



BETWEEN THE Tides

FEATURED



**A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO
OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS**



**ASSESSING CREEK HEALTH
WITH 2025 BIOASSESSMENT
RESULTS**



**MUTTS FOR THE BAY
CORNER: COMMUNITY IN
ACTION**



A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

Each year, we're reminded how much our volunteers make possible. From early morning creek sampling to shoreline cleanups – volunteers give life to our mission. In 2025, more than 335 volunteers contributed over 2,200 hours of service to support our program.



For restoration: We had the help of 12 restoration volunteers who contributed over 100 hours of their time to support our invasive plant management efforts.

In monitoring: Our 33 monitoring volunteers and 11 student fellows contributed more than 1,100 hours in 2025 by supporting fieldwork and lab work throughout the bay and watershed.



For education and outreach: Our 290 education & outreach volunteers contributed 750 hours and picked up over 220 pounds of trash! And our Mutts for the Bay volunteers stocked our 36 donation-funded pet waste bag dispensers throughout our watershed.

On our Governing Board: The nine volunteer members of our Bay Foundation of Morro Bay governing board worked throughout the year to review our workplan and budgets and help guide the direction of the organization.

On November 15, we celebrated the hard work of our volunteers and recognized five standout stewards at our 2025 Volunteer Appreciation Event. Mike Milanesi and Steve Harrell were named our Monitoring Volunteers of the Year, Sue and Myron Hood were honored as our Outstanding Monitoring Volunteers, and Becka Kelly was recognized as our Community Volunteer of the Year.



We are deeply grateful for every volunteer and community member who supports the Estuary Program. Your contributions make our work possible.



ASSESSING CREEK HEALTH WITH 2025 BIOASSESSMENT RESULTS

Every spring, our staff and volunteers head out to sites throughout the watershed to conduct bioassessment surveys. This involves collecting macroinvertebrates, which are insects visible to the naked eye. They give us information on creek health since some species are very sensitive to pollution, while others can tolerate or even thrive in polluted waters.



To collect macroinvertebrate samples, we put a net in the creek and scrub the rocks and gravel in front of the net. The macroinvertebrates float into the net with the current. The samples go to a lab for counting and identification.

We then use a tool called the California Stream Condition Index (CSCI) to calculate a health score for each site. Higher CSCI scores indicate a healthier stream. Of the ten sites for 2025, four scored as “Very Good” and five scored as “Good.” Only one site scored as “Fair.” While this site did not score well, the results were in line with historical averages, meaning that conditions have not gotten worse over time.



Creek sites with sensitive benthic macroinvertebrate species typically have higher CSCI scores than sites without sensitive species. The large stonefly larva on the rock pictured above are typically indicators of good water quality.

Long-term monitoring efforts like this help us understand how our watershed is changing over time, and we are excited to continue annual spring bioassessment surveys in 2026.



We would like to thank the Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust for their generous contribution of more than \$154,000 in support of this work since 2013. This critical dataset helps us prioritize conservation and restoration projects and track creek health over time. To learn more about the Miossi Charitable Trust, please visit <https://www.miossicharitabletrust.org/>.

HELP US PROTECT MORRO BAY TODAY, TOMORROW, AND FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

At the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, our goal is not only to protect and restore Morro Bay today, but also to ensure its longevity into tomorrow. As we look ahead to 2026, we invite you to join us in protecting the future of Morro Bay. When you donate, you fuel work that keeps Morro Bay healthy, resilient, and cared for today and for generations to come.

