

Morro Bay National Estuary Program
Community Project Applications for Fall 2025
Summary of Projects, Review, and Staff Recommendations

Estuary Program partnered with San Luis Obispo Beaver Brigade (SLOBB) to develop a potential project for our Community Projects program for 2026. SLOBB submitted a Concept Proposal in September 2025 and worked with Estuary Program staff to refine the project scope and budget.

Project: Central Coast Process-Based Restoration Workshop

Applicant: San Luis Obispo Beaver Brigade

Community Project Request: \$8,055

Matching Funding: \$3,545

Total Project Budget: \$11,600

Background: Process-based restoration (PBR) is a holistic approach to restoring degraded watersheds that aims to re-establish processes such as sediment transport, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, and fire resiliency. PBR involves using nature to restore waterways by harnessing the system's fluvial and biological energy to do most of the restoration "work." Treatments may include adding woody features such as post-assisted log structures (PALS) and beaver dam analogs (BDAs), as well as headcut treatments. These structures can help improve riparian ecosystem function and expand the riparian corridor by increasing the duration and extent of surface and subsurface water available to vegetation.

Walters Creek in the Morro Bay watershed has been the site of extensive restoration efforts over the past two decades, including projects in 2004 and 2006. Despite these efforts, Walters Creek remains mostly disconnected from its historical floodplain, lacks instream complexity, and experiences intermittent flows.

To address these impairments, the Estuary Program and partners implemented a PBR project in September 2025 to install low-tech structures instream. The project currently has 40 structures built, with implementation of 20 to 30 additional structures planned for spring 2026.

The project partners are interested in sharing knowledge on this restoration technique. The proposed project will leverage existing implementation resources and funding to teach the Central Coast community about low-tech process-based restoration (LTPBR). It will build local interest and knowledge that could lead to the implementation of future LTPBR projects.

Project Summary: For this Community Project, SLOBB proposes to plan and implement a day-long workshop and four site tours to provide educational and interactive experience on PBR techniques. The project aims to reach agencies, local non-profits, landowners, and community members to introduce the "how and why" of this technique to the Central Coast. The workshop will include a morning session of background information, an overview of permitting, etc. The afternoon will include a tour of completed BDA and PBR structures and an opportunity for participants to take part in hands-on building of PBR structures. Four additional 1.5 to 2-hour site tours later in the year will share the value and process of PBR with a broader audience. The anticipated invitation reach is expected to be over 8,000 individuals, and the project is anticipated to have between 70 and 140 participants.

Partner Roles:

SLO Beaver Brigade (SLOBB): This nonprofit will be the funding recipient who oversees the Community Project and manages the funds. For more details on their role, see the Community Project Tasks section below.

California Conservation Corps (CCC): This state agency provides environmental job training for young adults. The CCC Los Padres Center will be the site host for the classroom portion of the workshop and provide food. Meredith Hardy, CCC Fish Habitat Specialist, will speak on the history of Walters Creek. CCC crews will help prepare the majority of materials (e.g., coyote brush) for the hands-on workshop. Their support is funded through the State of California Forest Health & Resiliency Funding as match funds for this project.

Nature's Engineers: This company is a local business that implements PBR projects. The Estuary Program is contracting with them for the PBR project on Walters Creek, funded through our Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) grant. As experts on PBR, they will play a primary role in this project. Their tasks include the following: attending planning and coordination meetings; supporting site selection and materials prep for the hands-on portion of the workshop; developing and delivering workshop presentations; leading participants in hands-on construction of PBRs; and leading four site tours. Their time on this project will be covered by education & outreach funding in our federal IIJA grant.

Estuary Program: Estuary Program staff will help review and prepare workshop presentation materials; help coordinate workshop and field tours to align with implementation work; and offer general logistical support as needed.

