Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Grant

Fiscal Year 2026 Semi-annual Report: October 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026

The Morro Bay National Estuary Program (Estuary Program) is a locally driven, non-regulatory program established under Section 320 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and further supported by the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act (PRAE Act). As one of 28 National Estuary Programs (NEPs) across the country, the Estuary Program works in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies, as well as community stakeholders, to protect and restore the health of Morro Bay and its watershed. The program operates under the guidance of its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) which serves as a strategic framework for addressing key water quality, habitat, and resource management challenges in the region.

On November 15, 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA) (P.L. 117-58) was enacted. The law includes $50 billion to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for water infrastructure, the single largest investment in water that the federal government has ever made. The IIJA provides $132 million in funding for the 28 longstanding NEPs for fiscal years (FY) 2022 through 2026. This funding will be evenly distributed to the NEPs, annually providing each with $910,000 in IIJA funds.

The Estuary Program is moving forward with implementing the FY25 IIJA Workplan. Our spending under the grant (Grant Number 4T-98T47301) as of March 31, 2026 was $2,662,740. As of March 31, we have expended 59% of the IIJA funding grant that started in FY22.

The Estuary Program requests EPA's continued participation on the Executive Committee and assistance with meeting relevant administrative and programmatic grant conditions. During this period, the Estuary Program continued to coordinate with EPA staff to get relevant IIJA administration information, particularly related to updated guidance with new administration priorities.

The following report summarizes IIJA activities and deliverables completed during the first half of FY26, per workplan task.

Organization Capacity

The following section provides updates to IIJA projects and activities by workplan task: capacity building, environmental monitoring and research, habitat restoration and planning, water infrastructure, and education and outreach.

Capacity-1: Capacity Building

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Increase and maintain staff capacity to support all programmatic areas including IIJA administration and implementation.

Description: The increase in programmatic activity requires additional staff to administer and implement projects. Staff will support the administration of IIJA funding, reporting, and grant/contract management. Additionally, staff will support restoration, monitoring, and education & outreach needs. The task includes associated technology needs and professional development for staff.
Progress Towards Milestones: The Estuary Program successfully recruited and hired staff to build capacity to support the implementation of IIJA projects. IIJA funding supported a full-time Restoration Projects Manager, Administrative Assistant, and an Education & Outreach Specialist. Additionally, several Estuary Program staff funded through the 320 base funding grant contribute time towards implementing IIJA projects.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program serves as the lead for this task.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: IIJA-funded staff directly support IIJA projects and implementation of the CCMP.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: None.
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: The Estuary Program will continue to support staff positions.
Pending Deliverables: None.
CCMP Action Plan: All

Environmental Monitoring and Research

Monitoring-1: Tracking Bay Health

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Collect high quality data set to support understanding of estuary health.

Description: A primary goal of the Estuary Program is to conduct monitoring to understand changing conditions. The program will continue tracking key environmental indicators, working with partners to develop and implement monitoring efforts, and collecting data related to future environmental impacts.
Progress Towards Milestones: Staff coordinated with Cal Poly on use of data generated by the Central and Northern California Ocean Observing System (CeNCOOS) sensor arrays in Morro Bay. Staff recruited, trained, and coordinated Cuesta College students to conduct monitoring in the bay for indicator bacteria. The student fellows are collecting high quality bacteria data from the bay to support safe swimming and shellfish farming management. These community college students are also gaining real-life field and lab skills that may help open doors to future career pathways. The indicator bacteria data is being shared via the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN) data portal and with partners to facilitate resource management and support efforts to safeguard human health. Bacteria data was also integrated into the Estuary Program's 2026 State of the Bay report and State of the Bay data dashboard. The Estuary Program is coordinating with Cal Poly faculty and students to collect monthly nutrient samples from bay shoreline sites. Samples are collected and analyzed, and the data is under analysis by Cal Poly and UC Santa Barbara. To better understand bay tidal prism, the Estuary Program supported a Cal Poly researcher using IIJA funding to further refine the existing tidal prism calculations for the bay. A final report detailing the results of this project will be submitted to the Estuary Program later in the year. Staff are also partnering with a Cal

Poly researcher on a phytoplankton monitoring project. The work includes collecting and identifying phytoplankton samples from the front and back bay, and samples underwent genetic analysis of sediment and water to assess phytoplankton communities. The phytoplankton data are under analysis. Staff purchased supplies and funded lab analysis to support monitoring efforts throughout the estuary.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program served as the lead in the bacteria indicator monitoring conducted with Cuesta College. For other monitoring efforts, lead partners include Cal Poly who serves as the technical lead in the installation and maintenance of the CeNCOOS sensors; Cuesta College is a lead partner, providing lab facilities and technical support for bacteria monitoring efforts; and Cal Poly who serves as a technical lead in data collection and analysis for efforts related to bay nutrients, tidal prism, and phytoplankton. Partners who utilize Estuary Program data, share technical expertise, and provide landowner access (where applicable) include California State Parks, San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Public Health Department, SLO County Parks and Recreation, Cal Poly, Cuesta College, CeNCOOS, California Department of Public Health, Los Osos Community Services District (LOCSD), Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB), SWRCB, and commercial oyster farmers.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Activities for this task involved collecting and sharing high quality data that increases understanding of the long-term trends in ambient water quality in the estuary, promotes safe swimming and aquaculture, and supports identification of projects to address bacteria and nutrient pollution. Staff compiled data and analysis to create a 2026 State of the Bay (SOTB) environmental report card.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: A quality data set that meets the parameters outlined in the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). Example of monthly indicator bacteria memos shared with partners. Data for front bay and back bay sites available via CeNCOOS data dashboard. Activities as described in semi-annual and annual reports. Bay water quality data submitted to CEDEN for use in the SWRCB Integrated Report process to assess the status of impaired water bodies in the Morro Bay watershed. State of the Bay 2026 (print version). State of the Bay 2026 (online version). State of the Bay 2026 Data Dashboard.

Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Continue data collection and coordination with partners. Continue submitting data to CEDEN. Compile Bay Health Memo for WY25. Present State of the Bay results to the public.
Pending Deliverables: Data managed in an Access-based system for submittal to CEDEN. Monthly bacteria result memos. Bay Health Memo for WY25.
CCMP Action Plan: MON-2 (Monitor Environmental Indicators), MON-4 (Maintain Volunteer Monitoring Program), MON-5 (Support Partners), ECR-10 (Nutrient and Bacteria Dynamics), USE-1 (Recreational Use), USE-2 (Shellfish Farming)

Monitoring-2: Tracking Creek Health

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Collect high quality data to support our understanding of watershed creek health.

