

2013 | Annual Report



MORRO BAY
NATIONAL
ESTUARY
PROGRAM

“The Estuary Program has supported the Morro Bay Mutt Mitts program since the beginning. I am so thankful for their dedication and can-do attitude that helps bring people together to get things done.”

Diane Moore, Mutt Mitts Volunteer Coordinator



Estuary Program Staff

Morro Bay National Estuary Program works to protect and restore the Morro Bay estuary for people and wildlife. The Estuary Program is a collaborative, non-regulatory, nonprofit organization that brings together citizens, local governments, non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies, and landowners to support a healthy environment and vibrant local communities.

Activities include habitat protection and restoration, pollution reduction strategies, water conservation measures, monitoring the health of the bay, and public education.

Volunteer, Donate, or Learn more about how you can keep the bay healthy at mbnep.org.

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Executive Director

Lexie Bell
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Ann Kitajima
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Tom Sanford
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Jen Nix
Restoration Projects Manager

Kathryn Winfrey
*Communications and Development
Coordinator*

Cynthia Milhem
Office Manager

Jon Hall
*former Watershed Restoration
Coordinator**

Anna Halligan
*former Watershed Conservation
Coordinator**

**Former staff member who contributed to
projects in 2013.*

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Credit:

Art for this report is generously donated by local artist, Jeanne Miller, pinedancestudio.com

President's Message

I have had the pleasure to serve another year as President of the Bay Foundation of Morro Bay and the experience has been truly rewarding. This year I had the opportunity to "get my hands dirty" with the extraordinary staff at the Estuary Program, as well as our many partners during the eelgrass planting event. It was amazing to see such a diverse group of people (including representatives from the Black Brant Group, Morro Coast Audubon, EcoRotary of Morro Bay, and many others) come together for a common goal – to restore and enhance this important habitat in Morro Bay.



The Bay Foundation continues to work with Morro Bay National Estuary Program staff to develop new funding sources and strengthen our partnerships to ensure the future success of the Estuary Program. I offer my sincere thanks to all those who supported the Estuary Program this past year. Whether it is through our annual giving campaign, various volunteer programs, or a technical advisory committee, there are opportunities for everyone to help protect and enhance the Morro Bay estuary and watershed. I encourage you to join us during *State of the Bay* in April 2014 and become involved.

*Gary Ruggerone, President
Bay Foundation of Morro Bay*

Bay Foundation of Morro Bay Updates

The Bay Foundation of Morro Bay welcomed Carla Wixom to the Board in 2013. Carla brings diverse knowledge through her years of experience as a Morro Bay City Council member, local business owner, and member of the agricultural community. The Board and staff are excited to have her as our newest addition.



Thank you Gary Karner for 18 years of service to the Bay Foundation of Morro Bay. Gary, a long-time resident of Los Osos and a retired landscape architecture professor, retired from the board in 2013. The Bay Foundation appreciates the institutional knowledge and business expertise that Gary brought to the organization.

Director's Message

Today is a beautiful day on the bay thanks to the contributions made by our local community. People that live, work, and play near the Morro Bay estuary take an active part in picking up trash, planting eelgrass, cleaning up after their pets, monitoring water quality, and removing invasive weeds. I feel lucky to be part of this community.



These amazing community members are among the reasons the Estuary Program was able to overcome obstacles in 2013. This year, the Estuary Program sustained additional cuts from federal grant funding. On the flip side, the Estuary Program received more private funding support than ever before. Friends and partners supported our work with their time and money. Relationships with local foundations were strengthened, too. I was inspired by the support shown by our long-time friends and new supporters.

While funding will continue to be an obstacle, I am excited about the coming year. The first annual fundraising campaign is under our belt. Three new staff members with enormous energy for estuarine conservation joined the team, and the triennial *State of the Bay* will take place in April 2014. I look forward to continuing to strive for clean water and a healthy estuary along with the Morro Bay community in 2014.

*Adrienne Harris, Executive Director
Morro Bay National Estuary Program*

Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Finalized

After more than two years of community input and scientific analysis, the Estuary Program completed the final update of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. The Management Plan guides the important conservation work of the program and presents action plans to address priority issues facing the health of the Morro Bay estuary and watershed.

The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and supplementary documents are available for download at mbnep.org/Library/ccmp.html.