Community Project Tasks:

These are the tasks that SLOBB will undertake as part of this Community Project:

- **Project Management and Coordination**: This task involves general coordination and project oversight including managing the budget and timeline; managing all insurance and waiver requirements for field-based activities; compiling project and match invoices; and completing the Community Project final report.
- **Workshop and Site Tour Planning**: This task involves project planning and coordination for one all-day workshop and four site tours; scheduling and facilitating up to 10 planning meetings (up to five of them held in person); coordinating event logistics; working with Estuary Program staff to develop workshop content; developing outreach materials and event registration management; communicating with participants for workshop and four site tours; and developing an evaluation survey to be administered at the end of the workshop or tour.
- **Site Prep**: This task involves preparing for the hands-on portion of the workshop, including supporting the gathering and prepping of materials to build one BDA and one head cut treatment; and working with Nature's Engineers (funded through federal IIJA funds) to select building sites that would work best for workshop participants. If the hands-on portion of the workshop is canceled in advance due to concerns about the weather or unforeseen site constraints, this portion of the Community Project budget will not be utilized.
- **Workshop Day**: This task will include SLOBB staff facilitation of the workshop day, including technical support and audience questions on presentations; site, meal, and travel logistics; and debrief/reflection at the end of the workshop day. SLOBB will administer surveys of participants at the end of the workshop or via email within a few days of the event.

- Site tours: SLOBB will facilitate four site tours, including coordinating with Estuary Program staff on timing of site tours to align with active implementation work; managing registration and communications; and coordinating with Nature’s Engineers staff (funded through federal IJA funds) who will lead the site tours and manage day-of site logistics. SLOBB will administer surveys of participants at the end of the site tours or via email within a few days of the event.

Community Project Budget: Project costs are \$7,750 for SLOBB staff time, \$245 for travel costs, and \$60 for supplies for a total Community Project funding request of \$8,055.

Community Project Match: Match includes \$3,545 from California Conservation Corps for Los Padres Center facility use and Forestry Corps CCC members hours for prep materials (State of CA Forest Health & Resiliency Funding).

Other Community Project Support: Note that Nature’s Engineers will receive approximately \$6,500 in funding from the Estuary Program’s federal IJA grant to support their staff time. The project was structured this way in part to utilize available IJA funds and also to simplify the Community Project by eliminating the need to SLOBB to develop a subcontract with Nature’s Engineers.

Timeline: The full day workshop will be scheduled for spring, likely in March, to coincide with expected Estuary Program implementation of Walters Creek PBR projects. If the site is unsafe due to weather conditions (e.g., atmospheric river, lightning etc.), the field visit and hands-on portions will be cancelled, and participants will be encouraged to sign up for either a rescheduled hands-on portion of the workshop or one of four site tours of completed PBR structures. This rescheduled hands-on workshop would only be possible if there is ongoing restoration implementation led by the Estuary Program, Nature’s Engineers, and CCC. If implementation does not occur due to changes in CCC’s availability, inclement weather, or other unforeseen issues, no hands-on workshop will occur and the project budget will be adjusted accordingly. The four additional site tours ideally will be offered during project implementation in the spring (March to May) or fall (September to October) so participants can see structures actively being built. SLOBB will submit the final Community Project report in December 2026.

Relevant CCMP Action Plans: This project supports five Action Plans from our Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan (CCMP).

- EO-1 Public Education and Outreach: Public workshops and site tours expand knowledge on PBR techniques.
- CLIM-3 Climate & Adaptation Education: The project integrates climate change concepts and adaptation into workshop and site tour materials.
- FWR-3 Understand Flow for Public Trust Resources: The workshop and site tours will engage multiple stakeholders and increase scientific knowledge on ways to improve surface flows and groundwater recharge.
- ECR-1 Instream Habitat: With the hands-on component, participants will use restoration techniques to promote natural opportunities to enhance and restore instream habitat.
- ECR-3 Wetland Protection & Enhancement: The hands-on component of the project teaches participants techniques to restore wetland habitat hydrologic functioning.

