

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 5-6, 2020

Prepared on February 9, 2020

ITEM NUMBER: 8

SUBJECT: Summary of Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County Grant Implementation and Consideration of Proposed Resolution No. R3-2020-0027 Acknowledging Efforts and Outcomes

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KEY INFORMATION

Location: Santa Cruz County

ACTION: Information/Discussion and Adoption of a Board Resolution Acknowledging the RCDSCC

SUMMARY

This staff report provides an update on grant-funded efforts of the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCDSCC). This item also acknowledges the sustained efforts of the RCDSCC, including a recommendation for Board adoption of a resolution recognizing these successful efforts and grant project outcomes.

These efforts include the successful outcomes of Water Board nonpoint source pollution control grants awarded to the RCDSCC. Staff will provide a brief overview of the Grant Program, with an emphasis on priorities in impaired waterbodies within Santa Cruz County.

Lisa Lurie, the Executive Director of the RCDSCC, will also present information related to this agenda item.

DISCUSSION

Background

Central Coast Water Board staff manage grants that are administered by the State Water Resources Control Board and are funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Clean Water Act section 319(h) funding, associated with non-point source pollution control. This funding supports implementation of best management practices and restoration actions that address water quality problems resulting from nonpoint source pollution. Central Coast Water Board Grants Program staff assist with the

development of priorities and project selection, as part of a competitive state-wide grant selection process. Projects are selected based on alignment with the Central Coast Water Board's highest priorities, proponents' qualifications, and a set of established criteria in the guidelines.

Central Coast Water Board's Involvement with RCDSCC

The Central Coast Water Board Grants Program staff engages with stakeholders throughout the region to leverage funds for high priority projects. Projects that focus on achieving the goals of the Nonpoint Source Program and implementing the Total Maximum Daily Loads for sediment in the San Lorenzo River and sediment, nutrients, and pesticides in the Pajaro River watershed, are awarded on a highly competitive basis. The RCDSCC has been one of the most active and effective grantees on the Central Coast, being awarded millions of dollars over the past several decades and over half of the 319(h) grants in the central coast region in the past ten years.

Water Board Grant Funded Projects in Santa Cruz County

The RCDSCC uses performance metrics to document significant sediment, nutrient, and pesticide pollutant load reductions to impaired waters for projects throughout Santa Cruz County. For over twenty years, the RCDSCC staff have leveraged local resources and successfully partnered with non-profits, landowners, agencies, and consultants to conduct education and outreach, permitting, planning, design, and implementation of five types of grant projects:

1. **Rural Roads Erosion Control** to provide technical assistance to private landowners and road associations for construction of rural road and home drainage improvements, and to reduce erosion and sediment loading to anadromous fisheries habitat in the San Lorenzo River and sediment-impaired tributaries.
2. **Livestock and Land Improvements** to implement manure management and home drainage improvements to reduce erosion, sediment loading, nutrients, and pathogens to the Pajaro, San Benito, and San Lorenzo River watersheds.
3. **Irrigated Land Management** to address nutrients, sediment, and pesticide loading to surface water by implementing on-farm and edge of field practices, such as: denitrifying bioreactor treatment systems, irrigation and nutrient management practices, erosion control, and toxicity treatment in the Pajaro River.
4. **Habitat Enhancement and Restoration** for the protection of aquatic health, such as restoring anadromous Coho and steelhead fisheries in Zayante Creek and addressing toxic algal blooms in Pinto Lake.

Central Coast region grant funded projects that have been awarded in the past ten years, including those implemented by the RCDSCC, can be found on the Central Coast Water Board website at the following link:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/grants/open_and_completed_grants#319h.html

Climate Change

Grant funded projects aid in creating more resilient watersheds that will adapt better to future climate fluctuations. Irrigation and nutrient management (INM) practices reduce nutrient loading and water demand on groundwater using water conserving irrigation efficiency. Reductions in chemical use and installation of pesticide-reducing granular activated carbon (GAC) filters at the edge of agricultural lands will reduce toxic pollutant loading. Controlling phosphorous-rich sediment discharges reduces the likelihood of downstream toxic algal blooms. Restoration efforts buffer sensitive steelhead aquatic habitat from impacts of potential increased flashiness of higher peak flood flows and increased sediment loading from more intense storms and more droughts. These grant funded efforts demonstrate adaptations to the effects of climate change.

Human Right to Water

INM practices protect drinking water supplies from increased nitrate concentrations in groundwater.

Disadvantage Communities

Grant funded projects have been implemented in disadvantaged communities such as Santa Cruz, Watsonville, and Gilroy.

RECOMMENDATION

Central Coast Water Board staff recommend adoption of Resolution R3-2020-0027, Appreciation of Work Performed by the RCDSCC, acknowledging their sustained efforts to protect and restore water quality and aquatic health, and associated grant project and quality environmental outcomes.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution R3-2020-0027