Description: A primary goal of the Estuary Program is to conduct monitoring to understand changing conditions. The program will continue tracking key environmental indicators, working with partners to develop and implement monitoring efforts, and collecting data related to future environmental impacts.

Progress Towards Milestones: Staff conducted monitoring to track key environmental indicators in the watershed. We worked with partners to collect and analyze data from water level sensors to expand our surface flow monitoring network throughout the watershed. Staff are collecting data for the development of rating curves. A contract is underway to conduct additional analysis with the low flow data to create rating curves and develop recommendations for water conservation projects. Staff conducted water quality monitoring of agricultural impacted sites throughout the watershed, with a focus on analysis of nutrients. Staff implemented monitoring efforts, including coordination with the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program (CCAMP) and the and the Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory (MPSL) at UC Davis Granite Canyon for sediment and water toxicity analysis. Staff worked with Cuesta College students to collect and analyze creek samples for indicator bacteria. Staff shared the bacterial indicator results on CEDEN and via monthly bacteria memos sent to partners, agencies, land managers, and landowners. Staff conducted expanded nutrient and water quality parameter monitoring. Staff conducted wet season toxicity monitoring, which involved collecting water and sediment samples and sending them to a toxicology lab. The results are expected this spring. Staff purchased supplies to support monitoring efforts throughout the watershed. Staff finalized a report describing the program's sediment related work in WY2024. Staff compiled results in 2026 State of the Bay report in a print version, online version, and data dashboard.

Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program serves as the lead on all of these efforts, providing the funding, labor, and technical knowledge for the work. In addition, lead partners in these efforts include Cuesta College, providing lab facilities and technical support for bacteria monitoring efforts; the Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc. and the CCRWQCB, providing technical input on site and analyte selection; the CCRWQCB and Creek Lands Conservation (CLC), a local nonprofit, providing guidance on sensor selection and troubleshooting; and MPSL at UC Davis Granite Canyon for toxicity analysis and lab data submittal to SWAMP/CEDEN. For support by the California Conservation Corps (CCC)/Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) in partnership with AmeriCorps, Corpsmembers provide on-the-ground support for fieldwork. Partners who utilize Estuary Program data and provide landowner access (where applicable) include California State Parks, SLO County Public Health Department, SLO County Parks and Recreation, Cal Poly, Cuesta College, California Department of Public Health, CCRWQCB, SWRCB, Camp KEEP, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), CLC, and commercial oyster farmers.

Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Activities for this task involve working with partners to develop and implement monitoring efforts to increase understanding of the long-term trends in ambient water quality in the watershed. Staff compiled data and analysis to create a 2026 SOTB environmental report card.

Problems Encountered: None.

Deliverables: A quality data set that meets the parameters outlined in the QAPP. Monthly indicator bacteria memo (see example). Creek water quality data submitted to CEDEN for use in the SWRCB Integrated Report process to assess the status of impaired water bodies in the Morro Bay watershed. Sediment Report for WY2024. State of the Bay 2026 (print version). State of the Bay 2026 (online version). State of the Bay 2026 Data Dashboard. Bioassessment Memo for 2025.

Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Continue data collection. Submit data to CEDEN. Conduct spring bioassessment monitoring at ten sites. Work with a researcher to conduct sediment impact analysis as part of the bioassessment data analysis effort. Present SOTB results to the public.

Pending Deliverables: Monthly bacteria memos. Data submittal to CEDEN. Creek Health Memo for WY2025.

CCMP Action Plans: MON-1 (Support Development of TMDLs), MON-2 (Monitor Environmental Indicators), MON-4 (Maintain Volunteer Monitoring Program), MON-5 (Support Partners), ECR-10 (Nutrient and Bacteria Dynamics), FWR-3 (Understand Flow for Public Trust Resources), USE-1 (Recreational Use), USE-2 (Shellfish Farming)

Monitoring-3: Eelgrass Monitoring and Research

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Conduct eelgrass monitoring to determine distribution in the bay as well as bed health.

Description: Eelgrass is a valuable habitat type in Morro Bay, providing multiple benefits. It enhances water quality and water clarity, reduces erosion, and provides habitat for wildlife. Morro Bay's eelgrass has undergone rapid changes recently, with a steep decline in acreage from 2007 to 2017 and a rebound after that. Mapping and monitoring of eelgrass allows for tracking of bed health and indicates when there is a need for restoration efforts.
Progress Towards Milestones: The Estuary Program oversaw a contract for creation of a baywide eelgrass map using sonar and drone data collected in spring 2025. The draft map is expected in spring 2026. Estuary Program staff conducted eelgrass monitoring to track long-term trends. Estuary Program staff coordinated with Cal Poly for collection of high-resolution of drone imagery in late 2025 and early 2026. The data supports efforts to track eelgrass health. Staff are partnering with Cal Poly to use this imagery with an automated model to map eelgrass. Staff continued a partnership with a Cuesta College professor to develop a project to analyze eelgrass prokaryote communities and the genetics of the slime mold that causes wasting disease to better understand how eelgrass supports the estuarine ecosystem.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program is the lead on the eelgrass monitoring project and the baywide eelgrass mapping project. Cuesta College is the lead on the eelgrass wasting disease work. The partners in this effort are Cal Poly as the entity leading work related to bay water quality. Partners include those utilizing the data and those providing landowner access, including California State Parks, local oyster farmers, and the city of Morro Bay. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), CDFW, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), EPA, and others have provided funding and technical support for the effort. Other users of the data include the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership, the Black Brant Group, the City of Morro Bay, and local businesses.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Eelgrass monitoring and mapping efforts as well as working with research partners all support the outcome of better understanding of eelgrass stressors and dynamics. This improved understanding directly supports the outcome of development of eelgrass monitoring and restoration.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: State of the Bay 2026 (print version). State of the Bay 2026 (online version). State of the Bay 2026 Data Dashboard.
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Creation of a baywide eelgrass map. Eelgrass and macroalgae monitoring. Eelgrass prokaryote and slime mold genetic analysis work. Present SOTB results to the public.
Pending Deliverables: 2025 baywide map of eelgrass in Morro Bay. 2026 baywide map of eelgrass in Morro Bay. 2024 Eelgrass Report. 2025 Eelgrass Report.

