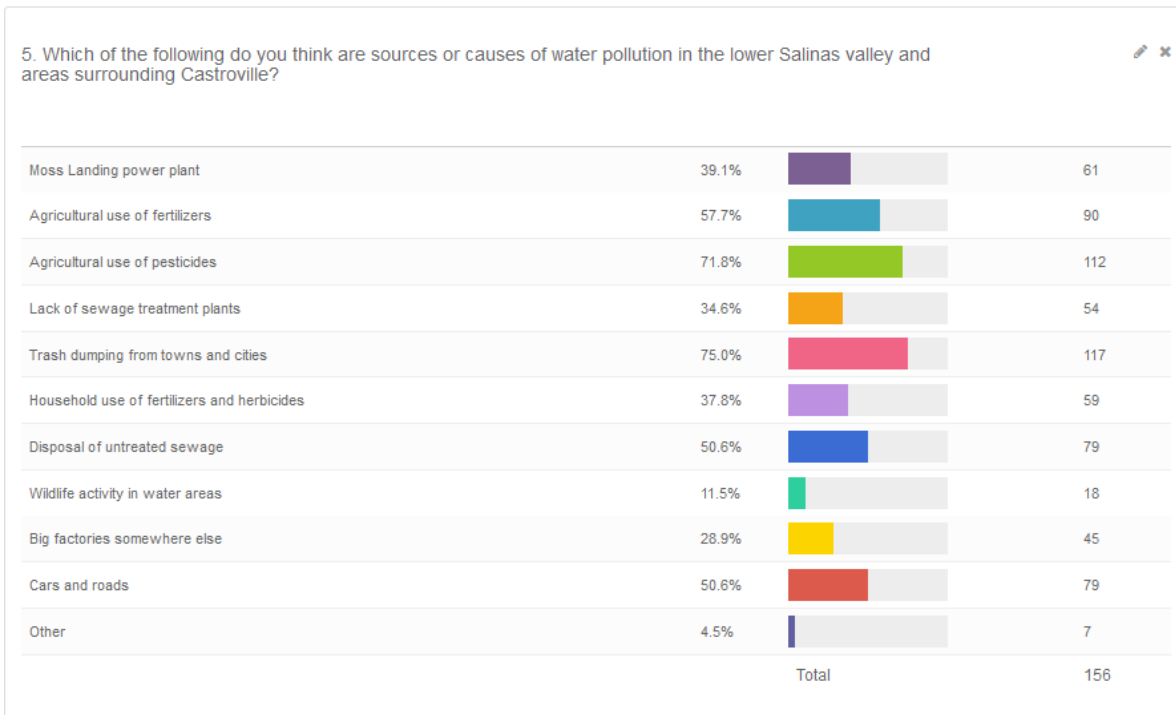


3. How would you describe the Tembladero slough (drainage that parallels south side of town)?

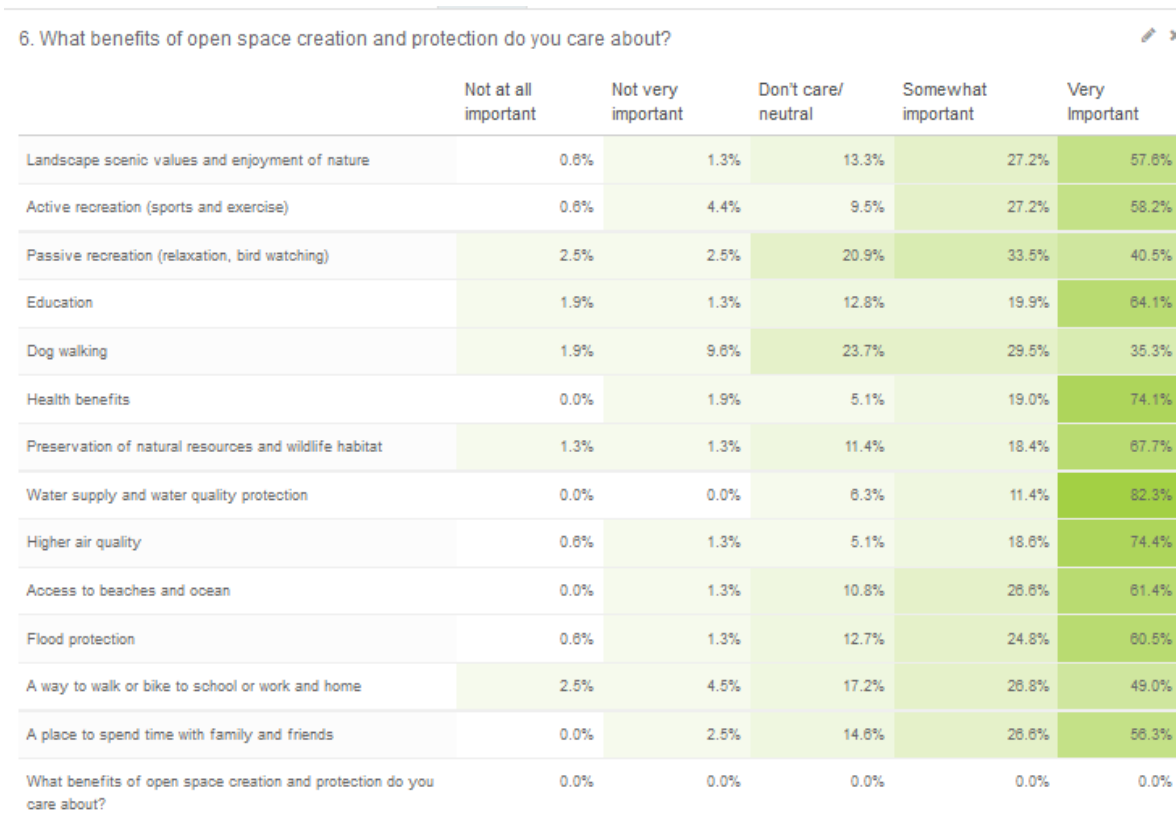


4. Which of the following statements do you think are TRUE of water quality in the lower Salinas Valley and Castroville surrounding areas?





Opinion Based Questions:



7. How important is it for you to have adequate access to the following?



	Not at all important	Not very important	Don't care/neutral	Somewhat important	Very Important
Bike and walking trails	5.1%	4.5%	10.8%	33.1%	46.5%
The ocean	0.8%	3.2%	9.7%	24.5%	61.9%
Wetlands	2.8%	3.9%	26.5%	37.4%	29.7%
Community gardens	4.5%	8.3%	22.3%	31.8%	33.1%
Park space	0.8%	5.1%	17.2%	33.1%	43.9%
Wildlife education and appreciation opportunities	3.2%	2.5%	17.8%	31.2%	45.2%
Soccer/sports fields	5.7%	3.2%	12.7%	23.6%	54.8%
Clean water bodies for human consumption	0.8%	1.3%	5.7%	17.2%	75.2%
Clean water bodies for recreational use	1.9%	0.6%	7.7%	32.1%	57.7%

8. What do you think are the main barriers to creating and maintaining publicly accessible open space in Castroville?

	Not a Barrier	Minor Barrier	Major Barrier
Public safety	21.1%	46.7%	32.2%
Pollution	10.7%	45.3%	44.0%
Maintenance costs	3.3%	42.5%	54.2%
Maintenance staff	6.6%	49.7%	43.7%
Vandalism	10.5%	41.8%	47.7%
Lack of community support	14.5%	40.1%	45.4%
Lack of ideas	32.2%	40.1%	27.6%
Lack of space	28.8%	34.6%	36.6%
Food safety	31.3%	34.0%	34.7%
Political conflict	14.7%	51.3%	34.0%
Bureaucracy	19.3%	44.7%	36.0%

