

# **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED FORUM**

*Creating a Statewide Action Plan:  
Watershed Partners Speak Out*

**SPONSORED BY**

**California Watershed Network**

**&**

**Watershed Management Council**

*September 19, 2003*

**Cal-EPA Building**

**Sacramento, California**

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*September 19, 2003*

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***When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect...***

– Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

## CALIFORNIA WATERSHED FORUM

### *Creating a Statewide Action Plan: Watershed Partners Speak Out*

Everyone lives in a watershed. California's 34 million residents are spread out among 1009 hydrologic basins that stretch from the Smith River in the northwest to the Coachella Canal in the state's southeastern corner. Although most Californians could not name their home watershed, they depend on it for food and wood fiber, recreation and wildlife, protection from fire and floods – as well as the water they drink. So much dependence on such fragile resources has put watersheds at risk. Some are polluted, some eroded. Many are all but paved over. Most are simply neglected.

The impacts of this widespread deterioration have spawned a coalition of concerned citizens bent on improving watershed management statewide for the benefit of the natural resources themselves, as well as the communities that rely on them. Among these activists are ranchers and anglers, city engineers and hydrologists, land-use planners, conservationists and water managers. They share a deep concern over the condition of their watersheds and a passion to restore them.

Watershed activists gathered 258 strong in Sacramento on September 19, 2003 at a daylong forum to develop a strategy to ensure local participation in future watershed management. Urban bureaucrats in coats and ties mingled with activists in denim skirts, purple pants and plaid shirts. Working together, they are the environmental movement of California, Martha Davis told them in her keynote address. They have created a place where it is safe for agricultural, environmental, rural, urban and governmental interests to meet and plan a future for California, she said.

What they accomplished during nine intensely focused hours will ultimately be demonstrated in the state's rural and urban streams, its woodlands, road culverts and parking lots, and in the fish, birds and wildflowers in countrysides and cities that share the watersheds with all state residents. But watershed advocates are not content to simply wait. They closed their September forum with a clarion call to the state and federal agencies that have traditionally managed these resources. The message is simple but powerful:

- **Citizen groups are partners in watershed management.**
- **The success of this collaborative effort depends on honest communication and consistent administration.**

The forum participants have a message for themselves as well:

- **The California watershed movement needs a regional structure.**
- **Watershed groups need to get smarter about how they manage their money, their partnerships and their public visibility.**

The latest of a series of roundtables held since 1999, the September 2003 forum was a coming-of-age gathering for a grassroots movement that is at once watchdog and

worker. The collaboration California watershed activists have created with state agencies is unique, said Davis, who represents the public on the California Watershed Council. It is an extraordinary opportunity to share both problems and solutions with government officials. Policies will evolve from the values watershed groups pass on to government officials, she assured them.

"You are the watershed movement. You are its heart. You are its soul... You have come together to envision a future for California... Make change happen."

## ***BACKGROUND***

California has been tackling the challenge of improving watershed management across the state in earnest since 1996, when voters approved Proposition 204 allocating \$15 million for watershed restoration in the San Francisco Bay area and Sacramento-San Joaquin river delta tributaries. In 1999, management leaders began meeting in a series of roundtable forums. The Watershed Management Council, a non-profit educational organization with membership throughout the West, sponsored four one-day discussions at University of California, Davis. All were funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The invited participants included government officials, private land managers and community leaders from all of the state's basins. The forums were designed to provide a neutral setting to discuss ideas, opportunities and needs for a practical framework for watershed management in California. Each had an objective intended to foster dialogue that would contribute in a particular way.

The first forum, held September 1, 1999, aimed to initiate discussion about watershed management in California. Participants heard about innovative programs in Massachusetts, Oregon and Washington. The audience offered ideas about what might work in California.

The second forum, held November 15, 1999, explored the various expectations of state and local agency programs to identify changes that might improve them. Speakers responded to questions about accountability, governance structure, incentives and technical support.

The third forum, held February 2, 2000, was designed to identify common ideas for state and local watershed programs and suggest how a collaborative statewide framework could be shaped. Observers felt that people really started to listen to one another at this session.

The fourth forum, held May 17, 2000, aimed to outline a collaborative framework and identify steps to achieve it. Participants added federal agencies to the list of state and local agencies involved in watershed restoration. The discussion produced a first draft of *12 Steps to Watershed Recovery in California*. Since then this document has served as a checklist for the process of creating and operating a statewide watershed partnership. It has been revised and updated, most recently in October 2003.

A fifth forum was held a year later to revisit the recommendations of *The 12 Steps*. Participants developed a message for California delegates to take to a National Watershed Forum in Arlington, Virginia that shared what they had learned they, what they had done and planned to do. The results of California's fifth forum also included nine suggestions for improving the role of federal agencies in the state's watershed management restoration.

One of the most significant products of these various discussions was the formation in 2000 of the non-profit California Watershed Network. Open to anyone in California active in watershed restoration, network members work at the local, regional and state levels to protect and restore California watersheds while ensuring healthy and sustainable communities. Creation of a statewide network gives watershed activists a voice in shaping programs and a way for local groups to communicate with one another. The California Watershed Network has sponsored two legislative education days in



Sacramento, giving local groups an important introduction to how to talk to state representatives and their staff. These sessions have emphasized the importance of ongoing communication with legislators.

Along with creating the California Watershed Network, the five daylong watershed forums also contributed to a study of watershed partnerships launched in November 2000 by then State Secretary of Resources Mary Nichols and Art Baggett, chair of the State Water Resources Control Board. A year later they formed the Joint Task Force on California Watershed Management, an interagency and stakeholder effort to discuss how to move the state in a new direction to protect and restore watersheds, lakes, rivers and estuaries in California.

One product of those discussions is *Addressing the Need to Protect California's Watersheds: Working with Local Partnerships*, a report to the California legislature issued in April 2002. Known as the Watershed Report, this 80-page document included a message from then-Governor Gray Davis making watershed protection a top priority. The report identified how state agencies can help local watershed partnerships, listing 18 recommendations for actions the state could take.

