Twenty years of preserving and protecting coastal watersheds through community stewardship, education and monitoring

Dear Friends,

It’s been twenty years since the Coastal Watershed Council (CWC) first performed water quality monitoring in Santa Cruz County. And now, twenty years later, some of our original volunteers are bringing their kids to test water quality. More of us are paying more attention to our water supply and to water quality – one positive of this prolonged drought – and we’re learning more about what we can do, individually and together, to address these serious challenges.

I’m excited that in the last year we expanded our summer camps for disadvantaged youth to a year-round program. We’ve also proven, with partners, that bacteria in the lower San Lorenzo River are mostly related to birds, not humans. That information will help us solve the problem rather than simply studying it. Most importantly, CWC has shown leadership in convening key partners working on the San Lorenzo River. Collectively, our community is engaged in a more positive, hopeful conversation about the river.

That’s a key shift as we work to reconnect a healthy watershed to a vibrant community. As we work on that together, the benefits for our community go far beyond water or the environment. We’re creating the capacity in this community to remain in challenging conversation and move forward – so that Santa Cruz can fulfill even more of its potential, as a rewarding, magical place to live, work and play.

Thank you for driving this positive community change! We pause briefly to reflect upon and celebrate the year’s triumphs and lessons and then race ahead for more impact that matters to all of us. I’m deeply grateful for the opportunity to play a key role in this work, and to you, because you’re making it possible as a member of the CWC family. Onward and upward we go, together!

With gratitude,

Greg Pepping
Executive Director
Coastal Watershed Council

CWC staff pictured on left: Stewardship Coordinator Laurie Egan (top), Monitoring Coordinator Debie Chirco-Macdonald (middle, bottom)
Thank You!

The Coastal Watershed Council thanks all of our partners, dedicated volunteers, generous members and amazing supporters for another successful year.

We share a special thank you to Leadership Circle members, who have given $1,000 or more each year. These donors choose to lead the way by investing in a healthy San Lorenzo watershed connected to a vibrant community.

To see a full list of CWC members visit www.coastal-watershed.org.
The San Lorenzo River is Cleaner Than You Might Think

Bacteria are everywhere – in the environment and in our bodies. Many of them are beneficial; some not so much. The San Lorenzo River has historically had high levels of fecal indicator bacteria, but how much of that is due to human sources? The Coastal Watershed Council and partners in the San Lorenzo River Alliance released a technical memo in June 2015 indicating little to no human contribution to bacteria levels in the lower San Lorenzo River.

Results from six months of testing from May to October 2014 showed that bacteria associated with human sewage was rarely if ever present. Additional testing is warranted to verify these results under varying conditions, but the findings represent a challenge to the notion held by many that the river and watershed supplying two-thirds of Santa Cruz’s drinking water are badly polluted.

The Alliance’s ongoing efforts include source identification and control and reduction of bacterial contaminants, with an emphasis on human and other anthropogenic sources that are deemed to be controllable. The goal is to eliminate human bacteria inputs to the river. This ongoing effort is another example of Alliance members working together to improve the San Lorenzo River.


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<th>REVENUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Contributions</td>
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<td>Program</td>
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When organizations work collaboratively, we can learn more than would be possible with a piecemeal approach. That’s what the San Lorenzo River Alliance is about.
As part of the Coastal Watershed Council’s bold commitment to spark meaningful change for the San Lorenzo River, we hosted Meander, a first-ever benefit dinner on the banks of the San Lorenzo River in June 2015. This special event showed Santa Cruz what is possible for the San Lorenzo River. It was a magical evening that inspired us all thanks to a creative team including Kendra Baker of the Glass Jar, Timerie Gordon of Nielsen Studios and Karissa Paxton of Coastside Couture. Many thanks to sponsors Plantronics, Inc., Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, Devcon Construction, Inc. and Pacific Gas & Electric Company.

“I first became involved with CWC by attending monthly water tours. I loved learning about local river history, ecology and the thriving amount of nature we have here. The passion and love that was shown by tour leaders who work every day to protect our natural world was inspiring. It made me want to become active and do my part to help protect and preserve our natural world.

I am finishing up college coursework in Park Management and Geography, a major that fits well with my passion for the outdoors. I started volunteering at events with CWC to help promote watershed stewardship and to share news about the San Lorenzo River Alliance. I also worked with CWC to remove invasive species along the San Lorenzo River.

My work with CWC helped me get a job with the Santa Cruz City Parks and Recreation Department where I now work to clean up and protect habitat along the San Lorenzo River and Branciforte Creek. My goal is to become a Park Ranger and do more work to help protect and serve our natural world and help the public enjoy it as much as I do.”

Sean Crawford
CWC Volunteer of the Year

“My passion for local ecology and community drew me to CWC in 1996 as a donor, volunteer and eventually as a board member from 2004-2007. I’m a firm believer in the idea that healthy lands create healthy people who, in turn, create healthy communities.

For almost three decades, my passion for local ecology has shown through my native plant nursery Central Coast Wilds’ mission: to nurture ecological relationships, cultivate community partnership and build sustainable business practices in order to protect and restore biological diversity. Once the nursery was well-established I used my knowledge of horticulture and observations of the growing community to start Ecological Concerns Incorporated, a habitat restoration consultancy and ecological landscape contracting firm.

I joined the CWC Leadership Circle to further my commitment to habitat restoration along the Central Coast and contribute to restoration efforts on the San Lorenzo River. I’m proud to support an organization working for healthy watersheds and healthy communities in Santa Cruz for my business, our team of 40 employees and my family.”

Josh Fodor
Founding Member, CWC Leadership Circle
Santa Cruz area water users relying on the San Lorenzo River for clean drinking water

3,334 students taught by Coastal Watershed Council staff from Boulder Creek to Beach Flats

964 data points collected for the San Lorenzo River by Coastal Watershed Council staff and volunteers

13 partner organizations in the San Lorenzo River Alliance

You. And people just like you. Each individual who has committed their time, money and ideas to revitalizing the San Lorenzo River. It’s happening.