9. If you had to prioritize different components of a wetland restoration project in Castroville, how would you rank the following benefits? (1=most important, 8= least important)



	Score*	Overall Rank
Improve water quality	703	1
Improve habitat for birds and amphibians	623	2
Create education opportunities linked to school and after-school programs	586	3
Reduce risk of catastrophic flooding	572	4
Create trails to increase public access to sloughs, ocean, and/or other parks	549	5
Remove invasive weeds and plants that threaten the health of natural areas	460	6
Create small public park for use with family and friends	437	7

Total Respondents 122

*Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is the sum of all weighted rank counts.

Survey Results Summary

- Majority of survey participants defined a wetland in a positive way such as: a wetland is a: “Home to birds, amphibians, and fish” or a “Seasonal water body with nutrient-rich soil.” However, over 35% of survey participants defined a wetland as a “muddy area resulting from poor land management.”
- More than 50% of survey participants responded that they did not know what the Tembladero Slough is, even though it runs adjacent to Castroville.
- Majority of survey participants understand that there is a water quality problem in the watershed and that nutrients and pesticides used on agricultural land is one of the main factors.
- Survey participants identified “Water supply and water quality protection” as the open space creation and protection benefit they care about most.
- When asked, “How important is it for you to have adequate access to the following,” “Clean water bodies for human consumption” and “the ocean” were ranked as the most important.
- Many barriers were identified when asked: “What do you think the main barriers are to creating and maintaining publicly accessible open space in Castroville,” however “maintenance” was identified as the largest barrier.
- “Improve water quality” was ranked as the most important component of wetland restoration projects in Castroville, followed by “Improve habitat for birds and wildlife,” and “Create educational programs linked to school and after-school programs.”

PLANTING DAY

At least 70 volunteers came to the Castroville Slough Restoration Site (located adjacent to Hwy 1 just north of Castroville) to help plant, mulch, water and weed native species on the morning of Sunday, January 29th (Figure 7). These volunteers consisted of families, students, restoration/conservation professionals, locals, and some who drove from hours away to help. Volunteers were introduced to the wetland and the function it plays in cleaning up the water quality of the Castroville Slough and the National Marine Sanctuary. An estimated 5,000 individual plants were either planted in soil or staged for work in the days following. Those species included lizard tail, bee plant, creeping wild rye, California sage, sagewort, Mexican rush, and many others. Local businesses and other conservation groups helped out by donating food and lending tools for the event.



FIGURE 7. VOLUNTEERS HELP PLANT NATIVES AT THE CASTROVILLE SLOUGH RESTORATION SITE

PLANS AND PROJECTS INFORMED BY OUTREACH PROCESS

The Castroville outreach process with community leaders, stakeholders, members of the public, and students helped inform a number of CCWG projects. These projects include:

Lower Gabilan Community Input Plan

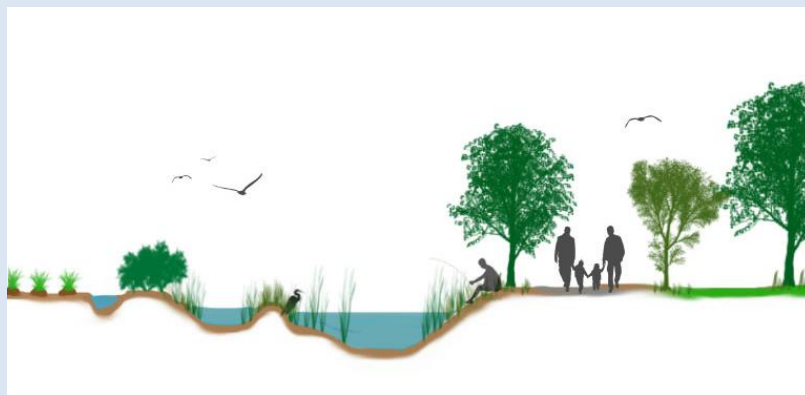
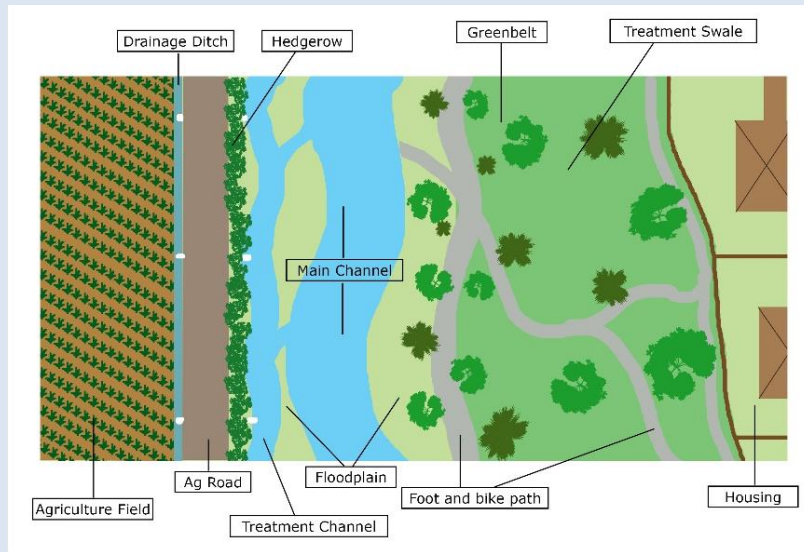
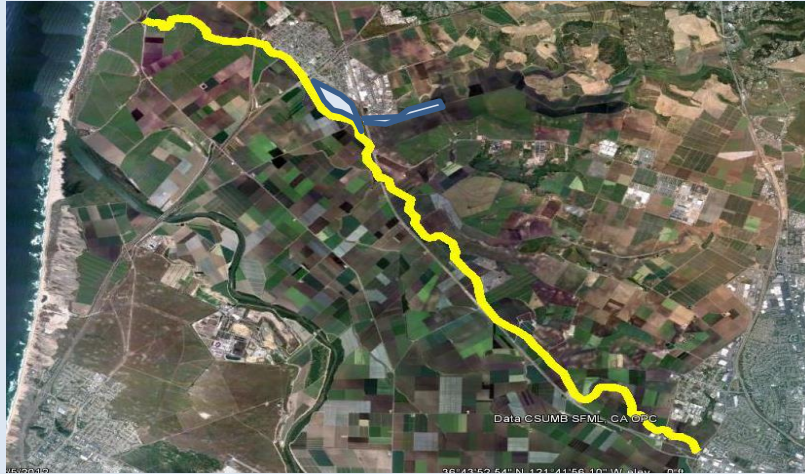
Through the community engagement process, several sites were identified for access to open space, places for pocket parks, wetland restoration, swimming opportunities, trails, and recreation fields. CCWG has worked to get funds for some of the components identified in this plan and will continue to develop project proposals that meet the goals and objectives of the community.

Salinas to the Sea (Planning Phase)

The Salinas Valley/Gabilan Watershed drainage system was originally designed in 1906 as a flood control system that reclaimed land for farming and urban development, to the detriment of environmental considerations. Today this historical management strategy is in direct contradiction with environmental laws and policies leading to legal challenges and regulatory actions. We have developed an alternative vision for how the current Rec Ditch/ Gabilan Watershed drainage system is managed that will increase flow capacity while also enhancing wetland habitat and water quality by creating a linear restoration project along the Reclamation Ditch between the City of Salinas and Moss Landing Beach (Salinas to the Sea). The project will help the County and farmers meet their water quality obligations in a cost-effective way. This enhanced drainage system will support flood control and environmental goals while also providing a recreational opportunity to north Monterey County residents who often feel isolated from their coast. Specifically, the project is designed to:

1. Expand the width of the current drainage system to include a maintenance road and water quality treatment areas along the entire 15.5 km of the system. Widen to at least 75m in width (15m maintained channel, 60m aquatic habitat, bike/maintenance path and upland transition/buffer).
2. Include a pedestrian/bicycle path, fencing and property boundary vegetation (blackberry, large bushes etc.) along the channel between the City of Salinas and Moss Landing Beach.
3. Include larger areas of wetland habitat/open space at opportunistic locations along the drainage.
4. Provide erosion control for the channel system through vegetation of a buffer on the slopes of the re-contoured drainage channel.
5. Greatly improve water quality of the Tembladero/Rec Ditch drainage channel as specified in the TMDL.
6. Integrate a wetland treatment system to biologically filter contaminants by expanding flood plain area adjacent to the channel.
7. Increase low flow retention time and water quality filtration through vegetation of the expanded flood plain.

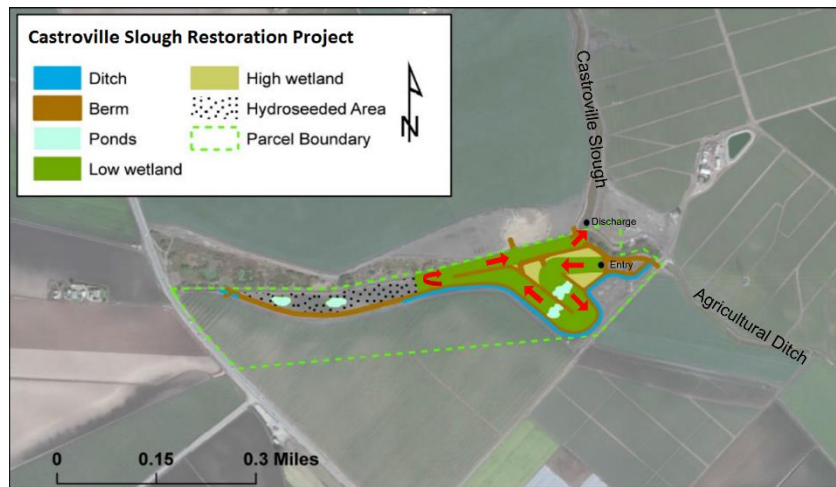
VISION FOR SALINAS TO THE SEA



Castroville Slough Restoration Project (Implemented)

Goals: Water Quality Improvements, Wetland Habitat Restoration

This project restored 18 acres of wetlands within the Castroville Slough adjacent to a previous 8 acre wetland restoration (1996). The land is owned by Pacific Gas and Electric. The project was a significant step towards full implementation of the Moro Cojo Management and Enhancement Plan as approved by the agriculture community, Monterey County, and the California Coastal Commission. This project stands as a highly visible partnership between farmers and resource managers to implement restoration efforts while treating nutrient loading of surface waters. The two sites constitute one of the largest wetland restoration projects in the Moro Cojo Slough.



RESTORATION PLAN FOR PG&E WETLAND CREATION SITE



A NEWLY CREATED WETLAND TO HELP IMPROVE WATER QUALITY AND PROVIDE HABITAT

Multi-media Treatment Bioreactor (Implemented)

Goals: Water Quality Improvements

This project involves the creation of a pretreatment laboratory to study various combinations of wood chip bioreactors and other water quality treatment mechanisms. The bioreactor will treat all low-flow runoff from approximately 600 acres of agricultural lands. The Multi-media Bioreactor will receive and treat drainage water flowing through the Castroville Slough drainage ditch that is pumped from the Castroville Lift Station into a forebay at the top of the Castroville Slough Restoration site (mentioned above). The water then flows through the Bioreactor and then out into the restoration site. The Bioreactor has 12 parallel treatment chambers, allowing for studies looking at the most effective ways to treat agricultural runoff in a confined space.