Some of these recommendations jibe with priorities identified by local watershed groups. Some do not. The state's assessment was a major contribution to improving and coordinating watershed management in California, but it focused on the role of the state agencies and gave less attention to the needs of grassroots groups. That is a task left to the local committees, councils and the many friends of local river groups spawned by the California watershed movement.

Local activists got an unprecedented assist in April 2003, when the Resources Agency and California Environmental Protection Agency signed a memorandum of understanding that created the California Watershed Council. In addition to the Secretaries of those two agencies, the council includes a member of the public to represent watershed groups throughout the state. The first person to fill that position is Martha Davis, former chair of the Mono Lake Committee and now executive manager for policy development with the Inland Empire Utilities Agency. Davis has co-chaired the watershed subcommittee of the California Bay-Delta Authority, which for five years has been informally developing statewide watershed policy through strong local participation and a consensus-based decision process.

Flush with the momentum generated by creation of this new council, the California Watershed Network and the Watershed Management Council convened a September 19, 2003 gathering of watershed participants from around the state to focus on a strategy for assuring the future of watershed management in California. This sixth forum departed from the previous five by issuing an invitation to anyone in California engaged in watershed management at any level. Its goal was a plan of action directed to the California Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, other government organizations and to local activists themselves. Unlike the Watershed Report, this assessment was dedicated to emphasizing the needs of grassroots groups, their recommendations to the state for improving watershed protections and restoration, and recognition of their own responsibilities.

When the call went out for participation, more than 250 people answered. It was an extraordinary response from people working largely in isolation despite their

connections through watersheds. The numbers that filled the Joe Serna Auditorium at the Cal EPA Building on September 19 demonstrate the drive to bring change to watershed management and the determination to involve local groups in crafting better programs as well as implementing them.

## ***BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP***

Changing a culture is difficult – "morbidly difficult," said Winston Hickox, former California Environmental Protection Agency secretary. His opening comments set the tone for the September 19, 2003 forum. Changing the culture of watershed restoration and management in California are the tasks watershed activists have taken on. Their goal is to transform the state's watershed programs into an operation that is coordinated among agencies and based on actual needs.

Held in a room draped with "no whining" signs, the sixth forum began with introductions from Hickox and other officials, who welcomed them with challenges:

Activists need better communication, more involvement, more education and better science. They must accomplish all that on a shoestring using collaboration that "can't be forced," said Allen Harthorn, president of the California Watershed Network.

The hardest part is changing programs built and financed by central agencies, said Luree Stetson, deputy secretary of environmental programs for the California Resources Agency.

Sari Sommarstrom, past president of the Watershed Management Council, reviewed the *12 Steps to Watershed Recovery in California*, outlining the progress and successes at each level.

Chuck Slaughter, president of the Watershed Management Council, lauded the assembled watershed workers for their accomplishments over the last four years. "What's happening here is heartening," he said.

Given the daunting tasks facing watershed practitioners in a rapidly evolving bureaucratic world, members of a panel shared their visions for the future of statewide watershed management. It is about far more than restoring what we've done in the past, said Dennis Bowker, a watershed program consultant with the California Bay Delta Authority, formerly called CalFed.

We are working for a time when watershed management will be a force in the minds of each of us as we make decisions – a part of our daily thinking about how far we drive to work, what cars we buy, what we throw in garbage cans, Bowker said. "The goal is to make us unnecessary." The reality is that there are just three people on the Bay Delta Authority's watershed staff.

Stetson envisioned a watershed management plan for all of California with clear monitoring and performance measures. Creating the California Watershed Council is an important first step. Watershed groups would go to a one-stop shop where all agencies would award grants, pool information, register their projects and coordinate their services. The reality is a disconnection among agencies and additional budget cuts looming for all.

The keys to improving watershed management are collaboration and "hard cold cash," said Chris Marxen, program manager with the California Environmental Protection Agency. "We sit here in Sacramento. We need your input on a constant basis," he said. "Water is the environmental concern of the new century." The reality, he noted, is that California is in a "financial valley."

Finding ways to make these visions reality was the focus of the sixth forum. "We need to start looking for solutions. We need to start building a solution list," said Mike Wellborn, vice president of the California Watershed Network.

## ***IDENTIFYING ISSUES***

The hard work at the sixth forum was done in dialog sessions conducted both en masse and in small groups. Many participants raised issues specific to their watershed projects, but the comments generally reflected common concerns over communication, funding and technical support, the need for creation of a regional structure and local group effectiveness. Calls for building better partnerships and developing better monitoring techniques were constant rumbles.

### ***Communication: Less Turf, More Trust***

Better communication at every level was a universal plea throughout the day. Local watershed groups need to be in touch with other neighboring groups. They need better communication with local agencies, regional, state and federal agencies. Local groups also need to develop better relationships with their state and federal legislators.

State agencies caught some of the heaviest flack for poor communication. Activists throughout the state complained about one-sided conversations with virtually every state agency involved in the watershed management. The exchange of information is scanty and often last minute. Meetings are poorly noticed and too often held at the convenience of the agency, not practitioners. Feedback from regulatory officials about funding and project progress is inadequate. Local groups not awarded grant funding would like to know why, using the model for project feedback pioneered by CalFed, now renamed the California Bay Delta Authority.

In addition to improving how they communicate with local groups, state agencies need to improve their dialog with each other and other agencies. Watershed groups depend, for example, on the California Resources and Environmental Protection agencies working well together. Often they don't. Dialog between state and federal agencies is also poor, leaving local groups to wander from one to another, sometimes conveying the information that should be transmitted directly between state and federal officials.

Another problem forum participants identified is communication within individual agencies. Regional boards and staff are sometimes not well informed by their state superiors. State officials should exercise more care in appointing staff to work with local groups; often they have the technical expertise but lack the communication skills, according to frequent forum comments. Once appointed, these field workers deserve more support from state-level staff.

Federal agencies should be included more fully in planning for watershed projects in California. Often their programs are poorly integrated into state and local plans for restoration, or not integrated at all.

Finally, watershed activists at every level should be working to build the capacity of their partners at every level. That takes time, but it has the long-term advantages of self-assurance, confidence and trust in partners. These are goals worth pursuing: Everyone with the patience to invest in these commitments enjoys the benefits.

