

Regional Priority Plan for Monterey County Forest Health and Fire Resilience
Resource Conservation District of Monterey County



View from Pico Blanco aka Pixchi; photo by Jamie T. Lewis

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Reference Documents

The following documents serve as the precursors and foundational sources for the *Monterey County Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience (MCFHWR) Regional Priority Plan (RPP, or Monterey County RPP)*. The references provide the background information, data and context that have informed the goals, objectives and strategies of this RPP. These documents also discuss the broader forest health and wildfire resilience efforts underway in our region and throughout the State of California.

*Monterey County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2010; 2016; updated 2023)*¹

Originally developed in 2010 and updated in 2016 and 2023, the Fire Safe Council of Monterey County (FSCMC) and a coalition of supporting agencies, groups and individual stakeholders created the Monterey County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (MCCWPP). The MCCWPP is a principal guiding document for prioritizing wildfire mitigation and fuels reduction work in the county. The *Monterey County RPP* builds upon the MCCWPP and serves as a complimentary tool to guide project development and provide a structured evaluation process for regional partners.

*California Forest Carbon Plan (2018)*²

The California Forest Carbon Plan outlines strategies to shift forests and wildlands as sources of greenhouse gas emissions to instead functioning as resilient and reliable carbon sinks. The plan introduces the concept of regional prioritization, which is central to the *Monterey County RPP*, and recommends actions to achieve forest carbon goals in California by 2030.

*California Climate Adaptation Strategy*³

The California Climate Adaptation Strategy provides a framework to increase California's climate resiliency. The *Monterey County RPP* aligns with the goals of this strategy, which consists of three key elements: 1) linking existing climate adaptation efforts with specific actions; 2) having a coordinated and integrated approach focused on work being implemented on the ground; and 3) improving the public understanding of climate resiliency and increasing public access to information and data about current adaptation efforts.

¹ Monterey County Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:cba320c1-0dbe-4f99-93c8-507d3dd20d8e>

² Forest Climate Action Team. 2018. California Forest Carbon Plan: Managing Our Forest Landscapes in a Changing Climate. Sacramento, CA. 178p.

³ California Climate Adaptation Strategy: <https://climateresilience.ca.gov/>

Monterey County Forest Health and Fire Resilience (MCFHFR) Regional Priority Plan (RPP) Collaborative Partners

The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) collaborates with a network of agencies and organizations to identify, develop, and fund forest health and wildfire resilience projects to address our region’s resource concerns. This work requires unified strategies and actions that extend across multiple jurisdictional and land ownership boundaries but ultimately benefit a broad collective of stakeholders in our region.

Many local organizations engaged in ecosystem management and wildfire prevention were critical in the initial development of the Monterey County RPP. This regional network of partners coordinate and collaborate, through aspects of project management, permitting, project implementation (including on lands which they steward), and community engagement and education efforts. Over time, we expect the RPP partner network to expand through continued outreach from current contributing partners to more of our County’s interested stakeholders.

MONTEREY COUNTY RPP CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS



Figure 1: Contributing Partners for the MCFHFR RPP

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Priority Plan (RPP) is a guidance document for partners and resource management stakeholders interested in developing and submitting wildfire resiliency and forest health projects for regional prioritization and for consideration in state block grant funding programs. The intent of the RPP is not to attempt to compile an exhaustive list of priority projects, but rather to be a living, companion document to assist interested organizations and community members in developing, ranking (prioritizing) and submitting their projects through the RPP portal and grant funding opportunities.

The initial sections of the RPP discuss the purpose, origin, contributing partners and vision of the RPP and explain the RPP's project prioritization process as the central framework for evaluating and prioritizing projects. *Project Prioritization Criteria and Process* describes the methods, also called "RPP governance", for project evaluation and prioritization. The section on *RPP Governance* describes the process of how RPP partners select projects. The *RPP Project Portal* provides basic information and a website link for applicants submitting potential priority projects, while the *RPP Project Classification* section defines the project categories, referenced in [Figure 2](#). These sections have been intentionally placed early in the document along with the classification matrix for project types; our intent is to orient partners and the public to the project prioritization process to encourage as many successful submissions of project information through the RPP portal as possible.