Eelgrass Monitoring and Restoration in Morro Bay

In August, over 100 volunteers and project partners planted 9,775 bundles of healthy eelgrass in the southern region of the Morro Bay estuary. Their tremendous contribution helped promote local stewardship and raise awareness about the issues facing the estuary. This six-day event continued the Estuary Program's ongoing community-based effort to restore depleted eelgrass beds.

Eelgrass provides essential shelter and nutrients for a vibrant assemblage of fish, invertebrates, birds, and mammals. Historically, Morro Bay had some of the healthiest eelgrass meadows in Southern California, covering up to 500 acres in the 1970s. For the past decade, the Estuary Program has monitored the extent of this important resource in Morro Bay using aerial imagery (see figure on page 4).

The Estuary Program works with researchers across the west coast to understand the dynamics of the decline, which is most likely the result of many factors including a leaf-rotting disease, excess sediment, and competition with macroalgae.

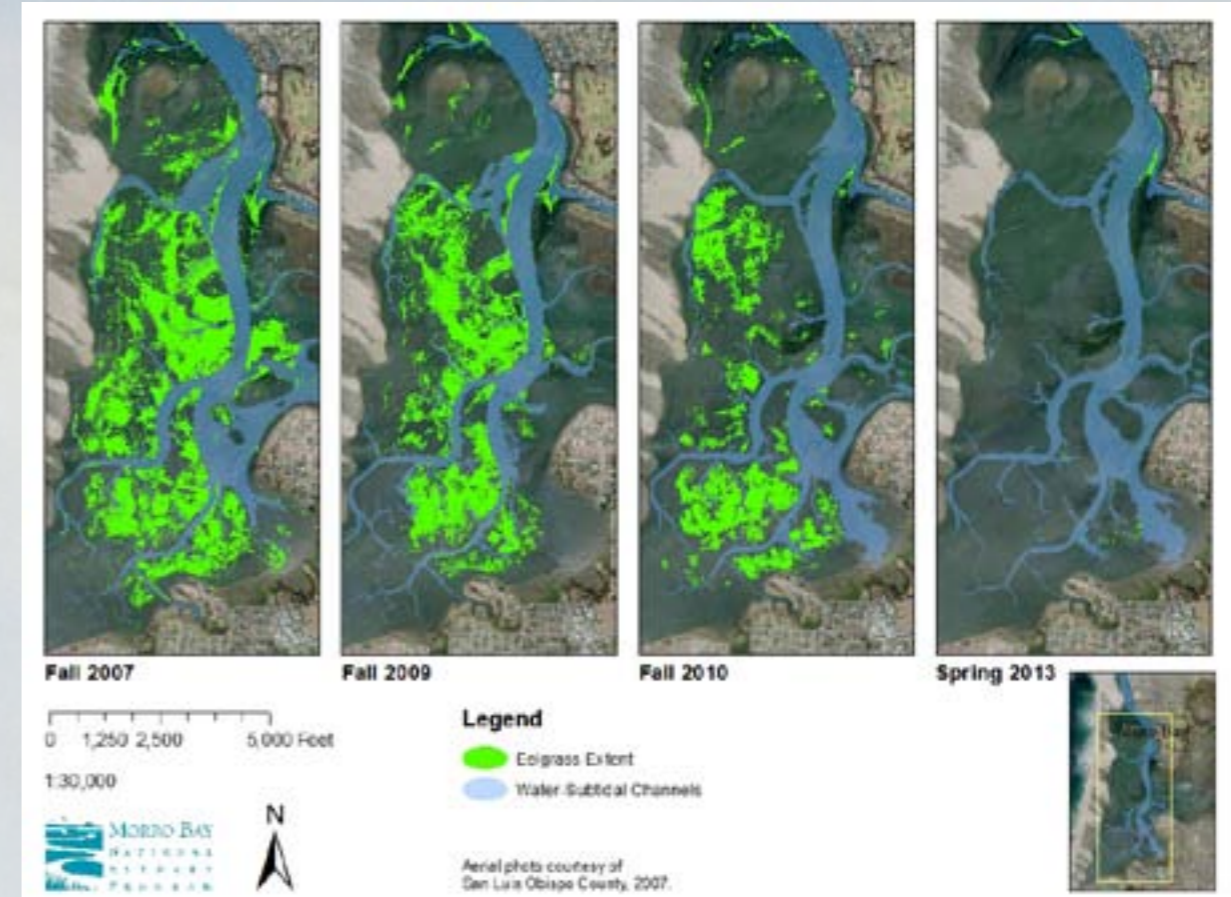


Eelgrass bundles



Volunteers prepare bundles of eelgrass with a cardboard stick, similar to those used for lollipops, to anchor bundles in the bay-floor while they grow.