**Project Support: Consistency! Consistency! Consistency!**

One of the shrillest cries at the forum was for consistency in the administration of every aspect of state programs: the criteria for grant funding eligibility, administration of



grants, project deadlines and citizen monitoring. Regional boards should reflect the direction given at the state agency level. State agencies should reflect the information provided by regional boards.

Project administration from the earliest requests for proposals to project completion is often inconsistent from one agency to another, sometimes from one project to another within an agency. Forum participants called for a streamlined process that is coordinated among agencies and uses consistent standards for grant applications, grant awards, grant contracting and grant administration. All requests for proposals should clarify environmental documentation, permitting and audit requirements. Administration should be consistent from one project to another.

**Partnerships: The Camel & The Donkey**

Everyone involved in watershed management should be more creative about partnerships. Remember the example, offered by a Monterey County shedhead, of the Moroccan farmer who teamed a camel with a donkey to plow his field. The camel was big and powerful but zigzagged across the field. The donkey was smaller but pulled in a straight line. It's a valuable lesson for watershed groups.

Local groups should develop relationships with land-use planners, sewer and recreation districts, local business owners and private landowners. At the state level, additional potential partners include Caltrans, the Departments of Education, Health Services and Food and Agriculture. Similar relationships should also be explored with federal agencies such as the Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Monitoring: The Emperor Has No Clothes**

Watershed projects are not new to California but the work has seldom been carefully evaluated. Without good monitoring, there is no way to know whether the work is effective or if there is a sound basis for improvement. It is, in effect, a naked emperor.

Watershed groups should work with state agencies to develop monitoring protocols that are consistent from project to project. The criteria and methods should be clear to citizen monitors, with instruction provided by qualified technicians.

Forum participants also suggested making state equipment available to local groups who are monitoring particular projects. The equipment could be shared among groups in a geographic area.

**Regionalization: Regions Rule!**

The California Watershed Network should create a regional watershed structure to focus actions with a regional stamp, improve communication with local groups and enhance its effectiveness statewide. This would help to decentralize state and federal programs, making them more accessible at the local level. It would also broaden restoration efforts by viewing watersheds as larger systems rather than isolated tributaries.

Among the benefits of a regional structure is the potential for developing a block-grant program that would allow regional groups to award funds to projects within their area. Regional needs could be weighted and prioritized, offering better geographic coordination of projects and eliminating both gaps and overlaps in on-the-ground work. With this level of scrutiny, watershed projects could be evaluated by size, allowing more

appropriate funding decisions. A block-grant program also offers an opportunity to adjust the complexity of requirements to the scale of the project.

An obvious advantage of a regional watershed structure is better exchange of information. Groups would know what other projects are going on within their watershed and in neighboring areas. Education forums could be held locally. In addition to clarifying who is in what watershed, a regional structure would also help state agencies provide staff dedicated to a specific geographic area. Many activists proposed creating regional watershed coordinator positions to serve as circuit riders in a geographic area.

A regional structure would help local groups communicate their needs to regional and state officials. It would also facilitate communication with city and county governments in specific geographic areas.

***Self Help: Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You...***

Local watershed groups need to get smarter. Working from grant to grant creates funding gaps that thrust individual organizations into the very boom-bust cycles many are striving to overcome in their local economies. Groups should find sources that bridge these gaps and work to schedule their projects to assure continuous funding. Funding from the state should seek to cover the work that precedes on-the-ground projects.

Several people suggested forming joint power agreements to manage grants.

Watershed activists throughout the state called for more creativity in developing partnerships, seeking funding and managing programs. They should work with mitigation banks, planning departments, local sewer and water districts as well as city councils, county supervisors and school groups. Environmental groups are frequently

overlooked as potential allies. Local governments are good potential sources for leveraging funds. When doing projects on private land, watershed groups should establish a system of fees for the services they provide. Well water fees are another potential source of revenue.

Local groups have a responsibility to educate their communities about the work they do. As Outreach 101, volunteers and newcomers should always be made welcome at meetings. Groups should hold public meetings, conduct educational projects in local schools, and work with local media to increase public understanding of their specific restoration projects and watershed management in general. Public service announcements could be shared among groups and aired jointly. All accomplishments, however small, should be reported to state and federal officials as a way to market the work of watershed groups generally.

## ***THE ACTION PLAN***

The September 19, 2003 forum generated a clear set of recommendations for both the California Watershed Network and the California Watershed Council. They fall into general categories that emphasize the need for communication, funding and technical support, creation of a regional structure and local group effectiveness.

### **Communication**

#### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED COUNCIL**

- Facilitate increased communication between California Resources Agency departments, Cal EPA and regional water quality control boards.
- Reduce intra-agency conflicts.
- Prepare an annual report to the California legislature based on feedback from the California Watershed Network on results of their programs.
- Develop guidelines for coordinating land-use planning with watershed restoration and management.
- Publish a list of all California watershed projects by watershed that are funded with public monies, whether state or federal. Existing projects should be registered with the Natural Resource Project Inventory at University of California, Davis.
- Publish a list of easy-access resource contacts for watershed groups.
- Issue statewide public service announcements.

#### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED NETWORK**

- Develop a system for regular dissemination of information about meetings, grant funding, pending legislation and more.

- Compile a directory of all watershed groups with contact information including web links. Existing groups should register their projects with Information Center for the Environment at University of California, Davis.
- Maintain a calendar of activities relevant to watershed groups.
- Establish a quarterly information exchange using the Blue Circle model.
- Publish a matrix of state agencies and their services relevant to watershed restoration and maintenance.
- Continue annual Watershed Education Day for state legislators.
- Conduct regional forums.
- Get more people with dirty feet! Bring legislators, business owners, school groups et al to on-the-ground projects.

### **Funding & Technical Support**

#### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED COUNCIL**

- Ask state legislators to fund watershed coordinator positions apart from project grant process.
- Provide in-field, hands-on training for staff to achieve consistency in administration of grant programs.
- Clarify and adjust overlapping or similar regulations and policies.
- Clarify grant audit process.
- Establish a permanent grant application process that uses conceptual proposals as the first tier.
- Establish a system for facilitating watershed groups needing federal permits.
- Promote longer-term grants for watershed projects, e.g. 4-5 year grants.
- Establish a California Get Grant web site, a central source for sharing watershed funding sources and other data in a usable format.