Partner Capacity Review: Estuary Program staff met with SLOBB staff to discuss the organization’s capacity to manage the funding and successfully complete the project. As a 501(c)(3), SLOBB has experience with applying for, receiving, and managing grant funding from numerous sources, including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Rose Foundation. They have the capacity to maintain financial records, manage staff, and conduct the invoicing and reporting required for the

project. SLOBB has extensive experience planning events like the highly successful Beaver Festival for the past three years. Thus, staff determined that SLOBB has the capacity to receive and successfully manage Community Project funding.

Project Technical Review: This project was developed in close collaboration with Estuary Program staff, along with input from project partners such as Nature’s Engineers and the California Conservation Corps. Based on this level of input from organizations with extensive restoration experience and because the project will have direct Estuary Program involvement throughout, staff determined that the project does not require additional technical review.

Staff Recommendation: Staff supports funding this project. We feel that the scope is reasonable and achievable given the budget and the project timeline. We think it is impactful to expand knowledge sharing and networking around process-based restoration to enhance stream habitat within the Morro Bay watershed and beyond. We recommend full funding of \$8,055.

**Morro Bay National Estuary Program
Community Project Program
Concept Proposal Instructions**

Project title: Central Coast Process-based Restoration Workshop

Applicant organization: San Luis Obispo Beaver Brigade

Organization type: Non-profit

Address: PO Box 2913, Atascadero, CA 9342

Contact information: Audrey Taub, 805-464-1255, audrey@slobeaverbrigade.com

Amount requested: \$8,055

Total project cost: \$11,600

Amount and source of other funding (if applicable): \$3,545

Match Item	Source	Amount
CCCs Prep Day	State of CA to CCC- State Forest Health & Resiliency Funding; Assumes 15 corpsmembers for half day at \$40.61/hr	\$3,045
Match from CCCs site & lunch	State of CA	\$500
	Total	\$3,545

Project description:

Process-based restoration (PBR) is a holistic approach to restoring degraded watersheds that aims to re-establish processes such as sediment transport, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, and fire resiliency. Process-based restoration is partnering with nature to recover degraded river and stream catchments by harnessing the system’s fluvial and biological energy to do most of the restoration "work." Practitioners use low-risk approaches that minimize the use of fossil fuels. Treatments may include adding woody features such as post-assisted log structures (PALS) and beaver dam analogs (BDAs), and large wood augmentation.

This project will include a day-long workshop and four site tours to provide educational and interactive experience into process-based restoration techniques geared for agencies, local non-profits, and community members. The workshop will be a hands-on introduction into the “how and why” of process-based restoration on the central coast. This day will include a tour of completed BDA and PBR structures. Four additional site tours later in the year will be available to share the value and process of PBR with a broader audience.

The workshop and tours will take place at Walters Creek, where a recent PBR project has been implemented in 2025 by the Morro Bay National Estuary Program and partners. Walters Creek has been the site of several restoration efforts over the past two decades. Active riparian restoration began in 2004 and included planting, fencing, instream channel stabilization, and bank stabilization. A project in 2006 realigned Walters Creek to reconnect the stream channel to its historic floodplain, reduced the number of road crossings, replaced a corrugated metal pipe culvert with a bridge, and included riparian planting and streambank stabilization.

Despite these efforts, Walters Creek remains mostly disconnected from its historic floodplain, lacks instream complexity, and flows fall to zero or near-zero in summer and fall. These hydrologic impairments are likely the result of persistent channel incision in the upper watershed, and a young, sparse riparian forest that has not had time to fully establish, mature, and recruit instream woody debris.

The Walters Creek PBR Project can improve baseline conditions and address limiting factors by adding low-tech structures instream to enhance habitat complexity, reactivate portions of the current inset floodplain, improve sediment sorting and water quality, improve winter refuge opportunities, and increase landscape storage capacity to enhance flows in Walters and Chorro Creeks. These structures will help to improve riparian ecosystem function and expand the riparian corridor by increasing the duration and extent of surface and subsurface water available to vegetation, and potentially even help prepare the site for future beaver reintroduction by increasing the availability of open-water habitat and improving riparian ecosystem function. The project currently has 40 existing structures built with 20 to 30 additional structures planned for implementation in Spring 2026.