CCMP Action Plans: ECR-7 (Eelgrass Data and Research), ECR-8 (Eelgrass Restoration), ECR-9 (Regional and National Collaboration)

Monitoring-4: Data Analysis and Management

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Analyze and maintain data in a state-compatible format.
Description: The Estuary Program compiles and analyzes program-generated data to assess long-term trends and project-specific effects on water quality and other indicators of environmental quality. These analyses are shared with program partners, local landowners, and the public to help inform decision-making. Data must be available in the correct format for analysis and must be maintained in a data management system that allows for easy sharing of results.
Progress Towards Milestones: Staff attended SWRCB CEDEN Work Group meetings to stay apprised on upcoming changes to the system. Staff analyzed the 2025 bioassessment data with the recently calculated California Stream Condition Index (CSCI) scores for a bioassessment memo for 2025. Monitoring data was submitted to CEDEN.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The lead is the Estuary Program, with partner support from the CCRWQCB and SWRCB who as users of the data and provide input on data collection, analysis, and sharing.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Activities such as storing and submitting data accomplished the outcome of making available to the public and state a high-quality data set that supports Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analysis, Clean Water Act section 303(d) assessment, land management, etc.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: Data submittal to CEDEN.
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Continue to work with SWRCB on CEDEN updates.
Pending Deliverables: Bioassessment Memo for WY26.
CCMP Action Plan: MON-1 (Support Development of TMDLs), MON-2 (Monitor Environmental Indicators), MON-3 (Monitor Project Effectiveness), MON-5 (Support Partners)

Habitat Restoration and Protection

Restoration-1: Invasive Species Management

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Prioritize, manage, and implement invasive species management in the estuary and watershed.

Description: To protect sensitive habitats in the watershed, proactive management of invasive species is a key tool. The Estuary Program works with partners and landowners to map and treat invasives.
Progress Towards Milestones: A contractor surveyed and mapped *Arundo donax* and up to 19 other priority invasive species within the Chorro Creek watershed in spring 2024, January 2025, and May 2025. Surveys were completed on foot and using drone surveys. Priority management areas and species were identified, and staff are taking initial steps such as permitting to treat invasives. Staff partnered with SLO County to manage giant reed within Chorro Creek. Two rounds of removal of sticky snakeroot (*Ageratina*

adenophora) have occurred on San Bernardo Creek with volunteers. Camp SLO has plans to continue to implement their invasive species management plan focused on cape ivy, tree of heaven, periwinkle, *Arundo*, and thistle with partner funding. Staff received a permit waiver from the California Coastal Commission to manage iceplant on the sandspit for five years starting in October 2023. Estuary Program staff received additional funds for this project through the USFWS Coastal Program. Iceplant treatment occurred in fall 2023, January 2024, and December 2025. Additional hand pulling of iceplant near sensitive plant species and near the water's edge occurred in September and December 2024 and December 2025 with CCC members. In April 2025, the CCC corpsmembers managed weeds at CCER and conducted plant survival surveys. Staff completed is planning for bi-monthly European sea lavender monitoring at target areas and a baywide monitoring effort in summer 2026.

Leads, Partners, and Roles: SLO County is the lead for *Arundo donax* management with support from the Estuary Program. The Estuary Program is the lead for invasive species management on the sandspit and other State Parks owned areas adjacent to the estuary in partnership with landowners, State Parks, and the City of Morro Bay. The Estuary Program serves as the lead for weed management at CCER with coordination with CDFW and the CCC.

Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Improved diversity of plant species and protection of sensitive plant species.

Problems Encountered: None.

Deliverables: None.

Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Complete post-project monitoring and reporting to the California Coastal Commission for Year 3 of iceplant management. Work with the CCC to complete weeding of the CCER floodplain restoration site and annual plant survival surveys. Continue *Arundo* management with SLO County along Chorro Creek. Complete removal at target areas and baywide monitoring effort for European sea lavender.

Pending Deliverables: None.

CCMP Action Plan: ECR-9 (Regional and National Collaboration), ECR-16 (Invasive Species Action Plan)

Restoration-2: Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Planning

Project Status: Ongoing

Objective: Further understanding of short and long-term environmental impacts to estuary and watershed habitats. Implement restoration projects to improve habitat acreage or conditions.

Description: Shifts in environmental conditions pose a threat to sensitive estuary habitats. Monitoring, modeling, and planning efforts can help communities mitigate the impacts of these changes by supporting planning and designs of additional habitat restoration projects within the watershed and estuary.

Progress Towards Milestones: The Estuary Program partnered with the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) to conduct a historical ecology project. SFEI has compiled an extensive list of referenced documents and georeferenced maps in Geographic Information System (GIS). A final habitat map (ca. 1850) has been finalized with the report being finalized and printed in spring 2026. Match funding has also been provided to the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD) for an SCC grant to model storm and flood vulnerability and adaptation measures along lower Chorro Creek. CSLRCD is

currently permitting the highest priority projects. Staff and partners permitted and implemented a project along Walters Creek to support floodplain enhancement through placement of 40 instream structures (e.g., beaver dam analogs, head cut treatments). Adaptive management of the structures occurred in March 2026. A workshop was also held to share lessons learned on how to implement low-tech process based restoration. A contractor completed geomorphic surveys at CCER to assess change over time (accretion/erosion) and fish passage at the restoration site. Estuary Program and CDFW staff are considering what adaptation measures are needed to maintain fish passage at low flows. Staff are also working with Cal Poly to improve a road crossing that was washed out along a Walters Creek tributary. A contractor completed field surveys, and final designs are currently being reviewed by stakeholders.

Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program is the lead on these efforts. The Estuary Program will continue a partnership with SFEI to complete historical mapping and understanding of watershed processes. The Estuary Program is partnering with Cal Poly and Trout Unlimited on a floodplain enhancement project and a road crossing along Walters Creek. The program will continue to partner with CDFW to ensure floodplain benefits and access to CCER are maintained.

Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: With stakeholder involvement, an improved understanding of historical conditions will guide and inform future restoration.

Problems Encountered: None.

Deliverables: None.

Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: A final report of the historical ecology study will be completed in spring 2026. Continued adaptive management, monitoring, and permit reporting of Walters Creek floodplain enhancement project. Final designs of the Walters Creek tributary road crossing will be completed in spring 2026.

Pending Deliverables: To be determined as contracts are completed over the next six months.

CCMP Action Plan: ECR-3 (Wetlands Protection and Enhancement), ECR-4 (Wetlands Inventory), ECR-7 (Eelgrass Data and Research), ECR-8 (Eelgrass Restoration), ECR-11 (Conserve Ecosystem Functions)

Restoration-3: Fish Habitat Monitoring and Improvement

Project Status: Ongoing

Objective: Support research and monitoring to increase understanding of fish habitat conditions and populations. Prioritize and further implementation of fish passage barrier improvement projects.

Description: Much of the habitat restoration and protection efforts of the Estuary Program target the protection of sensitive species, including steelhead. Monitoring and management of fish populations and their habitats directly support this work.