- Develop a clear picture of long-term sustainability for watersheds. Include environmental, economic and social values.
- Conduct time/efficiency study on contract preparation and invoice payment systems.
- Separate the different grant programs in a way to avoid the confusion in consolidation.
- Focus on the timing of the grant application and review process to make it more appropriate to watershed groups.
- Address environmental justice and diversity issues in grant application and review process.
- Address the 10 percent retention issue and its difficulty for small grants.
- Establish revolving fund for low and no-interest loans to watershed groups.
- Establish a circuit-rider program to provide organizational support to watershed groups.
- Publish a list of watershed issues that need research.
- Get federal data into archives before it's thrown out.

### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED NETWORK**

- Provide workshops and education on contract management, development and reporting.
- Provide information on benefit assessment districts and homeowner associations as managers for state funds.
- Track available computer models and where to get training.

### **Regionalization**

### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED COUNCIL**

- Promote creation of a regional watershed structure among state agencies.

- Establish a block-grant program allowing regions to issue small grants to local watershed groups.

### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED NETWORK**

- Create a regional watershed structure.
- Provide regional forums.

### **Self Help**

### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED COUNCIL**

- Seek support from local universities and state outreach programs for local watershed groups.
- Start a certificate program honoring exemplary watershed groups.

### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED NETWORK**

- Help watershed groups craft outreach strategies.
- Develop strategies for encouraging creative partnerships.
- Share education and media strategies with watershed network groups.
- Start a certificate program honoring exemplary watershed groups.

The California watershed movement has made phenomenal progress. Local groups and their activist members have established themselves unequivocally as partners in the restoration and maintenance of the state's water basins. This is a sea change from traditional government dominance. Agencies and officials have responded with endorsements of collaboration from the highest levels of state government.



The next work to be done requires an initial commitment from local, regional, state and federal participants to improved communication. With an open and inclusive process in place, all partners can focus on delivering funding and technology to the state's streambanks and forests, ranchlands and downtown rivers.

This is a movement that combines experience and local knowledge with the vision and savvy of government workers. The momentum these partners have already created will carry us on to our collective priority: restoring California's watersheds.

# CALIFORNIA WATERSHED FORUM

*September 19, 2003*

## *APPENDICES*

### ***KEY ORGANIZATIONS***

#### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED COUNCIL**

The California Watershed Council was created in 2003 as a result of a memorandum of understanding between the state Resources Agency and California Environmental Protection Agency. In addition to the Secretaries of those two agencies, the council includes a member of the public, to represent watershed groups throughout the state, who is selected by the two agency Secretaries.

#### **CALIFORNIA WATERSHED NETWORK**

The California Watershed Network is a non-profit organization founded in 2000 to help protect and restore the natural environments of California watersheds while ensuring healthy and sustainable communities. The Network works to enhance involvement in watershed management at the local, regional and state levels and hosts the California Legislative Day annually at the state capital.

#### **WATERSHED MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

Founded in 1986 in California, the Watershed Management Council is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to advancing the art and science of watershed management. Operating through an unpaid Board of directors, the council draws members from the western United States. Its primary activities include producing biannual conferences and periodic field tours, workshops, short courses and technical newsletters. As a neutral nonpolitical entity, the WMC was in a unique position to initiate the forum concept and bring together the diverse interests in the state on the topic of watershed management.

**CALIFORNIA RESOURCES AGENCY**

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**CALIFORNIA BAY-DELTA AUTHORITY**

**STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY**

**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY**

**SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

## ***FORUM PARTICIPANTS<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> Donna's list of who came on 9/19/03.

## ***12 STEPS TO WATERSHED RECOVERY IN CALIFORNIA<sup>2</sup>***

**September 19, 2003**

**Presented by**

**Sari Sommarstrom, Past President, Watershed Management Council  
Renee Hoyos, Special Assistant for Watersheds, California Resources Agency**

The original “12 Steps to Watershed Recovery in California” came out in May 2000 as a product of the first four California Watershed Management Forums. It is a list of achievable steps to help accomplish a new State framework for watershed partnering and serves as a checklist for progress. The list’s strength lies in the collaborative process used in deriving the steps and in the combined agency and non-governmental leadership and participation for carrying them out. Over the past three years, the “12 Step” format has proven to be highly successful in focusing energy and interest on the 12 elements that defined the needs, or barriers, toward a cooperative, statewide strategy for watershed management, protection, and restoration.

### **Brief History of Past Forums**

Improving watershed management across the state of California was the focus of a broad-based group of Californians who met together during five one-day forums between September 1999 and May 2001. Held at U.C. Davis, the forums invited diverse participants from the private and public sectors, and from all of the state’s basins, to share ideas about opportunities and needs for a practical, collaborative, coordinated framework for watershed management in California – especially at the state and local levels. The products of the California Forums (or ‘Roundtable’) were also shared at the National Watershed Forum in Arlington, Virginia in June 2001. The original sponsor was the Watershed Management Council, an educational non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the art and science of watershed management. Co-sponsors included many state, federal, local, and non-governmental entities. For more information, see: <http://www.watershed.org/forums> . Listed below is the theme and dates of the six forums:

<b><i>Forum #1</i></b>	<b><i>“Identifying the Potential”</i></b>	<b><i>Sept. 1, 1999</i></b>
<b><i>Forum #2</i></b>	<b><i>“Expectations of Governance”</i></b>	<b><i>Nov. 15, 1999</i></b>
<b><i>Forum #3</i></b>	<b><i>“Shaping a Robust, Collaborative Framework”</i></b>	<b><i>Feb. 2, 2000</i></b>
<b><i>Forum #4</i></b>	<b><i>“Filling in the Framework”</i></b>	<b><i>May 17, 2000</i></b>
<b><i>Forum #5</i></b>	<b><i>“Revisiting Progress and Revising Strategy”</i></b>	<b><i>May 31, 2001</i></b>
<b><i>Forum #6</i></b>	<b><i>“Creating a Statewide Action Plan”</i></b>	<b><i>Sept. 19, 2003</i></b>

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<sup>2</sup> October 2003 update.

