

Water Quality Report Card

Regional Water Board: Central Coast, Region 3

Beneficial Uses Affected: Warm Freshwater Habitat, Cold Freshwater Habitat, Municipal and Domestic Supply, Groundwater Recharge, Agricultural Supply

Implemented Through: Agricultural Order, General Permit for Phase II regulated MS4s, one or more other mechanisms (such as NPDES permit, WDR permit, or policy)

Effective Date: 7/12/2016

Attainment Date: 7/12/2026

Nitrate in Pajaro River

STATUS

Conditions Improving

Pollutant Type:

Nonpoint Source

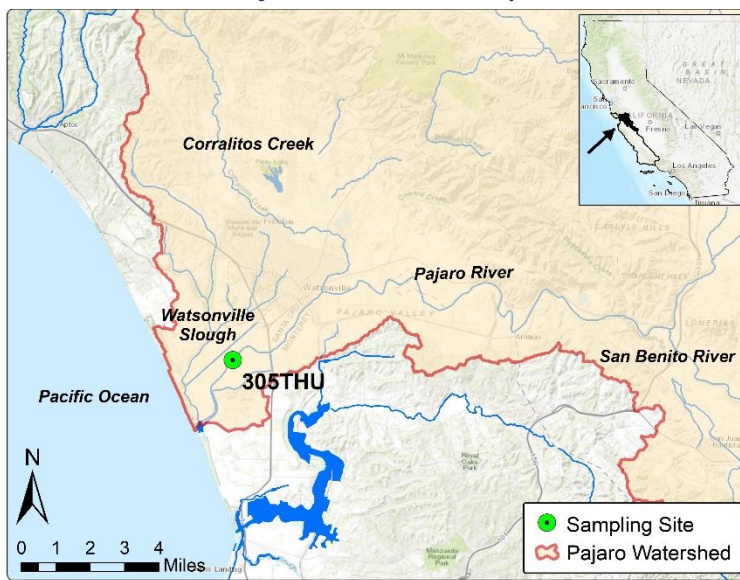
Pollutant Source:

Irrigated crop production
Grazing
Naturally occurring

Water Quality Improvement Strategy

The Pajaro River is in the Pajaro River Basin (about 1,300 square miles) in parts of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey counties. The Pajaro River and its tributaries flow almost entirely through grazing land and farmland before draining into Monterey Bay. Some water bodies in the Pajaro River Basin are on the US EPA Clean Water Act 303(d) list of impaired waters for exceedances of Basin Plan water quality objectives for nitrate (nitrate as N), including the narrative water quality objective for biostimulatory substances, and numeric objectives for agricultural supply, municipal and domestic supply, and groundwater recharge. The [Pajaro River Nutrients TMDL](#) was adopted by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board) in 2015 and identifies irrigated crop production as the primary source of nitrate in the watershed. The TMDL establishes a target equal to the existing Basin plan water quality objective of 10 mg/L N for municipal and groundwater uses, and a year-round watershed specific numeric target of 5.7 mg/L N for the protection of aquatic life beneficial uses. The TMDL is implemented through the [Agricultural Order](#).

Pajaro River Basin Map



Water Quality Outcomes

- The RCD of Santa Cruz County has collaborated with landowners and numerous partners to implement management measures in the watershed for over two decades.
- Since the TMDL effective date, there has been a slight improvement in water quality.
- Wet season targets are being met.
- Outcomes have been achieved through non-regulatory actions.

TMDL Waste Load Allocations/Load Allocations ¹

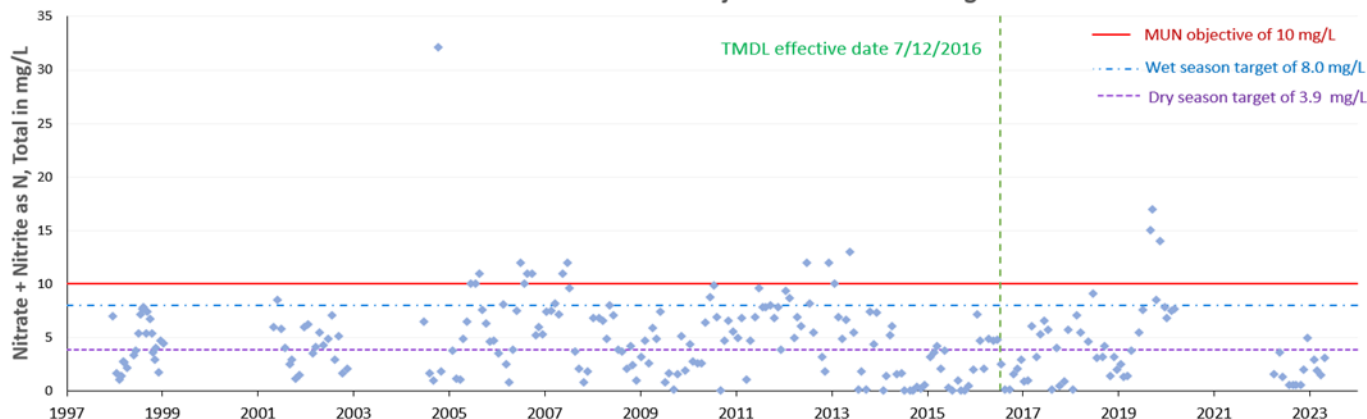
Site ID	Nitrate as N (mg/L) Aquatic Habitat	Nitrate as N (mg/L) Human Health
305THU	3.9 (dry season) 8.0 (wet season)	10 (year-round)

¹ Table information summarized from Table 8-3 in the Pajaro River Basin Nutrients TMDL [Project Report](#)

² More data available at the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program's (CCAMP) online [Data Navigator](#)

Water Quality ²

Nitrate Concentrations in Pajaro River at Monitoring Station 305THU



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