Progress Towards Milestones: A juvenile steelhead growth and tracking study was initiated in fall 2023 and will continue through fall 2026. A report summarizing data from fall 2023 through spring 2025 was completed. Steelhead were tagged and antennae were installed to track fish movement in lower Chorro Creek. Data from the winter storms show steelhead moving from Chorro Creek into the estuary and back again. Invasive pikeminnow were managed in Chorro Creek with the CCC in October 2025, and planning is underway for an anticipated repeat effort in fall 2026.

Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program is the lead for these efforts. Stillwater Sciences is a primary partner for monitoring as they hold the permit for implementation (e.g., electrofishing and passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags). The CCC provides project maintenance and field support as needed. Additional partners include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), CDFW, State Parks, and landowners throughout the watershed. The Estuary Program is the lead for fish barrier projects, in partnership with the county of SLO, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and CDFW. The Estuary Program is leading stakeholder engagement on fish passage barrier projects.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Improved understanding of steelhead habitat use, population, and movement to inform future restoration project prioritization. Support tracking of a fish focused measurable target within the HPRS.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: None.
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Develop contract and implement a pikeminnow management effort in fall 2026.
Pending Deliverables: None.
CCMP Action Plan: ECR-3 (Wetlands Protection and Enhancement), ECR-13 (Population Dynamics), ECR-14 (Support Recovery Plans), ECR-15 (Steelhead Barriers and Habitat), MON-5 (Support Partners)

Restoration-4: Open Space Habitat and Access

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Further planning and implementation to restore habitat and improve conditions at coastal access sites.

Description: The Estuary Program strives to protect sensitive open space habitats while supporting access to these areas. We collaborate with community stakeholders and partner organizations to further plans to restore habitat and improve conditions at coastal access sites. The Estuary Program and our partners are always seeking opportunities for further acquisitions or conservation easements for the protection of habitats.
Progress Towards Milestones: Estuary Program staff met with SLO County Parks & Recreation staff to discuss Pasadena Point habitat enhancement opportunities. A project to conduct cultural resource survey and remove iceplant is under development. Staff are planning to complete a contract with LCSLO to support the permitting and construction of a trail in a nature preserve along Ramona Avenue and adjacent to Sweet Spring property in Los Osos.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program is a partner on conservation and easement efforts, working with SLO County Parks, LCSLO, and Morro Coast Audubon Society.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Staff continue to collaborate with partners to prioritize projects. Work is increasing public access to coastal areas.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: None.
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Work with LCSLO to contract project support such as permits and cultural resources for the nature preserve trail in Los Osos.
Pending Deliverables: None.

CCMP Action Plan: ECR-3 (Wetlands Protection and Enhancement), ECR-13 (Population Dynamics), BMP-5 (Support BMPs by private landowners and municipalities)

Restoration-5: Implement BMPs in the Watershed

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Implement best management practices (BMPs) in the watershed to support improved water quality and quantity.

Description: The Estuary Program collaborates with partners and landowners to prioritize and implement BMPs to protect habitat.
Progress Towards Milestones: The CSLRCD completed 20,000 feet of wildlife-friendly riparian fencing and off-channel watering on private lands. A subaward with Cuesta College was completed to install water and fencing infrastructure to support their sustainable agriculture program.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: CSLRCD is the lead for implementing BMPs and riparian fencing on private lands. As the landowner and land manager, Cal Poly is a project partner. The Estuary Program serves a partner role, providing funding and technical input for these efforts.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Continue to build and maintain relationships with landowners to support BMP maintenance and effectiveness.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: None.
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Work with partners to identify new projects to support this goal. Continue discussion with Cal Poly on rainwater/high flow capture tanks.
Pending Deliverables: None.
CCMP Action Plan: BMP-1 (Agricultural and Grazing BMPs), BMP-2 (Rural Roads Erosion), BMP-5 (Support BMPs by private landowners and municipalities), ECR-2 (Riparian Corridors), ECR-9 (Regional and National Collaboration), EO-4 (Formal Education Programs)

Water Infrastructure

Water-1: Stormwater Improvement

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Prioritize and further implementation of stormwater improvement projects to protect the health of the bay.

Description: Stormwater management is an effective tool for protecting sensitive habitats such as our estuary and creeks. The Estuary Program engages stakeholders on planning, data collection, and prioritizing stormwater projects that could be supported with IIJA funding.
Progress Towards Milestones: Estuary Program remains in communication with Camp SLO and the CCC to track how the stormwater projects are doing since implementation. The projects are doing well to date. Staff are working with SLO County to develop future stormwater projects.

Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program is the lead, working with potential partners such as City of Morro Bay, SLO County, Camp SLO, and community stakeholders. Potential tasks include project development, applying for grants, and implementing stormwater construction projects.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Projects reduce pollutant and high runoff flows to creek systems and directly to the bay, protecting both fresh and marine resources.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: None.
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Continued communication with Camp SLO and CCC on initial survival of plantings and general success of the stormwater projects.
Pending Deliverables: None.
CCMP Action Plan: BMP-5 (Support BMPs by private landowners and municipalities), BMP-7 (Support Stormwater BMPs)

Water-2: Groundwater Monitoring

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Support monitoring of groundwater to support management of drinking water for the community of Los Osos.

Description: Increasing drought and groundwater supply is a major issue, in particular for vulnerable communities. The community of Los Osos depends primarily on groundwater for its water supply. Water withdrawals are leading to saltwater intrusion into the lower aquifer. To halt this threat to the aquifer, the Estuary Program works with partners such as the Los Osos Basin Management Committee (LOSBMC) and the LOCSD.
Progress Towards Milestones: Staff closed out a subaward with LOCSD to rehabilitate two existing monitoring wells to expand the network needed to support the drinking water needs of the Los Osos community. Staff worked with the LOCSD to complete a subaward agreement and contract to conduct an electrical resistivity geophysical survey to track saltwater intrusion in the aquifer. The contract, scope, subaward agreement, and QAPP are complete and the project is ready to proceed in spring 2026.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The lead partner in this effort is the LOCSD, which is a special district recognized by the state to provide services to the community such as water, solid waste, stormwater management, parks, etc. They act as the fiscal sponsor and lead agency for the project. They will contract with the consultant who will oversee the survey in partnership with Cal Poly and share the data collected with the public and with all other partners. Partners include the LOBMC, S&T Mutual Water Company, and Golden State Water Company. These entities work with the LOCSD to manage groundwater monitoring and supply, and all will utilize the data collected from the survey.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: The project supports the outcome of expanding monitoring of groundwater for the community of Los Osos to ensure access to clean safe drinking water.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: None.
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Contractor will conduct the geophysical survey and analyze and report the results. Staff will work with LOCSD staff to complete subaward reporting.