### ***2003 Update***

*Those people who were originally designated co-leaders of each step were contacted for this 2003 update. Their responses are included in the following progress report. Note the extent of the work and successes accomplished to date for each step!*

#### ***STEP ONE: Form a statewide coalition/network of local watershed groups.***

Create a statewide umbrella organization or coalition of local watershed groups for the purposes of communication, constituency building, informational sharing, and improving their capacity for organizational effectiveness.

Leaders: Laurel Ames, Sierra Nevada Alliance; Lynn Barris, Cherokee Watershed; Allen Harthorn, Sacramento River Watershed Program; Conner Everts, Southern California Watershed Alliance

- California Watershed Network formed as an organization in 2001.
- Website at: <http://www.watershednetwork.org/>
- Hosts the annual Watershed Education Day in the Legislature: Spring of 2002 & 2003
  - \* Each one a success; all agree that “watershed” is better understood in Sacramento as a result of everyone’s efforts
  - \* Event is an opportunity to learn effective techniques for talking to your legislators about the importance of watershed protection and management for the state, and to hear from agency heads about their commitment to watersheds.
- Initiated and sponsored AB 1405 (Wolk) in 2003 session, to put into statute the policy recommendations of AB 2117 Report to the Legislature and to assure that the state recognizes the effectiveness of local watershed partnerships (see Step 4).
- Co-sponsoring this 6<sup>th</sup> California Watershed Forum with WMC - to give a statewide voice to all local watershed groups to establish an action plan for the future of watershed groups in relationship to the state agencies and in terms of their own futures.
- In process of becoming a 501 (c)(3) organization
- Listserve: in planning phase

***STEP TWO: Seek endorsement by Governor Davis for the State’s commitment to the watershed approach.*** An Executive Order to address the statewide value of the watershed approach would be one means.

Leaders: Mary Ellen Dick, City of San Jose; Sungnome Madrone, Redwood Community Action Agency; Bob Meacher, RCRC; Martha Davis, Californians and the Land (now Inland Empire Utilities Agency)

- No Executive Order, but several other measures of endorsement have occurred.
- AB 2117 (Wayne) signed by the Governor in September 2000 (see Step 4)
- AB 2117 Report to the Legislature in April 2002: “Addressing the Need to Protect California’s Watersheds: Working with Local Partnerships”, by the Resources Agency and State Water Resources Control Board. Governor Gray Davis’ message inside is:
 

*“My administration has made the protection of the State’s watersheds a top priority. This important study will help to achieve that goal by promoting efforts at the local level to manage and restore our watersheds. The result will help protect and preserve our natural resources, improve water quality, and leave a priceless legacy for the future.”*

- Governor Davis was quoted in a 2/1/01 press release about the Dept. of Conservation grants to Resource Conservation Districts: “*There’s a real need throughout the state for the coordination of efforts at the local level to improve and protect our watersheds. Everyone lives in a watershed, and the health and vitality of each one is an important measure of the quality of life in California.*”
- AB 1405 (Wolk) signed by Governor Davis in Oct. 2003 (see Step 4)

### ***STEP THREE: Support collaborative watershed groups that are community-based.***

- a. Obtain State commitment for assistance with the start-up and continuation of collaborative watershed groups;
- b. Advocate funding for the operation and capacity-building of such groups;
- c. Advance the levels of state and federal technical support for such groups.

Leaders: CA Watershed Network; CA-CRMP; For the Sake of the Salmon; Resources Agency/CalEPA

- Astounding progress! Watershed groups that existed at the time of Forum #5 have grown, strengthened, matured, and got to work restoring their watersheds. Many others have formed and are competing for the state’s dollars.
- AB 2117 Report to the Legislature in April 2002, was supported by Secretary of Resources Mary Nichols, Secretary of the Environment Winston Hickox, and State Water Resources Control Board Chair Arthur Baggett. Recommendations included:
  - # 7. *State should participate and provide technical assistance for watershed management partnerships.*
  - #14. *Consider providing State support to local watershed partnership efforts for a sufficient period of time to allow success.*
  - #15. *Consider addressing the two largely unfunded areas in watershed management: operational support and monitoring.*
- Bay-Delta Authority (BDA) (CalFed)’s Watershed Program gave \$4.8 million for projects with capacity building as a primary goal or objective.
- Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee’s (CalFed)Watershed Subcommittee advocates for this step at its very active monthly meetings. The two-tier grant approach (first the concept, then the full proposal) was developed in response to watershed groups requests and work at the Subcommittee, giving new groups the opportunity to learn early in the process if they had a viable proposal, and saving many from the hard work of preparing the full proposal if they were not going to be in the running.
- Dept. of Conservation’s \$2 million grant program for Watershed Coordinators to 26 Resource Conservation Districts in ‘01; \$3 mil. (Prop. 50 via BDA) for ‘03 and ‘04.
- Resources Agency has funded 3 regional coastal watershed coordinators to help local groups - organizationally & technically - through For Sake of the Salmon (‘01-‘03).
- Dept. of Fish and Game’s Coastal Watershed Salmon Habitat Program includes capacity building for local watershed councils as a category for its grant awards.
- 2003 Consolidated Watershed Protection & Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Grants Program (State Water Resources Control Bd.) provided funding for capacity building in the CalFed solution area.
- US EPA continues to support capacity building, including help in funding each of our California Watershed Forums – thanks to EPA’s Sam Ziegler!
- California Agency Watershed Management Strategic Plan (August 2003 Draft) – Step 5

### ***STEP FOUR: Obtain Legislative endorsement of the State’s commitments.***

Through one or more bills, seek necessary authority and funding to carry out the state’s role in its watershed management commitments, including #3 above.

