Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Update
Project Solicitation Form

PROJECT OVERVIEW

General Project Information

Project Title:	Upper Pajaro River Uplands Conservation and Stewardship Project
Project Location:	Santa Clara and San Benito Counties
Estimated Cost:	$81,423,000

Brief Project Description (1 to 2 sentences):

This project provides multiple techniques to conserve the upland areas around the waterways draining into Soap Lake and the Pajaro River to protect water quality, preserve flood attenuation and provide wildlife habitat and connectivity.

Project Proponent Information

Contact Name:	Abigail Ramsden
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Other participating agencies/organizations (if applicable):

The Upper Pajaro River Conservation Collaborative currently consists of the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, Peninsula Open Space Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Loma Prieta Resource Conservation District, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Silicon Valley Land Conservancy, Wild Farm Alliance, Community Alliance for Family Farmers, and the California State Coastal Conservancy.

DETAILED PROJECT INFORMATION

Description

Please provide a description of your project (including the location) and its purpose, what will be constructed and/or implemented, how the project will function, the area(s) and/or entities that will be affected by or will benefit from the project, and any potential obstacles to implementation.

The Upper Pajaro River Uplands Conservation and Stewardship Project is part of a larger 30,000-acre initiative located in southern Santa Clara and northern San Benito counties that seeks to develop an interconnected network of parks, open space preserves, and actively conserved farms, rangelands, and other working lands along the Upper Pajaro River between the Santa Cruz Mountains and western Diablo Range. In the west, the project area encompasses Chittenden Gap and the Sargent Hills (which covers the entire Tar and Tick Creek watersheds), located near the Santa Clara Valley Water District's Carnadero Preserve; the central area includes the lower Bodfish, Gavilan, and Llagas Creek watersheds, located south of Gilroy, as well as small tributaries to Pacheco Creek and Tequisquita Slough in San Benito County; and the eastern portion includes the lower Ortega and Milias Creek Watersheds, which also feed into Soap Lake.

This project consists of implementation by the Upper Pajaro River Conservation Collaborative of interrelated conservation

efforts designed to protect water resource values including water supply, water quality, groundwater recharge, downstream flood attenuation, as well as aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity on approximately 20,000 acres. This project dovetails with the Soap Lake Floodplain Preservation Project, which covers an additional 9,000 acres, and will employ similar conservation tools including fee purchase; conservation easements; landowner outreach and stewardship; and, where feasible, pilot landowner management agreements or ecosystem service payments for long-term stewardship. This area has been identified as a critical conservation priority by the organizations involved in the Living Landscape Initiative, and in recent conservation planning efforts such as the Bay Area Critical Linkages Project. The partners involved in this project expect that Upper Pajaro River Uplands Conservation and Stewardship Project will be used to aggressively secure matching funds from these and other initiatives to promote conservation of water resources, working lands, and biodiversity in this area.

Much of this area is cultivated or grazed; through outreach and education, any landowner that chooses to participate in this project will participate in the preparation of a site-specific comprehensive stewardship plan that outlines practices designed to protect and restore water resources. Stewardship elements will address riparian restoration, development of ponds and water resources, nutrient management, and irrigation runoff, among other topics. In addition, educational resources would also be incorporated into this project to share best management practices and success stories of stewardship in the area. By protecting these working lands and restoring water resources, we will help sustain the local agricultural economy and support a land use that provides a wide range of ecosystem services.

Technical Feasibility

Discuss the technical feasibility of the project. If possible, cite references that contain information about the proposed project and detail the technical feasibility of the project.

The project area coincides with the Bay Area Critical Linkages (BACL) and is critically important to ensure long-term biological connectivity between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. Funding for this project will be used to leverage additional funds associated with the BACL project, including the Santa Cruz Mountains Linkages Conceptual Area Protection Plan, as well as the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan, which identifies areas in the the upper Pajaro as high priorities for the proposed HCP/NCCP reserve system.
Creeks draining these uplands have been listed with TMDLs by the Regional Water Quality Control Board as impaired for both fecal coliform and sediment. By conserving lands and assisting with enhanced stewardship of these upland areas, improvements to the steam water quality can be achieved.

Pajaro River Watershed IRWM Regional Goals & Objectives

Put an X next to any goal that the proposed project will achieve.

Water Supply

	1. Meet 100% of M&I and agriculture demands (both current and future conditions) in wet to dry years including the first year of a drought.
	2. Meet 85% M&I and 75% agriculture demands (both current and future conditions) in second and subsequent years of a drought.
	3. Identify and address water supply needs of disadvantaged communities in the Pajaro River Watershed.