Loss of Eelgrass in Morro Bay from 2007 to 2013



The images show a dramatic decline in eelgrass coverage from 344 acres in 2007 to less than 20 acres in 2013.

Thank You to Supporters of the Eelgrass Recovery Program

Success of the eelgrass planting was made possible thanks to Merkel & Associates, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program, Hind Foundation, The Black Brant Group, Morro Coast Audubon Society, Audubon California, Santa Lucia Fly Fishers, Pizza Port, Trader Joe's, Depth Perceptions Diving Services, and our community volunteers.



A diver harvests eelgrass for the restoration effort.

We Love Bugs!

Community Based Monitoring in the Morro Bay Watershed

Thanks to a generous grant from the Harold J. Miozzi Charitable Trust, the Estuary Program conducted the annual spring bioassessment monitoring. This is a complex effort that monitors the health of local creeks by studying the macroinvertebrate inhabitants and habitat quality. Macroinvertebrates, aka macros, are animals without backbones and are visible to the naked eye. These include insects, worms, clams, snails, and crustaceans that spend all or part of their life cycle in the water.

Staff and 16 volunteers monitored six sites in creeks located in the Morro Bay watershed. Results were shared with a state-wide data exchange network, thus contributing to a broader knowledge base of watershed science.

This year's volunteers were comprised mostly of college students. The bioassessment monitoring program provided a valuable opportunity for students to gain professional training in a real-world monitoring protocol, which included macroinvertebrate collection, identification of habitat features, and water quality measurements.

In July, the reach of this program expanded to engage visitors at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History with a docent-led, interactive, macro workshop. Using dissecting microscopes, participants studied preserved specimens and live samples to gain a new perspective on the aquatic world. Over 40 workshop attendees ranging from elementary school-aged kids to college professors learned about macro life cycles and characteristics, as well as what the macros reveal about creek water quality. These workshops will continue into the future thanks to the resources and expertise provided by the Estuary Program and funding from the Harold J. Miozzi Charitable Trust.



Macroinvertebrates under a microscope.



Community volunteers are trained in bioassessment monitoring in order to track the health of local creeks.

*"To be professionally trained and guided in the field is not only a resume builder, but also facilitates a connection between classroom knowledge and real world application."
- John Hardy, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Student*



A museum workshop participant explores macro anatomy under a microscope.

Be a Superhero!

This year, Bay Boy was introduced as the new face of the *Clean Water, Great Life* campaign. Bay Boy demonstrates how simple it is to be a superhero for the Morro Bay estuary. He encourages people to take the *Clean Water Pledge* and help save the bay. This pledge is a promise to incorporate the following four simple habits into daily life - habits which help keep Morro Bay clean for people and wildlife.

1. Pick up after your pet
2. Keep trash in the can
3. Watch your drains
4. Turn off the tap

Bay Boy and the *Clean Water, Great Life* campaign were promoted in the Estuary Nature Center, online at mbnep.org, in the Estuary Program newsletter, through a direct mail campaign, in social media, and at community events.

The Estuary Program set a goal of reaching 300 Clean Water Pledges by the end of 2013; this goal was quickly surpassed in October 2013 and the number of new pledges continues to climb.

The concept of Bay Boy and the new campaign artwork was designed by a group of talented students at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Bay Boy and the *Clean Water, Great Life* campaign will continue to be used to raise awareness about the importance of clean water in Morro Bay during 2014.

Join Bay Boy and take the *Clean Water Pledge* online today at mbnep.org.



Community Grants in 2013

The Community Grants Program fosters creative projects with the community to address the priority issues facing the Morro Bay estuary. The following projects were awarded Community Grants in the 2013 Fiscal Year.

Green Infrastructure Network Baywood Fine Sands Community

A coalition of local and state resource managers and interested stakeholders identified and mapped a network of natural lands, working landscapes, and other open spaces to better focus conservation efforts in protected areas around Los Osos. Purchase or download a free map at lulu.com.



A Healthy Sea Begins With Me

Children's artwork depicting marine consequences of littering were made into public signs as part of the Morro Coast Audobon Society's A Healthy Sea Begins with Me education program. Fifteen signs were posted in the City of Morro Bay, at California State Parks in the San Luis Obispo Coast District, and at Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area.