In the latter part of the document, *RPP Geographical Boundaries* provides information on the physical and political/economic characteristics of our region using USGS HUC-8 watershed boundaries for delineating sub-regions of our county. Subsequently, the *RPP Context* section discusses driving forces behind regional resource concerns within a historical, demographic, and land use context. An overview is also provided of indigenous peoples living in this region and their engagement as important regional stakeholders and land stewards. *Known Barriers to Project Implementation* describes key challenges faced by land managers of this region and *Regional and Statewide Information Sharing* acknowledges known gaps in our regional knowledge framework. *RPP Info & Resources* offers links and sources to current geospatial, informational, and pertinent data –many of which were used to develop this document. Finally, *Appendix A* concludes the document with maps displaying spatial information for the county, including demography, wildfire potential, vegetation types, tribal areas, and critical wildlife habitats.

Images interlaced throughout the RPP display the diversity of landscapes, wildlife and natural resources, wildfires, and current management practices that Monterey County encompasses; photo credits are provided in the captions.

Monterey County Forest Health and Fire Resilience Regional Priority Plan



Prescribed burning in Santa Lucia Preserve; photo by Brenna Yunn Fowler

MCFHFR RPP Purpose, Function and Origin

The Monterey County Forest Health and Fire Resilience Regional Priority Plan (MCFHFR RPP or RPP) is intended to support a collaborative, community-driven approach to wildfire risk reduction by leveraging existing resources, planning documents, and partnerships to develop evaluation criteria that prioritize the County's most vulnerable areas. The State of California has indicated that the future of forest health and wildfire prevention grant funding will use regional priority plans as the main source for guiding funding allocations. This approach utilizes block grants as a way to enable more efficient and customizable resource allotments.

The main function of the RPP is to serve as a living database of forest health and wildfire resilience projects that have been identified, cultivated and curated by regional land management organizations. The RPP will create an evaluation process for future project prioritization and funding as equitably, and expeditiously as possible. The project prioritization process builds upon past efforts and insights from Monterey County partner organizations, in particular the MCCWPP that was created in 2010 and updated through July 2023 (['Reference Documents'](#)). The MCCWPP has served as the foundational document for guiding regional wildfire mitigation efforts in this region.

The RPP was developed with local stakeholder groups engaged in the wildfire planning and resilience community: initial contributing partners include the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) and RPP partner organizations noted earlier ([Figure 1](#)). Our neighboring regions are developing their own RPPs in parallel with the shared, common goal of increasing wildfire prevention efforts across

California. The Department of Conservation Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFC) hosts a viewer to see all regional partners curating RPPs here: [RFFC Planning Areas](#)⁴.



Dolan Fire, 2020, Monterey County; photo by Jamie T. Lewis

Monterey County Forest Health and Fire Resilience Regional Vision and Goals

The MCFHFR RPP vision and goals are the overarching ideas that motivate and prioritize forest health and fire resilience project work in this region. These goals are distilled from State directives; primarily the California Forest Carbon Plan (2018)⁵, the California Climate Adaptation Strategy⁶ ([‘Reference Documents’](#)), and California State Executive Order N-82-20⁷, as well as other plans and directives. The RPP goals are:

- ❖ *VISION - Create a resilient landscape for ecosystems and people through collaboratively developed and carefully prioritized resource management projects*
 - ❖ *Goal 1: Maintain or expand native habitats while increasing the ability to adapt to climate change and its impacts*
 - ❖ *Goal 2: Decrease wildfire risk to communities in Monterey County as described in the MCCWPP*
 - ❖ *Goal 3: Increase carbon sequestration and retention*
 - ❖ *Goal 4: Augment capacity of regional organizations to implement all of the above*

⁴ California Department of Conservation Regional Forest and Fire Program Regional Priority Plan areas: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/8d8a7110d3b84713b6fc3aa4f387fa04>

⁵ California Forest Carbon Plan (2018) <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-01/California-Forest-Carbon-Plan-Final-Draft-for-Public-Release-May-2018.pdf>

⁶ California Climate Adaptation Strategy <https://www.climate resilience.ca.gov/>

⁷ California State Executive Order N-82-20 <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/10.07.2020-EO-N-82-20-.pdf>



Pfeiffer Beach, Big Sur region; photo by Jamie T. Lewis

Forest Health and Fire Resilience Strategies and Actions

MCFHFR RPP partners have identified and adopted several core strategies and related actions to meet our regional goals. Projects should fulfill at least *one* of the listed strategies for inclusion in the portfolio of RPP projects; they can address multiple strategies through a single project *or* multiple projects can be combined to address multiple strategies.