	4. Implement water conservation programs to reduce M&I and agricultural water use consistent with SBx7-7 and CVPIA.
	5. Maximize the use of recycled water during the irrigation season and expand other uses of recycled water.
x	6. Optimize the use of groundwater and aquifer storage.
	7. Maximize conjunctive use opportunities including interagency conjunctive use.
	8. Optimize and sustain the use of existing import surface water entitlements from the San Felipe Unit.
x	9. Maximize the beneficial use of existing local water supplies while protecting existing surface water rights.
	Water Quality
x	1. Meet or exceed all applicable groundwater, surface water, wastewater, and recycled water quality regulatory standards.
	2. Identify and address the drinking water quality of disadvantaged communities in the Pajaro River Watershed.
	3. Protect groundwater resources from contamination including salts and nutrients.
x	4. Address impacts from surface water runoff through implementation of Best Management Practices or other surface water management strategies.
	5. Meet or exceed delivered water quality targets established by recycled water users.

Flood Protection

x	1. Implement flood management strategies throughout the watershed that provide multiple benefits.
	2. Reach consensus on the Pajaro River Risk Reduction Project necessary to protect existing urban areas and infrastructure from flooding and erosion from the 100-
x	3. Work with stakeholders to preserve existing flood attenuation by implementing land management and conservation strategies throughout the watershed.
x	4. Develop approaches for adaptive management to minimize maintenance requirements and protect quality and availability of water while preserving ecologic and
x	5. Provide community benefits beyond flood protection such as public access, open space, recreation, agriculture preservation and economic development.

Environmental Protection and Enhancement

x	1. Address opportunities to enhance the local environment and protect and/or restore natural resources, in cooperation with landowners, when developing water
x	2. Improve biological and cultural resources, including riparian habitats, habitats supporting sensitive plant or animal species and archaeological/historic sites when
0	3. Address opportunities to protect, enhance, or restore habitat to support Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary marine life in conjunction with water supply
x	4. Address opportunities for open spaces, trails, parks along creeks and other recreational projects in the watershed that can be incorporated with water management

Integration and Coordination

Put an X next to any Resource Management Strategies (RMS) that the proposed project will address.

Reduce Water Demand	Agricultural Water Use Efficiency	x
	Urban Water Use Efficiency	
Improve Operational Efficiency and Transfers	Conveyance - Delta	
	Conveyance - Regional/local	
	System Reoperation	
	Water Transfers	
Increase Water Supply	Conjunctive Management & Groundwater Storage	
	Desalination	
	Precipitation Enhancement	
	Recycled Municipal Water	
	Surface Storage - CALFED	
	Surface Storage - Regional/local	0
Improve Water Quality	Drinking Water Treatment & Distribution	
	Groundwater Remediation /Aquifer Remediation	0
	Matching Quality to Use	

	Pollution Prevention	x
	Salt & Salinity Management	
	Urban Runoff Management	
Improve Flood Management	Flood Risk Management	x
Practice Resources Stewardship	Agricultural Lands Stewardship	x
	Economic Incentives (Loans, Grants, & Water Pricing)	x
	Ecosystem Restoration	x
	Forest Management	x
	Recharge Area Protection	x
	Water-Dependent Recreation	
	Watershed Management	x
Other Strategies	Crop Idling for Water Transfers	
	Dewvaporation or Atmospheric Pressure Desalination	
	Fog Collection	
	Irrigated Land Retirement	
	Rainfed Agriculture	
	Waterbag Transport/Storage Technology	

Please describe:	The uplands project works with willing landowners to protect and enhance the quality of upland range and open space to provide water quality and flood protection benefits. Using a watershed approach, this project incorporates multiple strategies to work in agricultural lands to enhance ecosystem services and benefits.

List the projects that were integrated to develop a single proposed project, if applicable.

Wild Farm Alliance Outreach and Education, Living Landscape Initiative Conservation Acquisition, Bay Area Critical Linkages Project, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan, Santa Clara County Open Space Authority Five-Year Plan

List the agencies and organization that are working together to implement the project.

The Nature Conservancy, Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, Peninsula Open Space Trust, Resource Conservation District, and Wildfarm Alliance

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Put an X next to any climate change adaptation or mitigation strategy the proposed project will contribute to.

Adaption Strategies

	Improve water supply reliability
	Expand conjunctive use of multiple water supply sources
	Increase water use and/or reuse efficiency
	Provide additional water supply
x	Promote water quality protection
	Reduce water demand
	Advance / expand recycled water use
	Promote urban runoff reuse
	Address sea level rise
x	Address other anticipated climate change impacts
x	Improve flood control
x	Promote habitat protection
x	Establish migration corridors
	Re-establish river-floodplain hydrologic continuity
	Re-introduce anadromous fish populations to watershed
x	Enhance and protect watershed forest and meadow systems

Please describe: This project protects critical linkage areas and enhances landscape through stewardship in order to improve water quality, continue with increase flood control and enhances the overall watershed landscape.