Stormwater Management Treatment Plan and Educational Signage

This project builds on previous low impact development work at the the California Conservation Corps Los Padres Residential Center and was comprised of two major components: educational signage to explain various stormwater management techniques used at the Center, and the development of a Stormwater Management Treatment Plan for the entire facility. The Center covers 39 acres and has the potential for more than 17 million gallons of runoff in an 18" rain year.



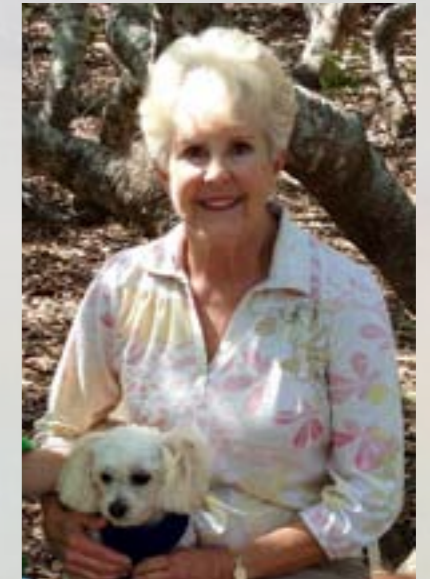
Volunteers of the Year

Many of the accomplishments achieved in 2013 were due in large-part to the dedication of over 200 volunteers. This team of volunteers monitored water quality, ensured that dog walkers and owners had a steady supply of Mutt Mitts, picked up trash around the estuary, and so much more. This year, two volunteers received awards for their invaluable contribution to the Morro Bay estuary.

Marla Dawson, Volunteer Monitoring Program

A retired medical lab technician, Marla has been living her dream on the Central Coast for nearly 10 years. When she heard about the opportunity to do bacteria analysis for the Estuary Program, she jumped at a chance to protect the bay and make use of her skills from her former career. Marla has contributed nearly 200 hours to the program since 2008, collecting samples from sites in the watershed and conducting lab analysis to track bacteria levels in our local creeks. While she keeps busy with her garden and takes long walks with her dog, she is happy to serve her community and contribute to the preservation of this special place she calls home.

Learn more about the Volunteer Monitoring Program at mbnep.org/Help/volunteer_monitoring.html.



Laurel Manthie, Mutt Mitt's Volunteer

Laurel Manthie has been a dedicated volunteer with the Estuary Program's Mutt Mitts Program for the past five years. She volunteers twice a week to fill seven Mutt Mitt dispensers at a volume of 88,900 bags per year. She is always willing to lend a hand when extra help is needed, from cleaning and maintaining dispensers to filling in for other volunteers when they are away. Laurel has a passion for pets and the environment that shows in her dedication to the clients of her pet care and dog walking business. She has been taking care of pets in Morro Bay for 15 years and was a resident of Morro Bay for 20 years before moving to San Luis Obispo. We appreciate Laurel's steadfast dedication, reliability, and her kind attitude towards everyone she meets.

Learn more about the Mutt Mitts program at mbnep.org/Our_Work/mutt_mitts.html.

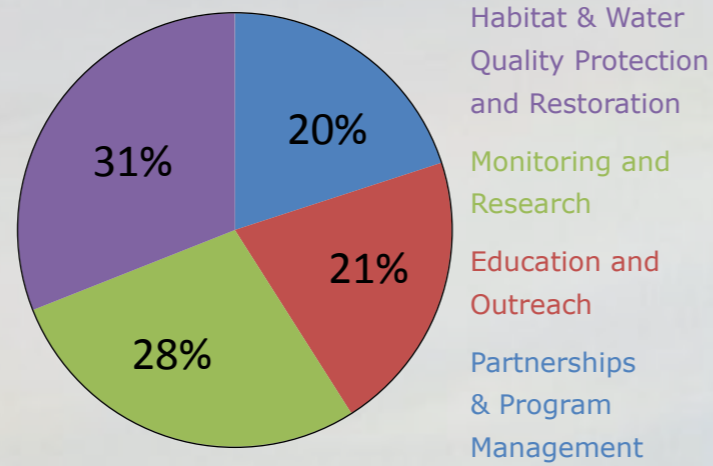


Fiscal Data

Morro Bay National Estuary Program is one of 28 National Estuary Programs around the country. As a member of this group, the Estuary Program receives an annual grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Estuary Program has been able to leverage each dollar of federal funding received into nearly ten dollars in support for local conservation work. Grant funding received by the Estuary Program supports important conservation goals for the Morro Bay estuary and watershed. The majority of these funds are provided to partners and local organizations through grants and collaborative projects.