Strategies

The RPP partners identified strategies as the nexus between our region’s forest health, fire resiliency and capacity goals. Each strategy requires a continual effort by regional partners to generate their intended beneficial outcomes. These strategies were identified, developed and vetted in planning sessions with the collaborating regional partner group during 2024 and early 2025. The strategies with examples are:

Increase habitat resiliency to climate change and related events

Related actions:



- ★ Collaborate with landowners and land managers to enhance the fire resiliency of wildland areas.
- ★ Identify and maintain critical habitat areas, including climate refugia, by partnering with state and federal agencies to prioritize suitable future habitats for at risk species.
- ★ Enhance climate resiliency by prioritizing projects that bolster ecosystem resiliency and stability amidst increasing climatic stressors.

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by resource work



Related actions:

- ★ Implement forest health treatments and methods prioritizing the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- ★ Secure funding to transition to electric equipment.
- ★ Employ best management practices to minimize the extent and intensity of wildfires originating from fuels reduction activities.

Protect and enhance ecosystem functions and components



Related actions:

- ★ Enhance carbon storage in key regional vegetation habitats like forests, grasslands, and chaparral.
- ★ Prioritize projects that also improve wildlife habitat and manage invasive plant species.
- ★ Fund initiatives that rehabilitate degraded habitats and are focused on carbon sequestration.

Protect and enhance water quality and supply



Related actions:

- ★ Support and finance projects focused on restoring natural areas along rivers and streams.
- ★ Develop consistent guidelines for managing riparian and wetland areas to ensure habitat protection.
- ★ Apply forest management and fire prevention practices that reduce the risk of soil erosion throughout the entire watershed.

Protect and restore cultural and historic resources



Related actions:

- ★ Prioritize projects and partnerships with historically disenfranchised peoples in Monterey County —including disadvantaged communities, low-income areas and tribal groups— to achieve equity in land resource management.
- ★ Collaborate directly with tribes to restore access to land.
- ★ Seek grants and opportunities to expand tribal land ownership, management, and stewardship.

Promote health and human safety



Related actions:

- ★ Implement wildfire risk mitigation strategies within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas of Monterey County (The WUI exists where human development, including structures and other infrastructure, meets or intermixes with undeveloped wildlands.)
- ★ Facilitate educational and outreach programs concerning the establishment and upkeep of defensible space and the reinforcement of residential structures against fire.
- ★ Focus on fuel management treatments within regions designated as having High and Very High Fire Severity.
- ★ Develop and maintain alternative evacuation routes for vulnerable communities.
- ★ Create and expand capacity for resource management organizations.



Salinas River; photo by Megan Barker

Project Prioritization Criteria and Process

The criteria are used to determine the prioritization of potential forest health and wildfire resilience projects in Monterey County. They reflect key elements of resource management issues that our communities want to address through forest health projects, such as climate, cultural resources, or ecosystem health. These elements tie back into the RPP strategies discussed in the previous section; [Table 1](#) illustrates the connection between criteria and strategies. All projects submitted to the RPP are considered to be local priorities by virtue of a regional partner or applicant expressing a need for their project. A project panel or governance committee (i.e. the collective group of project prioritization decision makers) will utilize the criteria to evaluate projects as future grant requests are advertised. The project evaluation process will be conducted in consultation with project proponents during governance evaluation sessions.

A basic ranking system will be used to evaluate each project relative to each relevant criterion. Some of these rankings will be assigned with defined categories, while ranking of other criteria will be more subjective. For example, connectivity can be ranked by distance (to nearest similar project) or it can be ranked by thematic components (project addressing eucalyptus removal at a sub-basin watershed level in two different areas of the county). A classification of *low*, *medium-low*, *medium/medium-high*, and *high* project rankings will be assigned relative to other evaluated projects during each session.

These criteria will be used as a supplement to the MC CWPP in addition to resources such as CAL FIRE's FRAP⁸ and the Regional Resilience Toolkit⁹ which is also used by the State for periodically evaluating the condition of forests and wildlands across the State. The last FRAP assessment was completed in 2017.