Leaders: Conner Everts, Southern California Watershed Alliance; Mike Wellborn, Orange County; Laurel Ames, Sierra Nevada Alliance; Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC); CSAC

- AB 2117 (Wayne) became law in Statutes of 2000. It required the Resources Agency and SWRCB to evaluate at least 3 watershed partnerships and report to the Legislature.
- AB 2534 (Pavley) became law in Statutes of 2002. It addressed the Integrated Watershed Management Program portion of Prop. 40 (up to \$50 million in grants), requiring MOU between RA & SWRCB before grant funding could proceed. See Step 5.
- AB 1405 (Wolk) of 2003 session, sponsored by the CWN & RCRC, passed Legislature and was signed by the Governor on 10/08 (see Appendix A). Purpose is to establish as state policy in statute Recommendation #1 of the AB 2117 Report: *Recognize the effectiveness of local watershed groups in helping the state restore watersheds as a healthy resource.*
- Bi-partisan & statewide support was received on the above bills.
- Watershed groups were mobilized to lobby the legislature and “power brokers” to provide adequate support for watershed restoration at the local level.

### ***STEP FIVE: Coordinate Agency watershed work officially through formal agreements.***

Develop and obtain MOUs for Watershed Management that clearly states their commitments to cooperative watershed management in California:

- a. among departments within the Resources Agency
- b. among the State’s cabinet-level agencies
- c. between the State and the Federal resource agencies
- d. between the State and Local governments
- e. between the State and watershed groups

Leaders: Tom Wehri, CARCD; Mike Wellborn, Orange County; Clay Brandow, CDF; Lisa H. McCann, Central Coast RWQCB

- MOU between Resources Agency and CalEPA signed on 4-28-03, as required by AB 2534 (Pavley) (see above). Its purpose is to:
  - \* Establish a statewide partnership and framework for improved integration and coordination of watershed policies, funding, and program implementation;
  - \* Specify the responsibilities of the State agencies in support of this partnership and framework;
  - \* Specify processes for stakeholder participation in this partnership, framework, and watershed decision-making.
- California Agency Watershed Management Strategic Plan (8-03 Draft), which was recommendation #5 of the AB 2117 Report, is supported by CalEPA and Resources Agency as means of coordinating among their internal departments to improve delivery of services with local watershed efforts.
- California Watershed Council (CWC), created by above MOU, is an advisory body to the Agency Secretaries and an open participatory body. First meeting held on 8-28-03, with 320 people attending and joining as participating members of the Council. Co-chaired by Secretary of Resources, Secretary for CalEPA, and one public member (Martha Davis). It will provide advice and guidance to the State’s agencies on the development and implementation of watershed programs and policies
- CalFed Watershed Program MOU adopted in 2001, is coordinating mechanism among those federal & state partners.



**“An Experiment in Agency and Local Watershed Coordination: The Santa Cruz Story”  
by Lisa McCann, Central Coast RWQCB**

**The State Coastal Conservancy is kicking off the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program in Santa Cruz County this year. This IWRP is a coordinated, multi-agency, non-regulatory approach to improving fish and wildlife habitat in seven watersheds in the county. It will seek to implement the recommendations of the local watershed plans that were recently completed and to incorporate the countywide permit coordination program that is currently being developed.**

**With coordinated watershed management programs being promoted at the state level, this Santa Cruz effort will serve as an excellent demonstration project. The Resources Agency, the State Water Resources Control Board, and state legislators are all following the progress of IWRP as a model for watershed management in other areas.**

**The Interagency Committee (IAC) is composed of state and federal agencies, local governments, and organizations that have countywide jurisdiction. IAC is tasked with the oversight of IWRP, which includes identifying project needs, coordinating funding sources, assisting in the development of project proposals, facilitating project permitting and implementation, reviewing IWRP technical work products, and monitoring the progress of IWRP.**

### ***STEP SIX: Prepare State watershed handbooks and guidelines.***

Develop State manuals to help provide consistency and clear expectations to watershed groups, managers, and restoration practitioners about recommended methods for: watershed assessments, water quality and habitat monitoring, data reporting, and watershed plans.

**Leaders:** Russ Henly, CDF; Fraser Shilling, UCD; Rick Kattelman, WMC; Kallie Kull, FishNet  
4 C

- California Watershed Assessment Manual underway, with CDF as project manager and funder, and UC Davis providing 4 team members. Steering Committee meets quarterly. First public draft (version 1.0) due in early 2004. Phase II will expand to Southern California and Lahontan regions. Website: <http://cwam.ucdavis.edu>
- North Coast Watershed Assessment Program Manual (2002) draft is publicly available on CDF-FRAP website ([www.ncwatershed.ca.gov](http://www.ncwatershed.ca.gov)); designed more for professionals than practitioners.
- Coastal Conservancy has published its Watershed Planning Guide, for use by local watershed groups ([www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov/Publications/ws\\_planning\\_guide.pdf](http://www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov/Publications/ws_planning_guide.pdf)).

### ***STEP SEVEN: Share state-of-the-art watershed restoration methods & effectiveness.***

- a. Hold an annual statewide watershed restoration conference, with a published proceedings to record the products of the event, as well as regional events.
- b. Expand use of field tours throughout the State's basins.
- c. Develop website sharing of restoration information.
- d. Develop a central listserv for announcements.
- e.

***Leaders: Watershed Management Council; Salmonid Restoration Federation; CA-CRMP; For the Sake of the Salmon***

- Annual watershed restoration conferences held by Salmonid Restoration Federation (SRF); biannual watershed management conference and field tours by WMC; biannual Nonpoint Source Conference by SWRCB/RWQCB/EPA. No proceedings, only abstracts.
- California Dept. of Fish and Game (DFG)'s Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual, with specific techniques, was updated in 2002. ([www.dfg.ca.gov/nafwb/manual.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/nafwb/manual.html))
- Listserve and website ([www.4sos.org](http://www.4sos.org)) by For Sake of the Salmon.
- Listserves for announcements by BDA and by Resources Agency
- California Biodiversity Council (CBC) and the UC Davis Information Center for the Environment (ICE) support the Natural Resource Projects Inventory (NRPI) searchable database for watershed-related restoration projects (<http://endeavor.des.ucdavis.edu/nrpi/>)

***STEP EIGHT: Create pathways for education, communication and outreach about watersheds.***

Develop a coordinated approach for improving awareness and understanding of watersheds and for improving involvement in watershed activities. Pursue the proposed Watershed Signing Program.