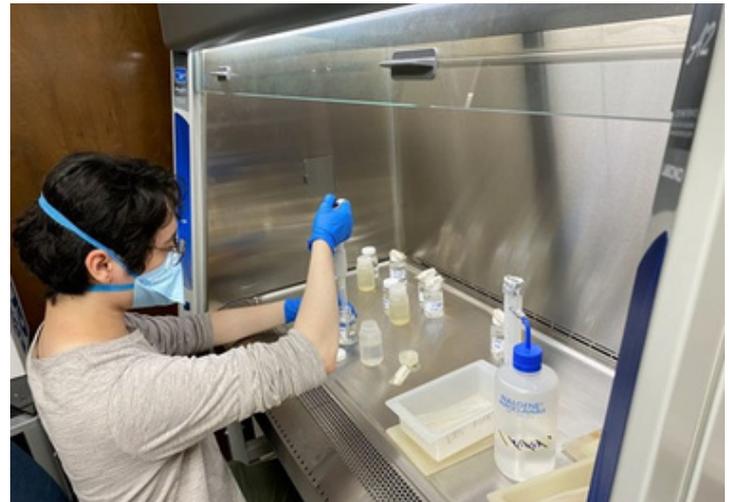
On top of supporting our monitoring, restoration, and outreach efforts, your support also funds two unique programs that work to inspire and uplift the next generation of environmental stewards.



When kids are outside and taught about the natural world from a young age, they are more likely to value and care for the landscapes and wildlife that make our region special. Our Educator Workshop Series provides free professional development opportunities for teachers, educating them on how to incorporate outdoor education into their curriculum and teach coastal environmental literacy.

While our Educator Workshop helps teachers spark a love of the outdoors in young learners, our fellowship opportunities help older students turn that passion into a career.

Our Monitoring Fellowship Program offers hands-on fieldwork experience in the bay and creeks, where students gain confidence, technical skills, and qualifications that help open doors to environmental careers.



In contrast to our other programs that receive grant support, our Educator Workshop Series and Monitoring Fellowship Program are made possible solely through your end-of-year donations.

Your generosity strengthens the work that safeguards this special place and nurtures the next generation of environmental stewards. Every gift, no matter the size, makes a meaningful difference for our waters, wildlife, and community. Together, we can ensure that Morro Bay remains healthy, vibrant, and cared for today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, donations to the Estuary Program are tax-deductible. Visit mbnep.org/donate to help protect Morro Bay now and into the future. Your donations help protect water quality, wildlife habitat, coastal recreation, and the estuary we all cherish.

Mutts for the Bay Corner

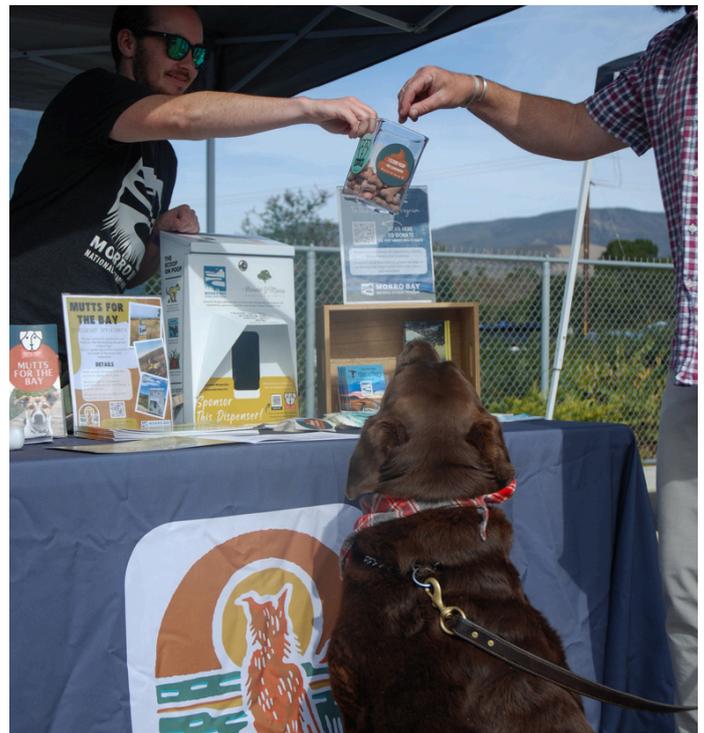
The Estuary Program supports efforts to protect the waters of our bay for people and wildlife. Our Mutts for the Bay program provides free dog waste bags in Morro Bay and Los Osos. Through our network of 36 dispensers, we give out around 300,000 bags each year for picking up after pets! This helps prevent hundreds of thousands of pounds of dog poop from potentially polluting our local waterways. This program, which we've helped manage for the past 20 years, would not be possible without the generous support of our many sponsors.



