

\$10 Million Awarded to Reduce Groundwater Reliance and Support Conservation in the Salinas Valley

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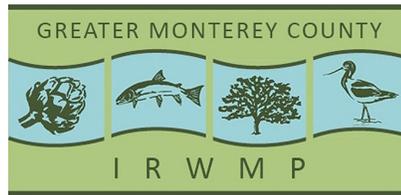
Monterey, CA— Sustainable water resource management efforts in the Lower Salinas Valley will benefit from a \$10 million grant awarded through the California Department of Conservation's [Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Program](#), part of Governor Newsom's comprehensive response to the ongoing drought. The award given to the Monterey-based [California Marine Sanctuary Foundation](#) will support the Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program and the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency in working with local land trusts to repurpose under-performing ag lands for multi-benefit conservation and to improve overdraft of groundwater supplies.

"One of the greatest challenges to restoring watershed processes, including groundwater recharge, flood protection and habitat restoration, is the lack of funding to compensate the farmers and landowners," said Ross Clark, Director of the [Central Coast Wetlands Group](#) at Moss Landing Marine Labs, which coordinates the water management program. "This strategic state funding supports our efforts to fairly compensate landowners for their contributions to creating more sustainable Central Coast water resources."

The award funds the implementation of the Lower Salinas Valley Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing Strategy, which will develop a decision-making process to acquire portions of farmlands for floodplain enhancement and groundwater recharge purposes.

Three quarters of the funding will be allocated for the acquisition of least productive, flood prone portions of agricultural lands that can best be repurposed for flood control, surface water quality enhancement, habitat enhancement and connectivity, recreational opportunities, and groundwater recharge. Projects will only be selected where landowners/growers choose to participate in the program.

Donna Meyers, General manager for the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency, says "We support this approach, which includes exploring voluntary repurposing of lands for groundwater benefit and water quality. These are high priorities for our stakeholders and this project helps establish a multi-stakeholder committee that will explore benefits from land repurposing and will build on successful efforts in North Monterey County that have been ongoing for over a decade."



The award was one of only five announced for the first round of this statewide program, part of Governor Newsom's multi-faceted response to the ongoing drought. A total of \$42 million was awarded to regional organizations working to reduce groundwater reliance and create local environmental and economic opportunities through land-use changes.

According to the non-profit Public Policy Institute of California, 500,000 to 1 million acres of irrigated cropland may have to be removed from production to meet the state's groundwater sustainability goals. California Department of Food and Agriculture's most recent data shows that California has roughly 36 million acres of farm, pasture, and rangelands, of which 8.6 million acres have been irrigated at least once in the last five years.

"The Department of Conservation's investment in this project shows a real commitment by the state to directly tackle some of the local impacts of our continued drought," said Robert Mazurek, Executive Director of the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation. "We are committed to working with all our stakeholders in the Salinas Valley to create win-win situations that benefit the community and the environment."