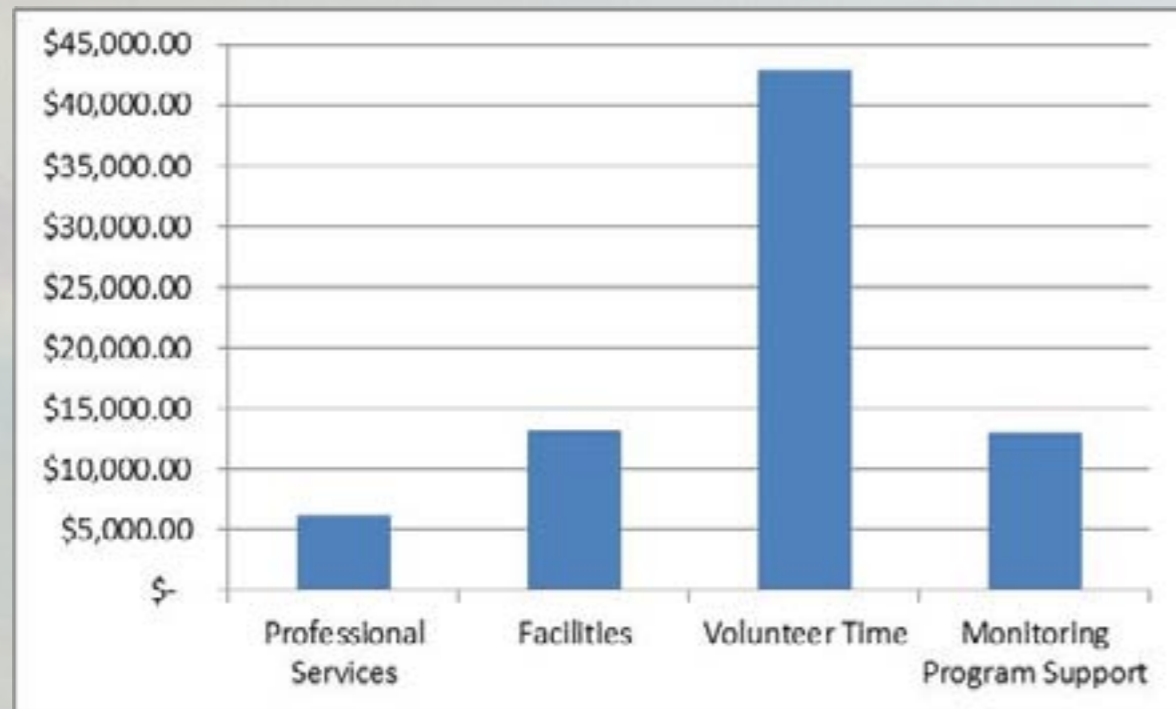
Expense Distribution

The *Expense Distribution Chart* shows the proportion of funds that are used in each of four program areas.