Each dispenser is supported by a sponsor who makes an annual donation to help cover the costs of bags, dispenser maintenance, and community outreach. These sponsors can be a business, a community organization, or an individual. Our local business sponsors include ESTERO, Dale Kaiser Real Estate, and The Shell Shop. Some of our sponsors donate on behalf of a pet or loved one. A few of our sponsors have been donating to the program for over a decade! Our sponsors collectively contribute over \$10,000 every year to keep this important program running smoothly.



The Mutts for the Bay program is always in need of support. Currently, there are several dispensers in Morro Bay available for sponsorship. If you are interested in helping out, please email outreach.support@mbnep.org or call us at 805-772-3834.



Blog Recap

In case you missed them the first time around, here are some of our top blogs from recent months.



NOVEMBER 2025 FIELD UPDATES: ASSESSING CREEK HEALTH WITH 2025 BIOASSESSMENT RESULTS

November 28, 2025

Read about the results of our 2025 bioassessment monitoring work which measures creek health through assessment of macroinvertebrates.



CALIFORNIA KING TIDES PROJECT: HELP SCIENTISTS SEE THE FUTURE!

November 14, 2025

Learn about the California King Tides Project, an annual community science effort using king tides to help predict the effects of sea level rise.



LOW-TECH SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE WALTERS CREEK

October 17, 2025

The Estuary Program is utilizing low-tech, “process-based” restoration projects in Walters Creek. Read this blog to learn more about the goals and impacts of these projects.



LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT TRASH: RECYCLING

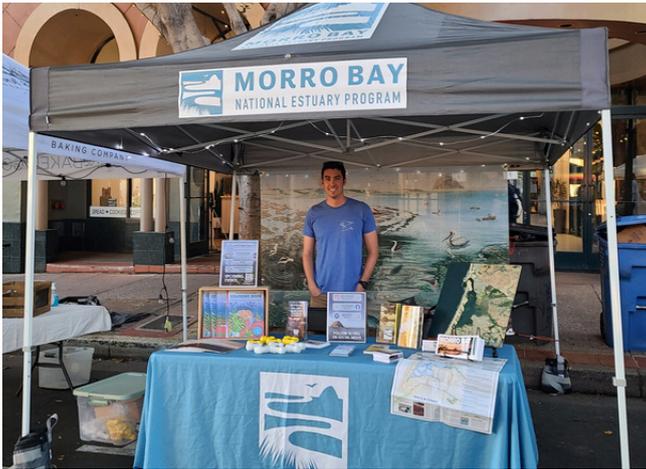
September 26, 2025

This blog discusses the history, benefits, and challenges of recycling, and it breaks down which items are recyclable in SLO County.

Upcoming Events

Join us! Learn more at [MBNEP.org/events](https://www.MBNEP.org/events) and register for limited-capacity events at [MBNEP.Eventbrite.com](https://www.MBNEP.Eventbrite.com).

Stay tuned for more events in the upcoming months!



January 17: Morro Bay Bird Festival
Community Family Day, 10:00am - 2:00pm

Morro Bay Community Center

February 8: SLO Botanical Garden Family
Free Day, 10:00am - 2:00pm

STATE OF THE BAY 2026

This spring, Estuary Program staff will be attending and hosting a variety of events to promote our triennial State of the Bay report. Keep an eye on our social media and events webpage to learn more!



[MBNEP.ORG/EVENTS](https://www.MBNEP.org/events)

[MBNEP.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://www.MBNEP.Eventbrite.com)

PHOTOGRAPH BY PROJECT EARTH