Pending Deliverables: None.
CCMP Action Plan: FWR-1 (Manage Freshwater Resources), FWR-3 (Understand Flow for Public Trust Resources)

Education and Outreach

E&O-1: Communications

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Implement a communications strategy and develop multimedia content to share the story of the Estuary Program, highlight projects, and engage a variety of audiences.

Description: A primary goal of the Estuary Program is to educate residents and visitors of all ages on how to be good stewards of the bay. Communication in various forms is essential to this work, allowing us to effectively communicate the status of our work, to highlight progress on CCMP implementation, and to engage a wide variety of audiences.
Progress Towards Milestones: Staff regularly updated webpages on the Estuary Program's website. The website had over 40,000 page views and over 22,000 visits in the first half of FY26. The seasonal *Between the Tides* newsletter continues to be published every quarter and has 256 email subscribers. The newsletter is posted on the website and sent out to subscribers via email. Communications via social media have been utilizing multi-media content including educational Reels on Instagram and Facebook. Between October 2025 and March 2026, the program's social media content received over 483,500 views and sparked the interest of local news outlets, resulting in 5+ articles, video interviews, and mentions of Estuary Program research and events. Our Instagram and Facebook accounts gained 1,245 new followers, putting our social media accounts at a combined total of over 7,660 followers. In the first half of FY26, sixteen blogs were posted on our website, sent to 531 email subscribers, and posted on our social media pages. In addition to written communication efforts, Estuary Program staff spoke on a local live radio show to share SOTB report results and information on upcoming events.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program serves as the lead for all program communication, with support from outside contractors for web development and multi-media content.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: The Estuary Program met expected outcomes through regular website updates, quarterly newsletters, active social media engagement, and consistent blog publication to communicate CCMP progress and stewardship messages to diverse audience.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: Communications statistics shared in the annual report (see above).
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Continue to update website and improve the user-friendliness of the site. Continue the quarterly newsletter and work to expand its reach. Develop and share more stories on CCMP progress. Create and share blogs and continue to engage followers on social media platforms.
Pending Deliverables: None.
CCMP Action Plan: All, depending on activity, but particularly EO-1 (Public Education and Outreach)

E&O-2: Environmental Education

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Provide environmental watershed and estuary-based education opportunities for students and teachers.

Description: Partnerships are key to implementing our program's environmental education goals. Staff work with partners to support bay field trips and develop curriculum.
Progress Towards Milestones: The Estuary Program continued education partnerships with One Cool Earth, Camp Ocean Pines, California State Parks, CLC, and Cal Poly. Staff are coordinating the 2026 educator workshop series in partnership with Cal Poly's Central Coast Science Project, to be held in summer 2026. This year's series will focus on studying watersheds "from crest to coast," traveling from inland SLO County down to Morro Bay and discussing about how water (and therefore pollution, nutrients, etc.) moves through watersheds. Up to forty pre-K to 12th grade classroom teachers will participate in this workshop.

In the first half of FY26, staff hosted 20 field trips that reached 450 students and individuals. Topics included watershed ecology, local wildlife, nature journaling, tide pooling, and estuarine habitats. Estuary Program staff also gave educational talks to students at Cuesta College. Staff began tracking demographic information for youth field trip attendees, including age and percentage of English language learners at their school. Staff also began sending out post-field trip surveys to teachers to gather data about field trip success. The Estuary Program funded 2025-26 school year garden education programming at Monarch Grove Elementary School in Los Osos in partnership with One Cool Earth. Estuary Program staff continue to be involved in the SLO County Environmental Education Coalition. Staff also gave presentations to the Morro Bay and Cambria Rotary Clubs, educating members on the estuary and local watershed, as well as the work done by the Estuary Program.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program serves as the lead, coordinating with partners including Camp Ocean Pines, One Cool Earth, Cal Poly, and local educators to expand environmental education efforts. Staff develop and implement watershed and estuary-based curriculum, support field trips within the Morro Bay watershed, and lead professional development workshops for teachers. Tasks include organizing and facilitating the educator workshop series, designing hands-on learning experiences, and integrating estuary science into K to 12 education. Staff maintain partnerships, track engagement metrics, and compile program impact reports. Partners provide locations for field learning, assist with curriculum delivery, and help connect students and teachers to estuary-focused programs, while also collaborating on program design and offering staff expertise, facilities, and access to youth audiences across the region.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Development of education partnerships increased educational opportunities for students and teachers and resulted in curriculum development.
Problems Encountered: None.
Deliverables: Environmental education statistics shared in annual report (see above).
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Complete planning and conduct the 2026 educator workshop series. Continue to offer field trips to school groups.
Pending Deliverables: None.

CCMP Action Plan: EO-1 (Public Education and Outreach), EO-4 (Formal Education Programs), USE-1 (Recreational Uses)

E&O-3: Nature Center

Project Status: Ongoing
Objective: Design and install new exhibits, upgrade and maintain exhibits, and support education and outreach programming for the Nature Center.

Description: The Estuary Program maintains a free Nature Center open to the public to share messaging about the estuarine environment and stewardship. Staff maintain, update, and promote the center.
Progress Towards Milestones: Staff conduct maintenance and restocking of the Nature Center. Work is nearly complete on repairing the augmented reality sandbox which demonstrates watershed science concepts. A new eelgrass exhibit is in the final stages of design and installation is scheduled for summer 2026. A new Mutts for the Bay exhibit was added to the Nature Center display cabinet. Staff will begin work on redesigning the watershed exhibit towards the end of FY26. The Nature Center had over 6,800 visitors in the first half of FY26. Education staff host regular field trips in the Nature Center.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program serves as the lead for maintaining and enhancing the Nature Center. Staff improve the Nature Center with updated exhibits and signage and ensure ongoing exhibit maintenance to keep educational materials relevant and engaging. Additional tasks include integrating technology and interactive displays to improve visitor engagement, developing new education and outreach programming within the Nature Center, and maintaining virtual resources on the Estuary Program website. Staff also use the Nature Center to host field trips and recurring education events while tracking engagement metrics and summarizing activities in the semi-annual and annual reports. USFWS was a funder on the eelgrass exhibit.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Nature Center updates support the task outcomes to create engaging exhibits and develop supplemental programming that will increase annual visitation to increase stewardship and understanding of estuary science.
Problems Encountered: None
Deliverables: Nature Center statistics shared in the annual report (see above).
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: Staff plans to continue programming in the Nature Center and hosting field trip groups to the space. Staff will work on adding new interactive exhibits and continue maintenance and infrastructure updates. Staff will continue to advertise for the Nature Center to attract more visitors.
Pending Deliverables: Programming statistics and Nature Center usage statistics.
CCMP Action Plan: EO-3 (Nature Center), EO-1 (Public Education and Outreach)

E&O-4: Community Engagement and Stewardship

Status: Ongoing
Objective: Provide community engagement and stewardship opportunities by hosting events and partnering with environmental organizations.

