

Watershed Conservation

WATERSHED: all of the land and subsurface groundwater that drains to a particular point along a stream, river, or wetland

Watersheds provide one of the most critical natural resources for humankind—water



PHOTOS, TOP TO BOTTOM:
SUNSET IN SCOTT CREEK WATERSHED
WATSONVILLE SLOUGHS
VIEW OF SOQUEL CREEK WATERSHED
SCOTT CREEK WATERSHED

Introduction

Everyone lives in a watershed. A watershed is all the land that drains to a distinct stream, river or wetland. All Santa Cruz County watersheds drain to Monterey Bay and the Pacific Ocean.

This display provides information about watersheds and local stream habitat. It also describes current efforts of the County of Santa Cruz and its partners to conserve and restore local watersheds and stream habitat.

Major watersheds in Santa Cruz County include the San Lorenzo River, Waddell, Scott, Soquel and Aptos Creeks, and the Corralitos, Salsipuedes, and Watsonville Sloughs subbasins of the Pajaro River. Smaller watersheds in the County include Arana Gulch, Rodeo Gulch and the North Coast streams—San Vicente, Liddell, Laguna, Baldwin and Wilder Creeks.

Watershed Assessments

In the past five years, watershed assessments have been completed for seven local watersheds: Scott Creek, San Lorenzo River, Arana Gulch, Soquel Creek, Aptos Creek, Lower Pajaro Watershed, and Watsonville Sloughs. Local and state agencies including the California Department of Fish and Game and the Coastal Conservancy provided funding for these assessments.

Each watershed assessment evaluates ecosystem health and potential impacts to sensitive species. With the exception of Watsonville Sloughs, the watershed assessments focus on factors that limit steelhead and coho salmon populations. Each plan identifies priority projects to improve habitat conditions for native plants, fish, and wildlife.

Several watershed assessments are posted at www.rcdsantacruz.org, website for the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County.

Photography: Russ White (Scott Creek sunset); Gary Kittleson (Watsonville Slough); Kristen Kittleson (Soquel, Scott and San Lorenzo Watersheds, Corralitos Creek); Jennifer Proudfoot (STEP). Watershed Cruzin' graphic by Mary Sievert. Map by County of Santa Cruz GIS



Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP)

The County has been a key participant in a unique program to promote watershed conservation in Santa Cruz County: the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP). IWRP is a voluntary, multi-agency program initiated by the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County and the California Coastal Conservancy in 2004 to develop and implement high priority projects identified in the various watershed assessments. IWRP is a collaborative approach to restoration that has served as a model for state programs.

Funding

Funding for watershed conservation comes from a mix of local, state and federal funding programs, including voter approved bonds (Proposition 40 and 50) administered by the State Water Resources Control Board, California Coastal Conservancy and California Department of Fish and Game. The County of Santa Cruz supports staff to manage programs and grant funded projects.

FishNet 4C—The Fishery Network of the Central California Coastal Counties (www.fishnet4c.org)

The County of Santa Cruz is a member of FishNet 4C, a county-based salmonid protection and restoration program that brings together the six California Coastal Counties of Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Monterey. FishNet 4C facilitates local actions through regional studies, information sharing, and training programs. The County of Santa Cruz adopted a FishNet 4C Implementation Plan that describes projects and programs to promote the conservation of steelhead and coho salmon. County departments of Planning, Public Works, Environmental Health, and Parks, Open Space and Cultural Resources implement the plan.



CORRALITOS CREEK

VIEW OF SAN LORENZO WATERSHED

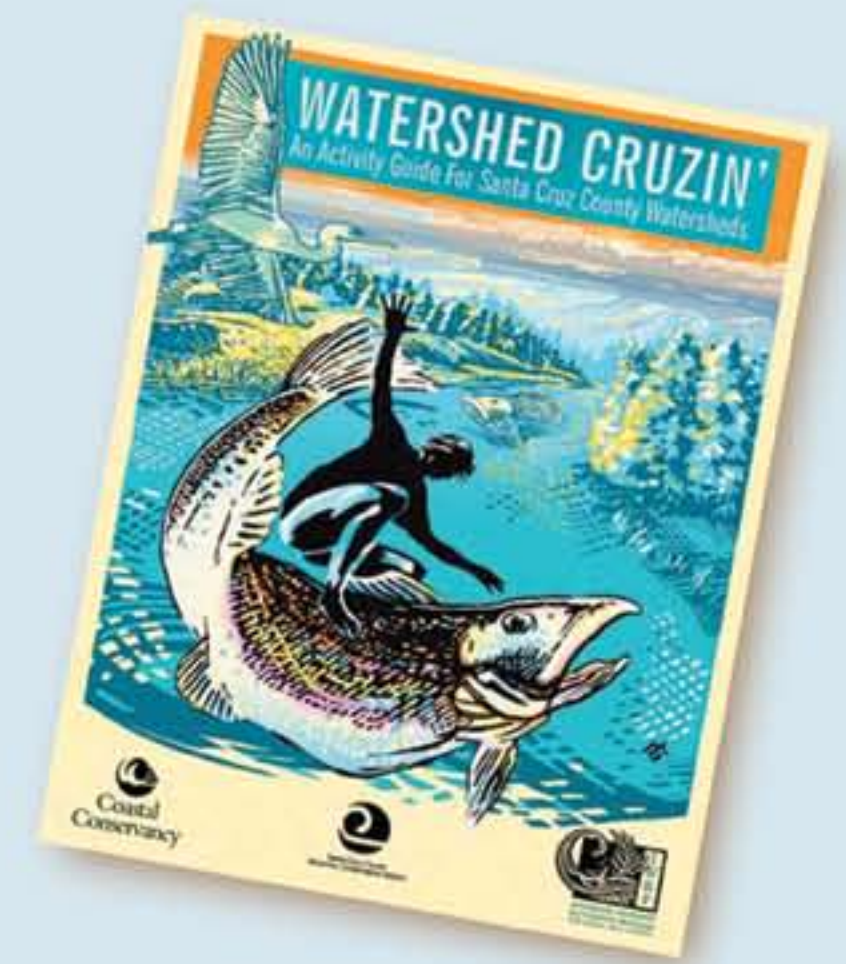
Planning Department

The Planning Department is a key player in county watershed conservation efforts. Numerous land use policies, ordinances and regulations protect water supply, water quality and stream habitat. For example, the Riparian Corridor and Wetlands Protection, Erosion Control and Grading Ordinances help protect water quality and stream habitat while the Sensitive Habitat Ordinance protects unique plant communities and sensitive species. The Planning Department protects water supply through General Plan policies and programs and zoning restrictions for groundwater recharge areas, least disturbed watersheds and water supply watersheds.

The Planning Department provides permits and environmental review for fish passage and habitat restoration projects and partnered with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County to develop a permit coordination program for restoration projects on private lands.

Watershed Education

Understanding watersheds is key to their protection, and many local schools are teaching the next generation about their importance. The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County has produced a watershed curriculum called Watershed Cruzin', the San Lorenzo Valley High School has a watershed academy program, and the Monterey Bay Salmon and Trout Project supports the Salmon and Trout Education Program (STEP).



THE STEP PROGRAM INCLUDES HATCHING STEELHEAD EGGS IN THE CLASSROOM



A STUDENT LOOKS FOR JUVENILE STEELHEAD IN FALL CREEK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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