Mitigation Strategies

	Increase water use efficiency or promote energy-efficient water demand reduction
	Improve water system energy efficiency
	Advance / expand recycled water use
	Promote urban runoff reuse
	Promote use of renewable energy sources
x	Contribute to carbon sequestration

Please describe: By preserving rangeland and open space through conservation, the existing carbon sequestration provided by these land uses are kept.

Does the proposed project reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions and/or improve energy efficiency? If so, explain how.

This project reduces the land base available for development and infrastructure improvement projects that could generate greenhouse gases. The project also provides significant climate benefits by permanently protecting natural areas that

sequester carbon and maximize resilience to climate change. The uplands targeted by this project include extensive water resources and other biophysical features associated with climate resilience: extreme elevation gradients, a range of aspects and solar insolation profiles, and diverse microclimates.

Social Benefits and Impacts

Does the project provide specific benefits to disadvantaged communities and/or Native American tribal communities? If so, explain.

The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, which is already very active in regional conservation, including hosting of seminars for protection and restoration of the Upper Pajaro Basin, has also expressed great interest in conservation of specific cultural sites that are sacred and of traditional importance. This project would help support the Amah Mutsun conservation and sacred site preservation efforts in the Pajaro River Uplands. Another social benefit of this project is that it also supports the long term viability of rangeland which will maintain lands for ranching, supporting the ranching infrastructure and helping to prevent the loss of the local and statewide rangeland economy.

Does the project address any known environmental justice issues?

This project addresses environmental justice issues by preventing development of what would most likely be expensive estate homes in the hills above the Upper Pajaro River (as has already taken place outside of Gilroy to the immediate north of the project area) that would have the potential of worsening flooding - through increase of surface runoff into the Pajaro River - in downstream disadvantaged communities of Watsonville and Pajaro.

Project Cost

Total Estimated Capital Cost	$81,423,000	(note: would be for protection of 20,000 acres)
Annual Operation & Maintenance (O&M) Cost	$200,000	(note: using a figure of $10/acre)
Cost Basis (Year)		
Source(s) of Funding for Capital	Many of the acquisition costs would be potentially funded through Local agencies (Santa Clara County Parks, Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, private donors and foundations), State agencies (Wildlife Conservation Board, Dept. of Transportation, Department of Conservation, Coastal Conservancy), Federal sources (Section 6 Endangered Species Act), and local land trusts and non-profit funding	
Source(s) of Funding for O&M Cost	Potentially local land management agencies (County Parks and Open Space Authority), local land trusts, and regional integrated management programs.	
Project Life (years)	5	
Provide link to project cost estimate, if available	See sheet 4.	

Economic Feasibility

Has a benefit:cost or cost effectiveness analysis been completed for your project? If so, please cite reference and briefly summarize. If no economic analysis has been completed for the project, the project may receive zero points out of a possible 100 points for the financial considerations criteria unless the project is a DAC project. If the project is not a DAC project but the B:C ratio is expected to be greater than 1, please provide a justification. The lack of an economic analysis may also affect the project's readiness score.

Land conservation would take place via the purchase of conservation easements or fee title acquisition from willing sellers. Conservation easements are a proven method of protecting land from conversion to other uses while benefiting from the private stewardship of responsible landowners. Conservation easements also require lower up-front acquisition costs than purchase of fee title, making them the preferred approach. Where conservation easements are not feasible, such as when a landowner wishes to sell a property outright, fee acquisition could be an additional alternative, or such as a landowner wishes to not sell any part of a property, stewardship practices could be an additional alternative. In either case, long-term stewardship and monitoring costs and funding sources will be estimated as part of the overall project cost. Excellent regional examples of upland watershed protection projects involving both conservation easements and fee acquisitions include the fee purchase by Peninsula Open Space Trust in 2008 of Clark Canyon Ranch in the headwaters of Uvas Creek.

If known, please provide the Benefit:Cost Ratio.

Provide a detailed discussion of the benefits the project will provide. To the extent possible, quantify changes and benefits (e.g. water quality and water supply benefits) that will result from project implementation; otherwise, describe benefits qualitatively.

This project provides benefits to water supply, water quality, groundwater recharge, downstream flood attenuation, as well as aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity through conservation of rangeland and open space in the areas draining into the Pajaro River, and specifically Soap Lake. Through conservation easements, fee purchases, outreach and projects with willing landowners, and education opportunities, this project uses multiple strategies to conserve the upland areas of the Pajaro Watershed.

Project Readiness

Proposed Project Start Date:	1-Jan-13
Anticipated Project Completion Date:	Jan 1, 2018 and further

Please Indicate the status (pending, in process, complete) of the following.

Project Element	**Status**	**% Complete**	**Estimated Completion Date**
Feasibility Study	in process	50	2013

Preliminary design	pending		
CEQA/NEPA	pending		
Permit Acquisition	pending		
Construction Docs	pending		