***Leaders: David Gottlieb, RCD of the Santa Monica Mountains; Allen Harthorn, Sacramento River Watershed Program; Mark Hite, CDF; Jacqueline Dingfelder, For the Sake of the Salmon***

- For Sake of Salmon's workshops throughout coastal regions for past 3 years, on capacity building, fish passage, watershed assessment, writing grant proposals, and more.
- CBC's Watershed Signing Program has: MOU between CDF and Caltrans, 3 signs prepared for Mad River, Trinity River, and Klamath River, and map of sites along state highways in North Coast. First sign ceremony with state and local officials planned for Fall 2003 on the Mad River near Arcata.
- "Watershed education is going strong in Southern California, especially promoting stewardship at the urban-rural interface. The RCD of Santa Monica Mountains sent out a "Living Lightly on the Land" brochure to every taxpayer in our district. The lesson we've learned is – the more partners the better!" –David Gottlieb

***STEP NINE: Establish State Scientific Peer Review Team(s) for watershed management.***

Ensure that credible science in watershed management is recognized by the State and included as advisory within state agency grant processes through integrated review and advice by independent team(s) of scientists using an interdisciplinary approach.

***Leaders: Cathy Bleier, Resources Agency; Russ Henly, CDF; Rick Kattelman, WMC; Dennis Heiman, Central Valley RWQCB***

- The 2003 Removing Barriers to Restoration Report (Task Force to Secretary for Resources) recommendation #3 is to: "Develop a pilot technical review team for large scale restoration projects". Pilot project encouraged for North and Central Coast regions.
- CalFed –BDA's Science Program not designed to look at individual projects but at protocols and strategies.
- DFG's Coastal Salmon Restoration Grants Program uses technical teams of DFG, NOAA-Fisheries, and Calif. Geological Survey staff to review project applications.
- North Coast Watershed Assessment Program (NCWAP) used scientist and practitioner peer review panels for development of its assessment methods and models ('01-02). NCWAP reported that this process was very helpful. The watershed assessments were intended to help establish restoration project priorities at the local level.

- Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project uses science panel of academics, which reviews project criteria but not individual project proposals.
- **Resources Agency has Science Advisor position to convene scientists and information to address science issues as they relate to policy needs, on an as-needed basis.**
- Regional context may be more doable than a statewide, standing team.
- WA and OR appear to do a better job of embedding science, scientists, and scientific processes into their work on watersheds than we have in CA. We tend to trot them out on a have-crisis-need-science basis rather than incorporating them into processes on an ongoing basis.

### ***STEP TEN: Promote effective watershed monitoring and project evaluation programs.***

Focus on the Big Picture of what is needed for local watershed monitoring and project evaluation and what is needed to help local groups.

***Leaders: Ken Coulter, SWRCB; Marty Gingras, CDFG; Donna Meyers, City of Santa Cruz; Rick Kattelmann, WMC***

- Guidelines for Citizen Monitors (2001) by the Technical Advisory Council on Citizen Monitoring, co-sponsored by SWRCB's and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD)'s Wild on Watersheds (WOW) program. Products include Sediment, Flow, and Visual Assessment.
- DFG's Interim Restoration Effectiveness and Validation Monitoring Protocols (2003 draft) was developed for its California Coastal Salmonid Restoration Monitoring and Evaluation Program. Designed for use by "qualified investigators" with proposed and/or completed restoration projects in coastal watersheds. To be formalized and incorporated into DFG's manual by 2005.
- DFG's California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual, updated in 2002, includes some monitoring methods.

### ***STEP ELEVEN: Develop an effective funding delivery system for grant recipients.***

Address the ongoing need for a user-friendly grant process for recipients of state and federal restoration grants that also meets accountability standards of the grantors.

***Leaders: Kristin Cooper-Carter, CSU Chico; Dennis Heiman, Central Valley RWQCB; Renee Hoyos, Resources Agency; & California Biodiversity Council***

- MOU of 2003 and the new CWC are to help address this topic for Prop. 40, Prop. 50, and related funding programs; first Council meeting held August 2003.
- State Agency Watershed Management Strategic Plan draft addresses funding coordination among state agencies and between state and local parties.
- Concept Proposals and Consolidated RFPs were recently used in SWRCB's 2003 grant program process; problems with new process still need working out.
- Staffing reductions due to budget cuts could make grant process slower.
- SB 297 (Chesbro) passed in 2003 and signed by Governor on Oct. 8th. Increases from 2 to 4 years the time period that encumbered funds must be spent under DFG's Coastal Watershed Salmon Habitat Program for local restoration projects.

***STEP TWELVE: Identify a package of new incentives that need to be developed, and existing disincentives that need to be removed, in order to improve watershed management.***

Develop a list of conservation incentives in California – what is and isn't working - as well as new ideas and solutions for better individual, business, and governmental involvement watershed management.

*Leaders: Sungnome Madrone, Redwood Community Action Agency; Jacqueline Dingfelder, For Sake of the Salmon; Mark Lancaster, Trinity County; Dennis Heiman, Central Valley RWQCB; Pam Giacomini, Farm Bureau*

- Removing Barriers to Restoration, Report of the Task Force to the Secretary for Resources (Jan. 2003), had 10 recommendations for removing barriers developed by this multi-stakeholder group. Active implementing efforts include:
  - \* Categorical exemption under CEQA for small restoration projects was recently noticed on the Calif. Regulatory Notice Register ([www.oal.ca.gov/notice/34z-2003.pdf](http://www.oal.ca.gov/notice/34z-2003.pdf));
  - \* Safe Harbor Program issues under ESA, to be addressed through the Working Landscapes Group of CalFed in cooperation with Calif. Dept. of Food & Ag
  - \* Permit Coordination Programs, initiated for several watersheds by Sustainable Conservation and NRCS and proven successful, are to be promoted elsewhere.
  - \* See report at: [www.resources.ca.gov/reports\\_and\\_publications.html](http://www.resources.ca.gov/reports_and_publications.html)

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- Our successes exceeded our expectations!
- The California Watershed Community achieved its goal to obtain the endorsement of Governor Davis and the State of California to a watershed approach.
- We need to give credit and thanks to the many leaders both inside and outside of state government who have persevered to accomplish so much in this short time!
- Having established the State's commitment to using a watershed approach, our watershed community now needs to "step up to the plate" and, working through the California Watershed Council, demonstrate the value of using this approach in coordinating and implementing the State's watershed programs and policies.
- Despite enormous progress, there is always the danger of going backwards. We must be eternally vigilant in sustaining the steps forward.
- Incremental progress over the past 3 years in achieving the "12 Steps" shows that we can achieve big steps with many small ones.
- We must continue on our collaborative path towards California's watershed recovery!