This workshop will leverage existing implementation resources and funding to engage the broader community interested in low-tech process-based restoration (LTPBR). This workshop would be one of the first workshops along the Central Coast to engage the surrounding community and provide training opportunities for LTPBR. It will allow local agencies and community members to get a hands-on introduction into this restoration technique, building local work experience, expertise, and capacity to implement future LTPBR projects to realize their own vision for the watersheds that they steward.

The full day workshop will be scheduled for spring, likely in March, to coincide with ongoing project implementation expected to be conducted by the MBNEP in spring 2026.

The workshop day will start with presentations on process-based restoration (PBR), the history of the Walters Creek site, and the permitting needed for the project. From there we will grab a sack lunch and head out to the site for a guided tour of an active restoration site on Walters Creek. After touring and eating lunch in the field, there will be an opportunity for everyone to

participate in hands-on building of beaver dam analogs and/or head cut erosion treatments. Participants will leave with a better understanding of what it takes to implement LTPBR projects and the benefits of using this restoration method.

The morning classroom sessions will happen regardless of weather conditions. Heavy rain with safety concerns (e.g., atmospheric river, lightning, etc.) will cancel the field site visit and hands-on portion of the workshop day. The project team may choose to reschedule the field site tour and hands-on portion of the workshop to another day that aligns with active implementation. The team may also encourage participants to sign up for one of the four additional BDA tours of completed BDAs and PBR structures offered. Four additional site tours will be offered, ideally during the project implementation periods in the Spring (March-May) or Fall (September-October), so people can see structures actively being built.

We expect this workshop to fill quickly so we will prioritize our outreach plan in collaboration with the MBNEP. We plan on initially limiting registration to 1 to 2 participants per organization to ensure there is a diversity of organizations and community members participating in the workshop. Outreach plan includes:

1. Emailing local organizations that have expressed an interest in PBR. These include US-LTRCD, Coastal San Luis RCD, local NRCS, Creek Lands Conservancy, County Public Works, among others. (Reach: ~200)
2. Include local permitting agency representatives: CDFW, RWQCB, FWS, Army Corps, etc. (Reach: ~50)
3. Local restoration companies and individuals: Wet Meadows, Althouse Meade, etc. (Reach: ~50)
4. SLO Beaver Brigade & MBNEP newsletters. (Reach: ~3000)
5. Cal Poly Professors to share with their students (Dr. Surfleet, Seeta Sistla, Dr. Nick Williams, etc), Cuesta's ranch course instructors and students. (Reach: ~200)
6. CalPoly's Center for Sustainability calendar (<https://cfs.calpoly.edu/>) (Reach: ~1000)
7. CalPoly's Natural Resources Management & Environmental Science Newsletter (nres@calpoly.edu) (Reach: ~1000)
8. Newsletters of partnering organizations (Sierra Club, Climate Coalition, One Cool Earth, Santa Barbara Permaculture Network, etc) (Reach: ~2000)
9. CalPBR network (Reach: ~2000)

Total reach of invite possible: 9500

Total expected attendance for workshop: 30-40

Total expected attendance for site tours: 40-100

Total reach: 70-140

Partner Organizations

- SLO Beaver Brigade (lead): Project management, facilitation, coordination, registration, outreach, evaluation, post-project reporting, and invoicing.
- Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP): Funding partner. Review presentation and outreach materials and support permitting information for workshop.
- California Conservation Corps (CCC): Site host for classroom portion of workshop, provide sack lunch, Meredith Hardy speaker on history of Walters Creek. Provide majority of prep material for hands-on workshop. Funded through State of CA Forest Health & Resiliency Funding.
- Nature's Engineers: Planning, prep day, presenter, hands-on workshop leads, site tour lead. Funded through additional MBNEP funds, not Community Project Program funds.