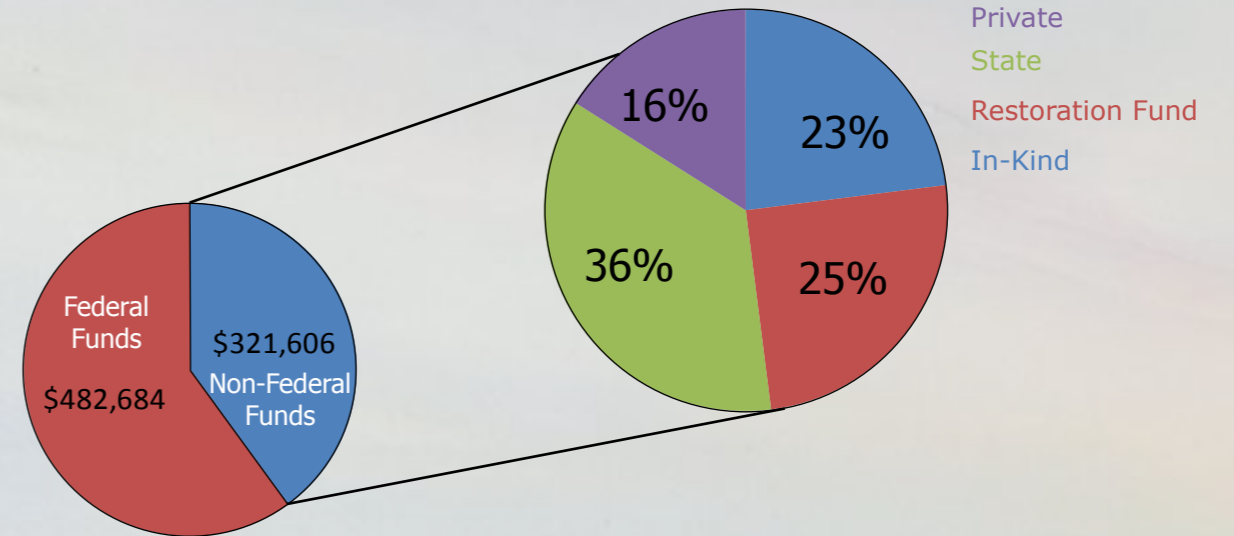
Donated Services

The Donated Services Chart demonstrates the dollar value of donated services received by the Estuary Program during the 2013 Fiscal Year (October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013).



Income Sources

The *Income Sources Chart* shows the value of cash and in-kind income from federal and non-federal sources for the 2013 Fiscal Year.



Sharing Our Message

The Estuary Program raises awareness about the ecological and social importance of protecting and restoring Morro Bay through a dynamic Education and Outreach program. Below is a summary of this year's achievements.

49 Field trips, tours, and presentations

319 Clean Water Pledges taken by community members (mbnep.org/CleanWaterPledge)

1,442 People reached by education and outreach efforts

40,000 Estimated visitors at the Estuary Nature Center (601 Embarcadero (upstairs))

Thank You 2013 Supporters

Generosity from the following individuals, companies, and organizations greatly improved the positive impact of the Estuary Program in 2013 for the Morro Bay estuary.

Program Funders

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board
Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Hind Foundation

Leadership Circle (\$500 to \$999)

Morro Bay Commercial
Fishermen's Organization
Santa Lucia Fly Fishers

Steward of Morro Bay (\$250 to \$499)

Dr. Thomas and Virginia Cahill*
Dorothy Christie*
Embarcadero Inn
Grassy Bar Oyster Company*
Adrienne Harris and Chris McMains
Lemos Feed and Pet Supply*
Gerald and Erika Luhr*
Rotary Club of Morro Bay*
Gary and Stephanie Ruggione
Paul and Shirley Vinson*
Wine Shed

Friends of Morro Bay (\$100 to \$249)

Homer and Dede Alexander*
Chris and Kate Anderson*
Anna Aven*
Terry and Lucy Brown
Carla's Country Kitchen
Central Coast Women for Fisheries
J.R. Evers*
Janice Fong Wolf
Karen Robert and Rick Gilligan*
Barbara Good*
Bill and Meg Henry
Myron and Sue Hood

Friends of Morro Bay continued

Michael and Betsy Ann Kinter*
Alaina Morgan
Morro Bay Lions Club
Mike Multari and Denise Fourie
Joel Neel
David and Helianthe Stevig
Robert and Kathryn Thomas*
Beverly Wainwright*
Dr. Mandy Ward
Fred and Candi Wickman*
Linda Williams*
Steven and Nancy Willison

Supporters (Up to \$99)

Anonymous
Linda and Robert Bailey
Bonnie Baron and Peter Delacorte
Michael and Lexie Bell in memory of Bungie Bell
Susan Bertoldi and Kurt Quint*
Edward and Monica Bischof*
Richard and Patricia Boyd
Cambria Education Foundation
Paul and Carol Courcy
Jill Denton*
Leslie Dougherty
J.E. Drake*
Eddy Co. Drywall
Mary and Chris Hudson in memory of Don Stegman
Jerry Kirkhart
Christopher Koppl
Julian Lipschitz
Gary and Freddie Ream*
Dominic Roques and Beth Fillerup
Jeanne and David Silverman*
Holly Sletteland
Julie and Irvin Smith
Shaunna Sullivan
Victor Takahashi*
Tratel Morro Bay
Rochele Ullum
Laurie and A.L. Viselli*
James Wright