*"I particularly appreciate the State's recognition of the importance of having a broad, inclusive partnership between the public and the local, state and federal agencies to achieve the State's watershed goals, and applaud the leadership of Mary Nichols and Winston Hickox in establishing a California Watershed Council in which everyone is welcome to participate. This is an unprecedented step in open government, and reflects the community-based values that are the hallmark of a watershed approach for managing the State's land and water resources. We are all partners in making sure that the State's precious natural resources are protected and well managed."*

*~ Martha Davis, Public Member, California Watershed Council*

## APPENDIX A

### **AB 1405 (Wolk) – 2003 Session**

Enacts the California Watershed Protection and Restoration Act with regard to watershed protection, restoration and funding.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Declares that watershed planning and protection efforts have a greater likelihood of being successful when governments, including federal and tribal governments, work in partnership with citizens in an effort to combine community resources, local initiative and state agency support.
- 2) Declares that the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA) and the Resources Agency (RA) produced a Report to the Legislature: Addressing the Need to Protect California's Watersheds and the recommendations of the Report form the basis and factual support for promoting watershed planning and protection efforts.
- 3) Encourages Cal EPA and the RA to provide assistance and grants in a uniform and predictable manner to those who choose to participate in the important work of watershed restoration and enhancement.
- 4) Declares that voluntary local collaborative partnerships that assist in watershed protection are in the state's interest in terms of effectiveness, citizen involvement, and community responsibility.

***Gleefully borrowed from the Assembly Natural Resources Committee by Mike Wellborn***

## ***RESOURCES***

### **PRINT INFORMATION**

*Addressing the Need to Protect California's Watersheds: Working with Local Partnerships*, California Resources Agency & State Water Resources Control Board, April 2002.

*Best Funding Practices for Watershed Management*, California Biodiversity Council Watershed Work Group, September 2000.

*Directory of Water and Wildland Expertise*, a listing of more than 2,000 faculty and staff with the University of California, California State University and state and federal agencies involved with water- and wildland-related research and resource management in California.

*North Coast Watershed Assessment Program Manual*, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 2002.

*Watershed Planning Guide*, Kate J. Goodnight. California Coastal Conservancy, 2000, Adobe PDF. [http://www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov/Publications/ws\\_planning\\_guide.pdf](http://www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov/Publications/ws_planning_guide.pdf)

*Watershed Restoration: A Guide for Citizen Involvement in California*, California Department of Commerce, NOAA/ Coastal Program, Kier Associates, 1995.

### **ON-LINE INFORMATION**

**California Bay-Delta Authority Watershed Program,**  
<http://www.baydeltawatershed.org/>

**California Biodiversity Council,** <http://ceres.ca.gov/biodiv/>

**California Biodiversity Council Watershed Work Group,**  
<http://ceres.ca.gov/biodiversity/wwg.html>

**California Coastal Commission,** <http://www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov>

**California Digital Conservation Atlas,** [http://legacy.ca.gov/new\\_atlas.epi](http://legacy.ca.gov/new_atlas.epi)

**California Legacy Project,** <http://legacy.ca.gov/>

California Resources Agency, <http://resources.ca.gov/>

California Watershed Council, <http://cwp.resources.ca.gov/cwc>

California Watershed Network, <http://www.watershednetwork.org/index.htm>

California Watershed Portal, <http://cwp.resources.ca.gov/>

E-mail updates / newsletters providing good sources of timely information:

- Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, [scwrp@scc.ca.gov](mailto:scwrp@scc.ca.gov)
- California Coastal Coalition, [steveaceti@calcoast.org](mailto:steveaceti@calcoast.org)
- For the Sake of the Salmon, [watershed\\_coordinator@pcz.com](mailto:watershed_coordinator@pcz.com) or [ecologyconsultants@msn.com](mailto:ecologyconsultants@msn.com)
- California Watershed Council, [coulk@dwq.swrcb.ca.gov](mailto:coulk@dwq.swrcb.ca.gov)

Information Center for the Environment, <http://ice.ucdavis.edu/>

Natural Resource Projects Inventory, <http://www.ice.ucdavis.edu/nrpi/>

State Water Resources Control Board, <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/>

Watershed Academy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,  
<http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/>

Watershed Information Exchange, For the Sake of the Salmon,  
<http://oregonstate.edu/instruction/anth481/watshd.html>

Watershed Management Council, <http://watershed.org/>

Other Watershed Programs in State Departments:

- [CALFED Watershed Program Workshop](#)
- [Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator Grants Program](#)
- [State Water Resources Control Board Watershed Management Program](#)
- [State Water Resources Control Board Proposition 13](#)
- [Department of Fish & Game Native Anadromous Fish & Watershed Branch](#)

- [Department of Water Resources Urban Streams Restoration Program](#)

### **FUNDING INFORMATION**

**For the Sake of the Salmon - Central Coast Region**, Comprehensive list of watershed funding opportunities, 707-874-0102 x42, [watershed\\_coordinator@pcz.com](mailto:watershed_coordinator@pcz.com)

**Watershed Coordinator Grant Program**, 2004 Request for Proposals, <http://www.consrv.ca.gov/dlrp/rcd>

**California state government grants information website**, <http://getgrants.ca.gov/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=index&topic=12>

**Federal grants website**, <http://www.grants.gov>

**Federal Watershed Initiative grants**, <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative/>

**NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program grants**, [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration)

**Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program grants**, <http://resources.ca.gov/eem/>



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