Description: The Estuary Program engages with partners to collaborate on efforts to engage the community and promote stewardship. Volunteer efforts are particularly powerful for connecting with community members and encouraging stewardship.
Progress Towards Milestones: Staff opportunistically partnered with organizations to engage the community, including Morro Coast Audubon Society, California Native Plant Society, SLO Beaver Brigade, and more. Staff hosted four community events with 110 total attendees, including two presentation-based Science on Tap events and two activity-based events with local partners. Staff led cleanups for 160 volunteers and tabled at an additional five community events where they engaged with more than 450 community members. At cleanups, volunteers picked up about 46 pounds of trash, including 1,500 cigarette butts, from the Morro Bay Embarcadero area. Staff hosted a volunteer appreciation event in November, honoring the hard work and dedication of our many volunteers. Over 40 volunteers were in attendance, and several received special recognition such as our Volunteer of the Year award.
Leads, Partners, and Roles: The Estuary Program leads community engagement and stewardship efforts in collaboration with partners and community members. Staff organize and facilitate recurring clean-up events to reduce marine debris and nonpoint source pollution and support opportunities for community science participation. Staff track volunteer participation, document project outcomes, and summarize engagement efforts in semi-annual reports. Partners include the City of Morro Bay's Harbor Department, the Morro Bay Yacht Club, the Bay Foundation of Santa Monica, the Los Osos Community Services District, and local recreational boating business owners.
Comparison of Actual Accomplishments with Anticipated Outputs/Outcomes: Activities conducted support the workplan task outcomes of increasing volunteer engagement and developing the infrastructure to prevent marine debris.
Problems Encountered: The Adopt-a-Spot program with ECOSLO is unlikely to move forward due to staffing limitations at a partner organization.
Deliverables: Event statistics included in the annual report (see above).
Activities Planned for the Next Six Months: We will continue to host cleanups and table at events and farmers markets.
Pending Deliverables: Event statistics and amount of trash picked up (see above).
CCMP Action Plan: EO-1 (Public Education and Outreach), USE-1 (Recreational Uses), ECR-12 (Upland Habitats)

Subaward Reporting

The Estuary Program utilizes subawards to manage IIJA funding projects. The following efforts with partners were ongoing as subawards in FY26:

- Los Osos Community Services District: Groundwater Resistivity Geophysics Survey
- San Francisco Estuary Institute: Historical Ecology Study
- Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District: Permitting and modeling for Lower Chorro Creek and San Bernardo Creek floodplain improvements
- California Conservation Corps: Invasive species management and project maintenance
- County of San Luis Obispo Department of Agriculture / Weights & Measures: Giant reed management

The following subawards under IIJA are now complete:

- Cuesta College: Sustainable Agriculture Educational Program Support

- Los Osos Community Services District: Groundwater Monitoring Well Installation
- Los Osos Community Services District: Groundwater Monitoring Well Rehabilitation
- Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District: BMP fencing implementation and stormwater planning support (Single audit findings are still pending as of March 31, 2026)
- USGS: Salt Marsh Monitoring and Modeling to Plan for Future Sea Level Rise Impacts (Note that this work continues with funding from the Restore America's Estuaries Coastal Watershed Grant.)

Staff conducted the following activities to manage subawards:

- Each subawardee was contacted to determine the fiscal year under which they operate and the timing of their next financial audit that will include the subaward funds.
- Estuary Program staff tracked subaward progress and updated reporting forms for use with subawardees to review the results of any financial auditing and review for their organization.

The status of each active or recently completed Estuary Program subaward under the IIJA funding is as follows:

Subaward: Los Osos Community Services District Monitoring Well Rehabilitation

Project Name: Groundwater Monitoring Well Rehabilitation

Project Status: Work completed. Subaward closed.

Activities Completed to Date: Procurement, selection, and contracting with consultant and contractor. Permitting coordination. Successful transfer of ownership of one of the wells from the County to the LOCSD. Well rehabilitation completed. Received final invoice and report. Received data collected to date from the well. Reviewed financial audit and no issues were identified. Closed out contract and subaward.

Future Activities: None. Subaward is now complete.

Review of Financial and Programmatic Reports: In the contract development and implementation process, the subaward recipient met all financial and programmatic requirements. The Estuary Program received an audit report and there were no issues.

Summary of Findings from Site Visits/Desk Reviews: In all project updates and communication with the subawardee, there were no issues of concern raised related to implementation of the subaward.

Environmental Results Achieved: The rehabilitation of two monitoring wells expands the monitoring network for the Los Osos Basin Management Committee and the LOCSD. This allows for better management of the drinking water supply for the community.

Summaries of Audit Findings and Related Subawardee Management Decisions: The Estuary Program received the results of the LOCSD's financial audit, and there were no issues identified. There were no issues related to the pass-through entity's (PTE) management decisions.

Actions the Subawardee Taken to Correct Deficiencies: Not applicable. No deficiencies were identified.

Subaward: Los Osos Community Services District Geophysical Survey

Project Name: Groundwater Resistivity Geophysics Survey

Project Status: Ongoing.

Activities Completed to Date: Developed monitoring protocols. Created a QAPP to document the methods, sites, and other project details. Submitted QAPP to EPA's Office of Quality Assurance (QA) and received approval. Finalized and approved the contract and subaward agreement.

Future Activities: LOCSD will work with their consultant and Cal Poly to conduct the survey. Review the final report from the LOCSD. Close out the subaward agreement.

Subaward: Cuesta Community College Sustainable Agriculture Support

Project Name: Sustainable Agriculture Educational Program Support

Project Status: Completed. Subaward closed.

Activities Completed to Date: Completed procurement, selection, and contracting for pipe installation and fence installation. All construction work completed. Final reporting completed. Reviewed financial audit and no issues were identified. Closed out contract and subaward.

Future Activities: None. Subaward is now complete.

Review of Financial and Programmatic Reports: In the contract development and implementation process, the subaward recipient met all financial and programmatic requirements. The Estuary Program received an audit report and there were no issues.

Summary of Findings from Site Visits/Desk Reviews: In all project updates and communication with the subawardee, there were no issues of concern raised related to implementation of the subaward.