Evaluation

All workshop participants and tour participants will be requested to fill out a survey evaluating the workshop/tour, including questions such as:

1. What is your affiliation (ex: state/federal agency, landowner, Tribal organization, non-profit)?
2. From a scale of 1-5, what was your understanding of PBR prior to this workshop/tour?
3. From a scale of 1-5, what is your understanding of PBR after the workshop/tour?
4. From a scale of 1-5, what is your understanding of the issues addressing Walters Creek?
5. From a scale of 1-5, what is your understanding of how PBR could affect the conditions at Walters Creek?
6. Does the information you learned make it more likely for you to implement and/or permit PBRs?
7. Please share a highlight of this workshop/tour:
8. Please share an improvement you'd like to see in this workshop/tour:

Project tasks:

1. Project Management and Coordination: This task involves general coordination and project oversight. This includes:
 - Managing budget and timeline: coordinating planning meetings, managing schedule, and tracking project costs to ensure all tasks are completed in timely manner and within budget
 - Ensuring all insurance and waiver requirements are met for field-based activities

- Completing final reporting by end of project time period. That will include:
 - The work accomplished under this agreement
 - Any changes made to the project that deviated from the original proposal
 - The project successes and challenges
 - An evaluation of whether the project was successful
 - A summary of project evaluation statistics
 - A final budget summarizing all sources of funding for the project (including match reporting) and how each was utilized
 - At least six high resolution photos related to the project
 - Project statistics like how many attendees were present for the workshop and tours, summary of project evaluation, summary of feedback
 - Name of a knowledgeable contact person
 - Compiling and submitting project invoices for project work, no more frequently than monthly
 - Compiling and submitting match invoices, due with submittal of project invoices
2. Workshop and Site Tour Planning: This task involves project planning and coordination for one all-day workshop and four site tours, including:
- Scheduling and facilitating up to ten planning meetings, five to be held in person and five held virtually.
 - Coordinating event logistics, including location, meals, parking, insurance, etc. Determine max numbers for workshop and tours.
 - Developing workshop content in conjunction with MBNEP staff, and coordination with presenters.
 - Creating email invitation.
 - Gathering event supplies needed.
 - Developing registration process for workshop and four site tours, including determining registration tool and managing all communications regarding invitations.
 - Communicating with workshop participants (recommended footwear, expectations for the day, etc).
 - Coordinating communications with participants for four site tours.
 - Evaluating project by preparing and conducting qualitative and quantitative evaluations at the conclusion of the workshop and the four site tours. A brief survey will be available at the events or sent out via email after the workshop and after each site tour to assess knowledge, skills, perception shifts, and likelihood of permitting/implementing similar projects. Data will be summarized and incorporated into the final report.

3. Site Prep: This task involves preparation for the hands-on portion of the workshop. This includes supporting the gathering and prepping of materials to build one BDA and one head cut treatment. SLOBB will work with Nature's Engineers to select building sites that would work best for workshop participants. If the hands-on portion of the workshop is canceled in advance due to concerns about the weather or unforeseen site constraints, this portion of the project budget will not be utilized.
4. Workshop Day: This task will include three SLOBB staff attending and facilitating the full-day workshop including:
 - Welcoming and orienting attendees upon arrival
 - Offering technical assistance and facilitation of classroom presentations on PBR and Walters Creek site history
 - Facilitating carpooling to site and parking (site can accommodate up to 10 vehicles)
 - Facilitating logistics of attendees at the site
 - Facilitating debrief/reflection at end of workshop day
 - Rain considerations: Workshop would continue in light rain and would utilize other parking locations. If the site is unsafe due to rain conditions (e.g. atmospheric river), the field visit and hands-on portions will be cancelled. Folks will be encouraged to sign up for one of four site tours of completed BDAs and/or participate in the rescheduled hands-on implementation portion of the workshop. This rescheduled workshop would only be possible if implementation led by MBNEP, Nature's Engineers, and CCC occurs.
5. Site tours: The SLOBB will facilitate four site tours, including:
 - Coordinating with MBNEP staff to schedule four site tours (approximately one-and-a-half to two hours each) at Walters Creek to view completed PBR structures. Ideally, the site tours will also be scheduled during active implementation so people can see the structures being built.
 - Managing registration and planning for the site tours.
 - Nature's Engineers staff will lead the site tours and manage day-of site logistics.