In-Kind Services and Products

Albertson's
Azhiaziam
Better Business Financial Services
Central Coast Outdoors
Central Coast SUP
Depth Perceptions
Digital West
Dorn's Breakers Café
Fiona Bleu Gallery
Glenn Burdette
Grassy Bar Oyster Company
Harmony Cellars
Jill Garcia
Kayak Horizons
Kys Design
Los Osos Flower Market
Marina Square
Mike Baird
Mike Multari
Miner's Ace Hardware
Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce
Pacific Watershed Associates
Pizza Port
San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden
Shine Café
Squeaks, Chirps & Bubbles
Stax Wine Bar
The Galley Seafood Bar & Grill
The Habit Burger Grill
Tolosa Winery
Trader Joe's
Wolff Vineyards

*Mutt Mitts Program Supporter

Organization Structure

Morro Bay National Estuary Program is a non-profit organization that works on behalf of the local community to protect and restore Morro Bay. The Estuary Program frequently gathers community input to guide its work. The program also invites community members to serve on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee provides the policy direction for the program, assesses progress, and approves grant requests. The Bay Foundation of Morro Bay is the fiscal sponsor for the Estuary Program and applies for grants, manages funding for the Estuary Program, and employs the staff.

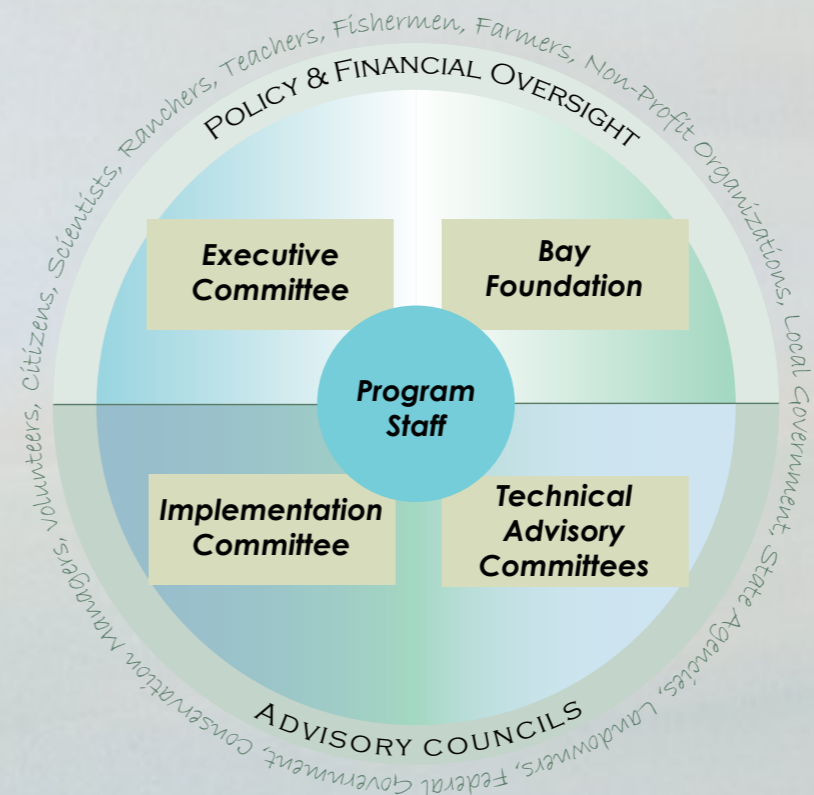
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Gary Ruggione, President
Shaunna Sullivan, Vice President
Bill Henry, Secretary
Bob Semonsen, Treasurer
Rick Algert
Joel Neel
Gary Karner
Greg Smith
Carla Wixom

Executive Committee

Marshall Ochylski, Chair
Los Osos Community Services District
Gary Ruggione, Vice Chair
Bay Foundation
Noah Smukler
City of Morro Bay
Bruce Gibson
County of San Luis Obispo

Dominic Roques
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Sam Schuchat
government at-large
State Coastal Conservancy
Holly Sletteland
environment at-large
Morro Coast Audubon Society
Dean Sullivan
tourism/recreation at-large,
Sullivan Studios
Sharon Rowley
fishing at-large
Central Coast Women for Fisheries
Dean Wendt
science at-large
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Marc Lea
agriculture at-large
County of San Luis Obispo Department of Agriculture
Mike Bush
Implementation Committee Representative
Suzanne Marr
Environmental Protection Agency





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