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District in Cachagua; photo by Brenna Yunn Fowler

⁸ Fire and Resource Assessment Program: <https://frap.fire.ca.gov/>

⁹ Regional Resilience Toolkit | US EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/regional-resilience-toolkit>

Table 1. MCFHFR RPP Strategies and Criteria Crosswalk

RPP Strategies	Primary Criteria	Secondary Criteria	Other Criteria
<i>Increase habitat resiliency to climate change and related events</i>	Climate impact	Ecosystem Health; Connectivity;	Prior Project Investment Project Size Urgency
<i>Reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by resource work</i>	Climate impact	Health and Safety	
<i>Protect and enhance ecosystem functions and components</i>	Ecosystem Health	Reduction of Fire Risk	
<i>Protect and enhance water quality and supply</i>	Ecosystem Health	Health and Safety; Equity	
<i>Protect and restore cultural and historic resources</i>	Cultural Resource Impact	Equity	
<i>Promote health and human safety</i>	Health and Safety	Reduction of Fire Risk; Equity	



Black sage (Salvia mellifera); photo by Zoe Curcio

The prioritization criteria include the following:

Climate impact: a project taking measurable steps to reduce CO₂ emissions, methane or other greenhouse gas emissions through intentional efforts aimed at protecting carbon stocks and/or reduction in emissions would rank higher in this criterion. Projects that target reduced emissions and/or increase carbon stock must provide a clear plan and reduction goal.

Connectivity: can be spatial adjacency to other projects and/or valued resources, or it can be thematic connections (i.e. eucalyptus treatments spread across different watersheds).

Cultural resource impact: a project that identifies and purposefully aims to enhance cultural resources, such as tribal involvement, will rank higher in this criterion.

Ecosystem Health: projects that use restoration methods to improve ecological benefits for plants, wildlife, soil, water and air. Projects that clearly demonstrate more benefit for ecosystem health – through larger project size, number of restoration objectives, or targeting a critical resource need (i.e. providing habitat for an imperiled species or a wildlife corridor).

Equity of project: project has direct benefit for mapped disadvantaged communities or explicitly assists such populations, whether through increased safety, providing jobs and/or better ecosystem services.

Health and safety: projects emphasizing public health and safety, which can be manifested in elements, (i.e. strategic fuels treatments that benefit targeted communities or post-fire timber harvesting to reduce impacts to recreational users) and can benefit a larger number of communities, WUI areas, or important infrastructure.



Juvenile coyote, Salinas River; photo by Pathways for Wildlife

Prior project investment: Total financial investment or similar metrics will be used to determine the rank of a project under this criterion, which can be used in two different ways. Previous investment in past project work and/or planning that has contributed to ongoing work considered by the RPP partners and stakeholders to be worthwhile would increase the ranking of the project under this criterion. However, prior investment is a subjective criteria and within certain contexts may not always be a positive attribute, i.e. some prior investment may be an indication of sunken costs and therefore guide ranking this criterion lower. Another example of where a rank would be low would be if a tribal group or community has been historically underserved. In this last scenario, the score might be higher to compensate for this historical discrepancy, so that lack of prior project investment does not count negatively towards the criteria rank, but rather the project would receive a high rank for this criterion.

Project Size: larger projects can have multiple benefits, both in scale and in number. For this criterion, larger projects would score or rank higher than comparable, but smaller projects. When submitting your

project, the mapping tool provided in the portal allows users to calculate acreage. The rank categories for quantitative size by acreage roughly include:

- 0 to 5 acres- low,
- 5-20 acres- medium low,
- 20-100 acres- medium,
- 100-500 acres- medium high,
- 500 acres and above- high

Reduction of fire risk: projects that reduce wildfire risk to communities or ecosystems in identified risk areas, either from the MCCWPP, fire hazard severity mapping provided by the State, or other relevant planning processes. The rank categories include:

- Moderate fire hazard severity rating- low to medium-low,
- high fire hazard severity/not identified in CWPP- medium,
- high fire hazard severity/identified in CWPP or very high fire hazard severity- medium-high,
- very high fire hazard severity and identified in CWPP

Urgency: Projects that have an urgent, overriding need to be implemented, such as protection of Federally Endangered species, to prevent an imminent disaster, or to leverage related funding opportunities that would be lost without project implementation. The need for urgency must be clearly identified and seen in the community.



