The CCRC demonstrates stewardship techniques integrated into grazing and water management that preserves wildlife and water and presents new knowledge to the broader community of rangeland managers. For example, over the past 4 years, CCRC participants have invited rangeland scientists and experts onto their properties to participate in an extensive monitoring program examining water quantity and water quality concerns. This monitoring program includes irrigation system and nutrient management evaluations, supported 71 growers in installing 384 conservation practices, treating 12,423 acres. These practices included irrigation system and nutrient management evaluations, improved sprinkler systems, conversion to micro-irrigation, and installation of flow meters, among many others.

AWQA Partners in San Mateo County received federal funding under the NRCS Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) for a similar project in coastal San Mateo County. Technical assistance partners at the San Mateo County RCWD Farm Bureau, and NRCS provided services to assess and improve irrigation efficiency. Biotechnical restoration methods at the site of a farm’s 2006 dryland cotton crop demonstrated that reducing water and nitrogen inputs significantly increases implementation of small restoration projects, leading to promising reductions in soil erosion. However, despite the broad popularity of PIR programs among all stakeholder groups, the programs have become more difficult and expensive to develop rather than easier and cheaper. Based on the results of their program evaluation, Sustainable Conservation proposes transitioning PIR permitting efforts from the watershed and coastal levels to the local or property level region program. For more information and to view the full PIR program summary and case studies, contact Eric Schwieter, Senior Research Analyst at 415-977-0380 x334, eschwieter@suscon.org, or visit suscon.org.

Sustainable Conservation recently undertook a comprehensive evaluation of PIR programs. The analysis found that PIR significantly increases implementation of small restoration projects, leading to promising reductions in soil erosion. However, despite the broad popularity of PIR programs among all stakeholder groups, the programs have become more difficult and expensive to develop rather than easier and cheaper. Based on the results of their program evaluation, Sustainable Conservation proposes transitioning PIR permitting efforts from the watershed and coastal levels to the local or property level region program. For more information and to view the full PIR program summary and case studies, contact Eric Schwieter, Senior Research Analyst at 415-977-0380 x334, eschwieter@suscon.org, or visit suscon.org.

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Growing plants in a saline sodic soil, working with water officials, local ecologists, and government and community members, has demonstrated that reducing water and fertilizer inputs can be an effective strategy for lowering production costs, saving water, and improving water quality. In the face of rising costs and increasing water quantity and water quality concerns, many Central Coast landowners seek to conserve resources through effective irrigation and nutrient management strategies. For these reasons, AWQA and a broad coalition of partners developed the Central Coast Irrigation and Nutrient Management Demonstration Programs. Led by Sustainable Conservation Resource Conservation Districts, and the NRCS, the Partners in Restoration Permit Coordination Programs help landowners to quickly and efficiently obtain permits from multiple agencies, and provides technical and cost assistance to accelerate implementation of conservation practices. During the course of the 13 years, a total of 227 individual restoration projects have been completed under eight PIR programs covering all or portions of eight counties within California. These practices have prevented over 200,000 tons of soil, treated 12,423 acres, and in 2011, three additional PIR programs are slated to begin in four counties within California’s Central Coast region.

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The USDA-funded Upper Pajaro River Watershed (in development) and Morro Bay Watershed (in development) are in development.

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For more information on PIR contact Jeff Rodriguez, CCRC&D at 805-434-0396, x119 or jrodriguez@suscon.org. For more information on AWEP contact Erik Schmidt, Senior Research Analyst at 415-977-0380 x334, eschmidt@suscon.org, or visit suscon.org.

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“AWQA is a partnership created out of love and respect for our natural resources.” Tim Chiala, George Chiala Farms, Inc.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD), the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau, UC Cooperative Extension, and the AWQA have worked together to enhance the value of water quality and to find ways to use water more efficiently. We are committed to improving irrigation efficiency, streamlining, and watershed coordination. AWQA’s regional approach focuses on outreach, technical and financial assistance, research and monitoring, permit streamlining, and watershed coordination. AWQA’s regional approach focuses on outreach, technical and financial assistance, research and monitoring, permit streamlining, and watershed coordination. AWQA’s regional approach focuses on outreach, technical and financial assistance, research and monitoring, permit streamlining, and watershed coordination.

The Central Coast of California abounds in natural resources. Its rugged coastline and rolling valleys support a diverse, $5 billion dollar agricultural industry that produces more than 200 crops. The region is also home to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary - the largest national marine sanctuary in the United States. As land use intensifies in this rich landscape, the protection of water resources, gaining increasingly urgent Farmers are up against a number of challenges to stay viable, comply with regulations, and protect natural resources. In response to these challenges, farmers and agencies on the Central Coast have formed the Agriculture Water Quality Alliance (AWQA).

AWQA is a unique regional partnership that brings together farmers, ranchers, resource conservation agencies, researchers, and agricultural and environmental organizations to promote and protect the health of San Luis reservoirs and the productivity of Central Coast farmlands. Since 1999, AWQA partners have worked together to reduce the runoff of sediments, nutrients, and pesticides from agricultural and rural lands. Through their success stories with their peers, offering their property as the site for workshops, offering their property as the site for field tours, they have implemented water quality practices on their farms. Their leadership in the agricultural community serves to promote and enhance the value of water quality stewardship on Central Coast farmland.

LEARN MORE ...

For more information on AWQA, contact Lisa Lurie at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary 831-220-3024 or info@awqa.org.

Agriculture Water Quality Alliance

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) is always looking to help growers find ways to use water more efficiently. That’s why in 2009, the SCVWD funded a three year project led by the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau to improve irrigation efficiency. The goal of the project is to work intensively with 10 growers to achieve an irrigation efficiency of 80% or greater. A team of technical experts from the Santa Clara Farm Bureau, UC Cooperative Extension, and the AWQA regional advisory group worked with the project team to train and support these growers. The project team offered 4 workshops in 2010 to help these growers find ways to use water more efficiently. The project team then reevaluated the systems to monitor the growers’ progress and to help them comply with the irrigation efficiency standards.