Environmental Results Achieved: The installation of infrastructure to support Cuesta College's sustainable agriculture education curriculum trains the next generation of ranchers in environmentally friendly land management practices. While these environmental results cannot be directly measured, the project expands and improves Cuesta's ability to provide education in updated land management practices which benefits rangeland in the Morro Bay watershed and beyond.

Summaries of Audit Findings and Related Subawardee Management Decisions: The Estuary Program received the results of the Cuesta Colelge financial audit, and there were no issues identified. There were no issues related to the PTE management decisions.

Actions the Subawardee Taken to Correct Deficiencies: Not applicable. No deficiencies were identified.

Subaward: San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) Historical Ecology Study

Project Name: Historical Ecology Study

Status: Ongoing

Activities Completed to Date: SFEI coordinated with partners to identify available resources for study. SFEI completed visits to several archival sites and site visits in the watershed in spring 2024. SFEI has compiled initial georeferenced maps with ArcGIS and a draft final report of finding. TAC and local partners reviewed the draft report and a final habitat map has been completed. The final report will be printed in spring 2026.

Future Activities: SFEI will complete the final report and a presentation of the project in spring 2026. Staff will work with SFEI to close out the contract, review financial audit results, and close out the subaward.

Review of Financial and Programmatic Reports: In the contract development and implementation process, the subaward recipient met all financial and programmatic requirements. Upon completion of a financial audit, Estuary Program staff will review the results.

Summary of Findings from Site Visits/Desk Reviews: In all project updates and communication with the subawardee, there were no issues of concern raised related to implementation of the subaward.

Environmental Results Achieved: The project supports more sustainable restoration and land management to adapt to future environmental challenges. While the environmental results cannot necessarily be quantified, the results support building a more resilient landscape to protect natural resources for both humans and the environment.

Summaries of Audit Findings and Related Subawardee Management Decisions: The Estuary Program is awaiting the results of SFEI's upcoming financial audit. There have been no issues to date related to PTE management decisions.

Actions the Subawardee Taken to Correct Deficiencies: Not applicable. No deficiencies have been identified to date.

Subaward: USGS Salt March Monitoring and Modeling Plan

Project Name: Salt Marsh Monitoring and Modeling to Plan for Future Sea Level Rise Impacts

Status: Completed

Activities Completed to Date: Estuary Program staff worked with USGS to conduct sediment monitoring in the salt marsh. This data as well as historical information was fed into USGS models to understand sediment transport and sea level rise impacts on the fragile salt marsh habitat. A draft model was completed. At this stage in the project, the Estuary Program received a Restore America's Estuaries Coastal Watershed Grant to fund the remainder of the project, and the subaward was completed and closed out.

Future Activities: None. Subaward is closed.

Review of Financial and Programmatic Reports: In the contract development and implementation process, the subaward recipient met all financial and programmatic requirements. USGS will not be sharing financial audit information as per the Code of Federal Regulation, 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F, the Single Audit Act does not apply to Federal entities.

Summary of Findings from Site Visits/Desk Reviews: In all project updates and communication with the subawardee, there were no issues of concern raised related to implementation of the subaward.

Environmental Results Achieved: By better understanding the landscape, the project supports more sustainable restoration and land management to adapt to future environmental challenges. While the environmental results cannot necessarily be quantified, the projects provide guidance and framework for developing a more resilient landscape to both the fragile habitats surrounding the estuary and essential infrastructure.

Summaries of Audit Findings and Related Subawardee Management Decisions: Not applicable. As a federal entity, USGS is not subject to the Single Audit Act and will not be providing financial audit information.

Actions the Subawardee Taken to Correct Deficiencies: Not applicable. No deficiencies were identified.

Subawardee: CSLRCD BMP and Stormwater Implementation

Project Name: BMP implementation and stormwater improvement implementation

Status: Project completed, awaiting financial audit to close out subaward.

Activities Completed to Date: Estuary Program staff worked with CSLRCD to complete two projects. The first project involved collaborating with landowners to develop on-farm BMPs through riparian fencing and associated stock water infrastructure on upper Los Osos and Warden Creeks. CSLRCD completed 20,000 feet of wildlife-friendly riparian fencing and off channel watering on private lands. The second project supported stormwater improvements at Camp SLO's Calaveras Avenue stormwater improvement project in fall 2023.

Future Activities: No remaining project activities. Awaiting financial audit results for review to close out subaward.

Review of Financial and Programmatic Reports: In the contract development and implementation process, the subaward recipient met all financial and programmatic requirements. Upon completion of a financial audit, Estuary Program staff will review the results.

Summary of Findings from Site Visits/Desk Reviews: In all project updates and communication with the subawardee, there were no issues of concern raised related to implementation of the subaward.

Environmental Results Achieved: The projects addressed stormwater and soil erosion in the watershed. Bioswales associated with the stormwater improvement project capture and infiltrate stormwater while slowing flow to reduce erosion in the current drainages. On-farm BMPs improve water quality through reduced sediment and nutrient loading.

Summaries of Audit Findings and Related Subawardee Management Decisions: The Estuary Program is awaiting the results of CSLRCD's upcoming financial audit estimated by summer 2026. There have been no issues to date related to PTE management decisions.

Actions the Subawardee Taken to Correct Deficiencies: Not applicable. No deficiencies have been identified to date.

Subawardee: CSLRCD Lower Chorro Creek Floodplain Study

Project Name: Lower Chorro Creek Floodplain Study

Status: Ongoing

Activities Completed to Date: The contract was finalized in late September 2025.

Future Activities: The CSLRCD will develop permit packages for five priority projects along Lower Chorro Creek and San Bernardo Creek as well as model and design floodplain improvements.

Review of Financial and Programmatic Reports: In the contract development and implementation process, the subaward recipient met all financial and programmatic requirements. Upon completion of a financial audit, Estuary Program staff will review the results.

Summary of Findings from Site Visits/Desk Reviews: No issues of concern to date.

Environmental Results Achieved: None to date.

Summaries of Audit Findings and Related Subawardee Management Decisions: The Estuary Program is awaiting the results of CSLRCD's upcoming financial audit.

Actions the Subawardee Taken to Correct Deficiencies: Not applicable. No deficiencies have been identified to date.

Subawardee: California Conservation Corps (CCC) Project Support

Project Name: Invasive Species Management and Project Maintenance

Status: Ongoing

Activities Completed to Date: This contract was finalized in late September 2025. One round of iceplant management occurred in December 2025.

Future Activities: Project maintenance at Los Osos Wetland will occur in spring 2026. Additional workdays for iceplant removal scheduled for fall 2026.