Central Coast TREX (2023); photo by Jamie T. Lewis

RPP Governance

The prioritization of projects necessitates a structured governance framework. This section delineates the fundamental procedures for project solicitation, evaluation, and ranking to determine eligibility for subsequent grant funding opportunities.

1. RPP partners will meet, at a minimum, at least twice each calendar year to review projects for grant submission. It is likely that two sessions a year will be requested as grant opportunities arise.

2. There will be representation from at least *three* RPP partner organizations to form a quorum to select from submitted projects; project proponents cannot rank their own project during these sessions but are allowed (and encouraged) to be present.
3. Criteria should be applied fairly and as objectively as possible by the ranking group.
4. Partners should provide feedback to project proponents on criteria ranking for future selection meetings.
5. Partners can suggest other methods to proponents for including a project for submission, including: incorporation or merging with other projects, revisions to project scope, budget or criteria, etc.
6. Projects that are too incomplete to be considered should be sent back to the proponent with clear and simple direction about changes needed for project consideration in future sessions. Projects submitted through the application portal will be recorded by the governance team using a tracking system that allows for revisiting and improving under-developed projects. The governance team can then aid applicants to meet the criteria outlined for resubmittal as an independent project or as an expected eventual merging with another project that is geographically or thematically aligned.



Eucalyptus removal near Elkhorn Slough; photo by Jamie T. Lewis

RPP Project Portal

The MCFHFR RPP Project Portal will serve as the interface for groups to submit their projects for priority evaluation. The RPP portal website link, below, directs users to a Survey123 ArcGIS form into which applicants can submit pertinent project information. Accessing this portal does not require an ArcGIS license. The mapping tool provided in the portal allows users to calculate acreage. Once the information is entered, the project will be included in a secure database of potential regional priority projects to be maintained by the RCDMC. Entered projects will be assessed by a group of MCFHFR partners at least twice annually or as grant solicitations arise. The governance group will utilize project criteria to prioritize and select the best projects to match the most appropriate grantor funding opportunities.



RPP Project Classifications

The following types of classifications for projects are presented below. These denote the main goal of the project, although that does not exclude secondary project goals. These may change or be added to over time, as needed and as determined by the RPP partners.