CCWG STAFF BUILDING THE MULTI-CHAMBER BIOREACTOR

North Monterey County High School Habitat Enhancement Project (Planned for 2017-2019)

Goals: Access to Open Space, Education, Awareness, Habitat Restoration, Low impact Recreation

The North Monterey County Amphibian Habitat Restoration Project seeks to restore wetlands and uplands and enhance habitat for Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders (SCLTS) at the 25-acre piece of land adjacent to the North Monterey County High School (NMCHS) campus located on Castroville Blvd, near Castroville in unincorporated Monterey County. This project will improve SCLTS breeding and upland habitat through wetland enhancement, improving upland condition and cover, and creating a corridor of microhabitats beneficial to the SCLTS. This project has been identified as high priority by USFWS and CDFW as the species is threatened with extirpation in this area. The restoration project design was facilitated by the Central Coast Wetlands Group (CCWG) and developed in consultation with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that included staff from USFWS, CDFW and the Monterey and Santa Cruz RCDs. Project objectives include:

- Enhance breeding pond habitat through the removal of select vegetation to increase diversity and minimal earth moving to slightly enlarge one of the ponds.

- Increase terrestrial (riparian and upland) habitat cover and quality through strategic plant removal and revegetation with native riparian trees and shrubs, oak woodland species, and enhancing existing native grassland.
- Install one-mile trail system to provide low impact recreational and educational opportunities to students and the public while protecting sensitive habitat. Interpretive signs along the trail will illustrate the need and benefits of wetlands and provide information about the life history of the SCLTS and the importance of different types of wetland and upland habitat. The trail system will have three access points (two that connect to community trails and one connected to the high school campus).
- Education and Outreach: This project provides an opportunity for teachers to incorporate lessons on environmental stewardship into their classes. This site will enable high school students to be involved in a habitat enhancement project through planting days, study of wetlands and uplands, and investigation of the roles these habitats play for endangered species.



NORTH MONTEREY COUNTY HABITAT ENHANCEMENT SITE

Environmental Education Program at North Monterey County High School (partially funded and implemented)

Goals: Education, Awareness, Access to Open Space, Stewardship

NMCHS is committed to working with partners to educate students and the community on environmental stewardship. Currently, students have very limited opportunity to interact with the natural resources surrounding their campus and community. The School District is working to develop programs with their partners so that every one of their students will have the opportunity to experience and teach their families about environmental stewardship, understand and see the rich resources in their community, and explain how the watershed is essential to the community.

With the Habitat Enhancement Project (description above) adjacent to the high school, the District is excited about the many opportunities their students will have to continue to develop their environmental literacy. Specifically, they envision students going on-site to learn about water quality testing, native plants, habitat restoration, and helping to develop the public signs that can help lead visitors through the public trails and highlight the unique characteristics of the land that make it an ideal habitat for the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander. At the elementary level, students would be able to take field trips and learn about the importance of environmental stewardship. All of the elementary schools have been involved in the Ocean Plastics Pollution Summit and have conducted many presentations and developed public service announcements on the impact of plastics in our environment. In addition, the District is working in partnership with the Elkhorn Slough Foundation to develop a Journalism class focused on environmental stewardship advocacy at the middle school. At North Monterey County High School, there has been an increased interest in the Slough Crew, the environmental stewardship club, as students participate in activities and field trips that afford them the opportunity to advocate for environmental stewardship and experience the beauty of our area. This Habitat Enhancement Project would provide a hands-on outdoor classroom environment for students to actively participate in environmental stewardship through research, restoration projects, and exploring how restoration projects can impact the wildlife in the area.



STUDENTS AT NORTH MONTEREY COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL LEARN ABOUT WATER QUALITY AND NATIVE PLANTS

Elementary School Greenhouse (Planned)

Goals: Education, Restoration

Build a greenhouse at Castroville Elementary School to help engage youth in environmental stewardship. Students will have the opportunity to grow native plants to be installed at local restoration projects.