



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

America's Great Outdoors Initiative for Monterey Bay Conservation

“This is a win for both our innovative agriculture and our spectacular environment we enjoy on the Central Coast because it will reduce nutrients, pathogens and sediment loads entering Monterey Bay.”

— Congressman Sam Farr

Partners and Supporters Include:

USDA NRCS
USDA U.S. Forest Service
NOAA Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary
USDI Bureau of Land Management
USDI National Park Service – Pinnacles
USDI U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History
Central Coast Ag Water Quality Coalition
Central Coast Wetlands Group
Big Sur Land Trust
Watsonville Wetlands Watch
The Nature Conservancy
American Conservation Experience
RCD of Santa Cruz County
RCD of Monterey County
San Mateo RCD
Grower Shipper Association
Moss Landing Marine Lab
California State University Monterey Bay

The America's Great Outdoors Initiative for Monterey Bay Conservation is offered through EQIP to provide accelerated financial and technical assistance to producers who want to implement conservation practices on ranches, farms and private non-industrial forestland in the Monterey Bay Special Emphasis Area.

President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative in April 2010 to develop a 21st Century approach to conservation, designed by and accomplished in partnership with the American people. AGO recognizes that lasting conservation solutions should rise from the American people, and many of the best ideas come from outside of Washington. This initiative turns to communities for local, grassroots conservation initiatives.

The Monterey Bay Conservation America's Great Outdoors Initiative



In 2011, the USDA selected the Monterey Bay region as a pilot project area for implementing the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. On June 17, 2011, over 100 representatives of diverse resource conservation agencies and interest groups came together to kick-off the initiative. This community meeting was an opportunity for diverse interests to provide input

on the importance of America's working landscape and outdoor recreational resources around the Monterey Bay and to identify critical needs and partnership opportunities to benefit natural resources and communities. The input was synthesized into a Work Plan for the Monterey Bay America's Great Outdoors (MBAGO) Initiative.

The purpose of the MBAGO Initiative is to identify, support and highlight partnership opportunities and collaborations that enhance water quality and other natural resources in the watersheds that drain to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS). This includes all lands, including federal, state, and local jurisdictions, and private lands in the six counties that drain to MBNMS.

Landscape-scale Conservation

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a key player in this effort. The MBAGO Initiative is offered through NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to provide accelerated financial and technical assistance to producers who want to implement conservation practices on ranches, farms and private non-industrial forestland in the counties that are eligible for this initiative: Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Mateo and San Luis Obispo.



MBAGO offers financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who install approved conservation practices. In addition to the primary water quality goals, the Initiative also supports practices that improve wildlife habitat, water conservation, and soil health, protect key forage species on grazing land, and reduce soil erosion and the threat of fire.

Over the past four years, NRCS has directed increasing levels of technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers in the America's Great Outdoors-Monterey Bay Special Emphasis Area. One example of this is the Pajaro River Watershed Project in Santa Cruz County, a project that exemplifies the connections between land management, water quality, and the Monterey Bay marine environment.

NRCS used the Emergency Watershed Protection - Floodplains Easement Program and funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to purchase easements and implement restoration practices on two adjacent properties, a total 30 acres, next to the coastal Watsonville Slough. The project removes active cropping from the flood plain. It will also will decrease the threat of flooding, restore floodplain function, revitalize fish and wildlife habitat, combat noxious weeds and improve water quality in the Pajaro River Estuary and Monterey Bay.



Restoration of riparian vegetation on a flood plain easement along Watsonville Slough. These plantings will minimize flooding and erosion and enhance habitat for wildlife.

The project is part of a larger ongoing effort with the Middle Watsonville Slough Wetlands Protection and Water Quality Partnership Team, consisting of 11 nonprofit organizations and government agencies. This partnership team has initiated numerous restoration projects within the Watsonville Slough system, the largest freshwater wetlands in Santa Cruz County and one of the largest in coastal California.

For their years of work to restore the Watsonville Slough, NRCS and partners received the prestigious Coastal America Award in 2012. Partners include the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County; The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County; California State Coastal Conservancy; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office; California Wildlife Conservation Board; State Water Resources Control Board; Watsonville Wetlands Watch; Fitz Wetlands Education Resource Center; The Nature Conservancy; and the California Department of Fish and Game.

Monterey Bay Conservation Program Watershed Area of Program Eligibility



Since 2011, NRCS has advanced the MBAGO Initiative by securing additional federal cost-share dollars to fund relevant conservation work in the Monterey Bay Region. From fiscal year 2011 to 2013, NRCS allocated more than \$3.8 million in additional EQIP dollars to support conservation practices through 143 contracts with farmers and ranchers in the region. Planned conservation practices include water-saving micro-irrigation systems and irrigation water management, watering facilities for livestock, pipelines, fencing, brush management, and nutrient management.

| Fiscal Year 2013 Sign-up | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------|
| County | Funding | Contracts | Acres |
| Monterey | \$ 433,104 | 6 | 26,096 |
| San Benito | \$ 249,713 | 8 | 12,108 |
| San Luis Obispo | \$ 213,963 | 9 | 17,367 |
| San Mateo | \$ 29,413 | 2 | 297 |
| Santa Clara | \$ 192,168 | 12 | 220 |
| Santa Cruz | \$ 131,129 | 8 | 297 |
| Total | \$ 1,249,490 | 45 | 56,365 |

| Fiscal Years 2011 to 2013 | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| County | Funding | Contracts | Acres |
| Monterey | \$ 1,600,952 | 32 | 58,517 |
| San Benito | \$ 646,764 | 27 | 33,595 |
| San Luis Obispo | \$ 556,634 | 30 | 29,264 |
| San Mateo | \$ 171,029 | 4 | 1,098 |
| Santa Clara | \$ 653,513 | 36 | 13,592 |
| Santa Cruz | \$ 260,995 | 14 | 361 |
| Total | \$ 3,889,887 | 143 | 136,427 |