Project Budget:

Budget Item	Requested from MBNEP	Source of Match Funding	Total Cost
Personnel Costs			
Project Management and Coordination (<i>estimate 16 hours rate \$50 / hour includes wage + taxes/insurance</i>)	\$800.00		\$800.00
Workshop and Site Tour Planning (<i>estimate 88 hours rate \$50 / hour includes wage + taxes/insurance</i>)	\$4,400.00		\$4,400.00
Site Prep (<i>estimate 2 SLO BB staff for 6 hours each rate \$50/ hour includes wage + taxes/insurance</i>)	\$600.00	\$3,045 (CCC-State Forest Health & Resiliency Funding; Assumes 15 corpsmembers for half day at \$40.61/hr)	\$3,645.00
Workshop Day (<i>estimate 3 SLOBB staff rate \$50 / hour includes wage + taxes/insurance for 13 hrs each</i>)	\$1,950.00	\$500 (CCC site use and food)	\$2,450.00
Supplies			
Gloves for working in wet conditions	\$60.00		\$60.00
Travel			
Mileage (Planning mileage for 5 meetings (120 miles), Prep Day Mileage (92), Day of Event (138 miles) Total mileage (350 miles) mileage \$0.70/mile)	\$245.00		\$245.00
Totals	\$8,055.00	\$3,545.00	\$11,600

Although support for Nature’s Engineers is not funded as part of this Community Project, they will play a primary role in this project. Their time for the project will be covered by other MBNEP funding. Their tasks include the following: attending planning and coordination meetings; supporting site selection and materials prep for the hands-on portion of the workshop; developing and delivering workshop presentations; leading participants in hands-on construction of PBRs; and leading four site tours and handling related on-site logistics.

The MBNEP implementation schedule for additional PBR installation is expected to occur this spring. However, constraints such as weather, CCC availability, or other unforeseen issues may prevent implementation from happening in the expected timeframe. If this is the case, the hands-on portion of the workshop may not be able to take place, and the project budget would be adjusted accordingly.

Project Schedule:

- January - February 2026: Confirm workshop date, speakers, partners, location, rain and site logistics, parking, landowner permissions, liability waivers, and food.
- February 2026: Create email invitation and invite participants. Registration underway. Workshop supplies gathered. Presentations for workshop finalized by mid-February in collaboration with MBNEP.
- March 2026: Complete registration, determine work sites, prep materials, conduct pre-event site visit, host workshop. Conduct post survey on workshop day or via email within a few days of the event.

Workshop Schedule

Timing	Agenda Item	Responsible Organization
9-10AM	Presentation on PBR’s why & how, site history, and permitting pathways	Nature’s Engineers, CCC, MBNEP
10-11AM	Lunch prep and transport to site	All
11AM-12PM	Site tour of built structures	Nature’s Engineers
12-12:30PM	Lunch at site	n/a
12:30-4PM	Building PBRs	All
4-4:30PM	Wrap-up/Reflection	All

Timing	Agenda Item	Responsible Organization
4:30-5PM	Return to CCC Center	n/a

- March to May and/or September to October: Plan and host four site tours by Nature’s Engineers with SLOBB supporting coordination during active project implementation periods.
- March - October 2026: Conduct post tour surveys on event day or via email within a few days of the event.
- October - November 2026: Analyze evaluations and create final report.
- November - December 2026: Submit final report to MBNEP. Final report, photos, invoice, and match invoice due.

Partial Funding:

If only partial funding were available, SLOBB would propose removing the four site tours from the project. This would include \$800 for coordination of the four site tours.

Partially Funded Project Cost: \$7,255