Review of Financial and Programmatic Reports: In the contract development and implementation process, the subaward recipient met all financial and programmatic requirements. Upon completion of a financial audit, Estuary Program staff will review the results.

Summary of Findings from Site Visits/Desk Reviews: No issues of concern to date.

Environmental Results Achieved: None to date.

Summaries of Audit Findings and Related Subawardee Management Decisions: The Estuary Program is awaiting the results of CCC upcoming financial audit.

Actions the Subawardee Taken to Correct Deficiencies: Not applicable. No deficiencies have been identified to date.

Subawardee: County of San Luis Obispo Department of Agriculture / Weights & Measures Invasive Management Effort

Project Name: Giant Reed Management

Status: Ongoing

Activities Completed to Date: This contract was finalized in March 2026. Initial management has been completed on Cal Poly Chorro Creek property.

Future Activities: Continued management giant reed throughout Chorro Creek. Larger sites will need to be revisited.

Review of Financial and Programmatic Reports: In the contract development and implementation process, the subaward recipient met all financial and programmatic requirements. Upon completion of a financial audit, Estuary Program staff will review the results.

Summary of Findings from Site Visits/Desk Reviews: No issues of concern to date.

Environmental Results Achieved: None to date.

Summaries of Audit Findings and Related Subawardee Management Decisions: The Estuary Program is awaiting the results of SLO County's upcoming financial audit.

Actions the Subawardee Taken to Correct Deficiencies: Not applicable. No deficiencies have been identified to date.

Lab Competency Documentation

The Estuary Program utilizes laboratories that have met the certification requirements for their technical area. During FY26, the following labs were used:

For Water Quality: In this period, we primarily used two labs, Fruit Growers Laboratory (FGL) and County of SLO Public Health Laboratory. Both labs maintained Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) certification during this reporting period. Documentation for the county lab is available online. The certification for FGL is available online.

For Bay Nutrient Analysis: The University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) Marine Sciences Laboratory conducts analysis of Morro Bay waters for nutrients. Although the laboratory is not ELAP certified, it undergoes similar steps to ensure data quality. Their detailed QA manual was provided and reviewed by Estuary Program staff, and the lab's QA activities were deemed sufficient to ensure data quality.

For Toxicity Analysis: The Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory at UC Davis Granite Canyon Laboratories (UCD-GC) conducts toxicity monitoring for the Estuary Program. This laboratory is ELAP-certified under certificate number 2821.

For Genetic Analysis for Cal Poly: The University of Connecticut (UCONN) Institute for Systems Genomics (CGI) conducts amplicon sequencing of 18S rRNA genes, following rigorous protocols to ensure data quality. The CGI adheres to Illumina MiSeq protocols and quality assurance processes, which have been reviewed and approved by Estuary Program staff and the Pasulka Lab at Cal Poly, ensuring that their QA practices meet high standards for producing accurate and reliable sequence data.

For Genetic Analysis for Cuesta College: The CD Genomics conducts whole genome sequencing and amplicon sequencing of 16S rRNA gene, performing quality control tests at every major step in the sequencing process to ensure accuracy. Upon receiving samples, CD Genomics checks the quantity and purity of each sample using industry standard equipment and methods. Positive controls and integrated software are then used to monitor sequencing quality on all runs, with additional QA measures available upon request. These protocols have been reviewed and approved by Estuary Program staff and Dr. Silvio Favoreto of Cuesta College, ensuring that the QA practices meet high standards for producing accurate and reliable sequencing data.

Budget Overview

Tables 1 and 2 present costs associated with IIJA activities since the beginning of the IIJA grant agreement on December 12, 2022.

Table 1: Costs expended during this annual report period (October 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026). These costs represent cumulative costs since the initiation of IIJA activities.

Category	Subcategory	FY26 BIL Period 1	FY26 BIL Cumulative Total
Personnel	Salaries	$109,426	$742,038
	Fringe	$14,676	$79,467
	Subtotal	*$124,102*	*$821,505*
Travel	*(category includes local mileage)*	$0	$7,059
Supplies	Computers, Software	$1,142	$27,335
	Monitoring Supplies	$9,061	$106,618
	Education and Outreach Supplies	$1,230	$31,136
	Subtotal	*$11,433*	*$165,090*
Equipment	Monitoring Equipment	$0	*$152,746*
	Subtotal	*$0*	*$152,746*
Contractual	Capacity Building	$0	$24,729
	Monitoring and Research	$15,210	$303,633
	Restoration and Protection	$97,244	$538,146
	Water Infrastructure	$0	$53,910
	Education and Outreach	$16,787	$70,137
	Subtotal	*$129,241*	*$990,554*
Other	Training, Prof. Dev.	$580	$6,503
	Restoration Subawards	$33,024	$374,283
	Water Infrastructure Subawards	$0	$145,000
	Subtotal	*$33,604*	*$525,786*
	TOTAL	**$298,381**	**$2,662,740**

Table 2: Costs by Program Area and Task for IIJA funding (FY22-26)

Program Area	Workplan Task	FY26 BIL Period 7	FY26 BIL Cumulative Total
Capacity Building	Capacity-1: Capacity Building	$125,824	$887,131
	Subtotal	*$125,824*	*$887,131*
Environmental Monitoring and Research	Monitoring-1: Tracking Bay Health	$5,870	$157,684
	Monitoring-2: Tracking Creek Health	$15,488	$258,671
	Monitoring-3: Eelgrass Monitoring and Research	$2,914	$134,466
	Monitoring-4: Data Analysis and Management	$0	$12,120
	Subtotal	*$24,272*	*$562,940*
Habitat Restoration and Protection	Restoration-1: Invasive Species Management	$62,438	*$189,556*
	Restoration-2: Habitat Restoration and Climate Planning	$55,096	*$395,109*
	Restoration-3: Fish Habitat Monitoring and Improvement	$11,600	$244,741
	Restoration-4: Open Space Habitat and Access	$1,133	$2,533
	Restoration-5: Implement BMPs in Watershed	$0	$65,525
	Subtotal	*$130,268*	*$897,464*
Water Infrastructure	Water-1: Stormwater Improvement	$0	$68,875
	Water-2: Water Infrastructure	$0	*$145,000*
	Subtotal	*$0*	*$213,875*
Education and Outreach	E&O-1: Communication	$100	$2,750
	E&O-2: Environmental Education	$3,430	$53,484
	E&O-3: Nature Center	$377	$21,385
	E&O-4: Community Engagement and Stewardship	$14,110	$23,653
	Subtotal	*$18,017*	*$101,273*
	TOTAL	**$298,381**	**$2,662,683**

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