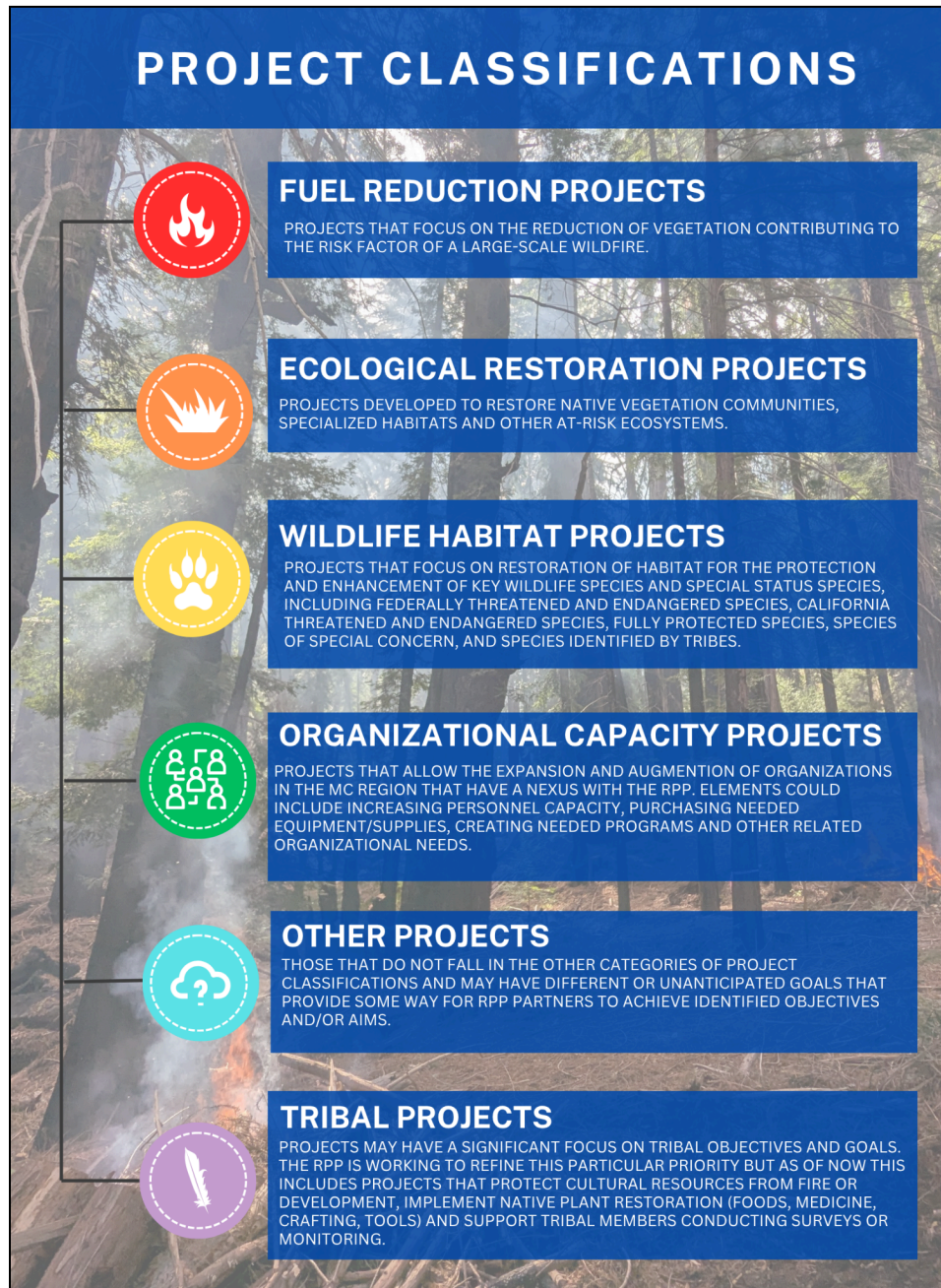


Figure 2: Project Classifications. (Background of Trappers Canyon in Santa Lucia Preserve); photo and figure by Brenna Yunn Fowler

RPP Geographical Boundaries

Regional Boundary

The MCFHFR RPP boundary is defined as the terrestrial boundaries of Monterey County, including federal, state and local responsibility areas, which overlaps with the jurisdiction of the RCDMC and other partner organizations. Other local groups will have different boundaries by which they define their respective regions and may be brought into consideration on a project-by-project basis. [Table 2](#) provides the total area for Federal, State and Local Responsibility Areas, with [Figure 3](#) showing the spatial distribution of these regulatory and administrative boundaries. Definitions are provided by the California Public Resources Code:

Federal Responsibility Areas (FRA) are lands administered or controlled by the Federal Government for which the Federal Agencies have administrative and protection responsibility.

State Responsibility Areas (SRA) as defined in California Public Resources Code Section 4126 are *(a) Lands covered wholly or in part by forests or by trees producing or capable of producing forest products, (b) Lands covered wholly or in part by timber, brush, undergrowth, or grass, whether of commercial value or not, which protect the soil from excessive erosion, retard runoff of water or accelerate water percolation, if such lands are sources of water which is available for irrigation or for domestic or industrial use, (c) Lands in areas which are principally used or useful for range or forage purposes, which are contiguous to the lands described in subdivisions (a) and (b).*

Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) are incorporated cities, urban regions, agriculture lands, and portions of the desert where the local government is responsible for wildfire protection. This is typically provided by city fire departments, fire protection districts, counties, and by CAL FIRE under contract.

Table 2: Federal, State, and Local Responsibility Areas in Monterey County; data sourced from Monterey County Open Data¹⁰

Responsibility Area	Responsible Agencies	Area (Acres)
Federal Responsibility Area	United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service	77,178.85
State Responsibility Area	CAL FIRE San Benito-Monterey Unit	41,924.56
Local Responsibility Area	Various local fire departments and districts	184,180.68

¹⁰ Monterey County Open Data:
<https://montereycountyopendata-12017-01-13t232948815z-montereyco.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/MontereyCo::sra-fire-haz-zones-1/about>

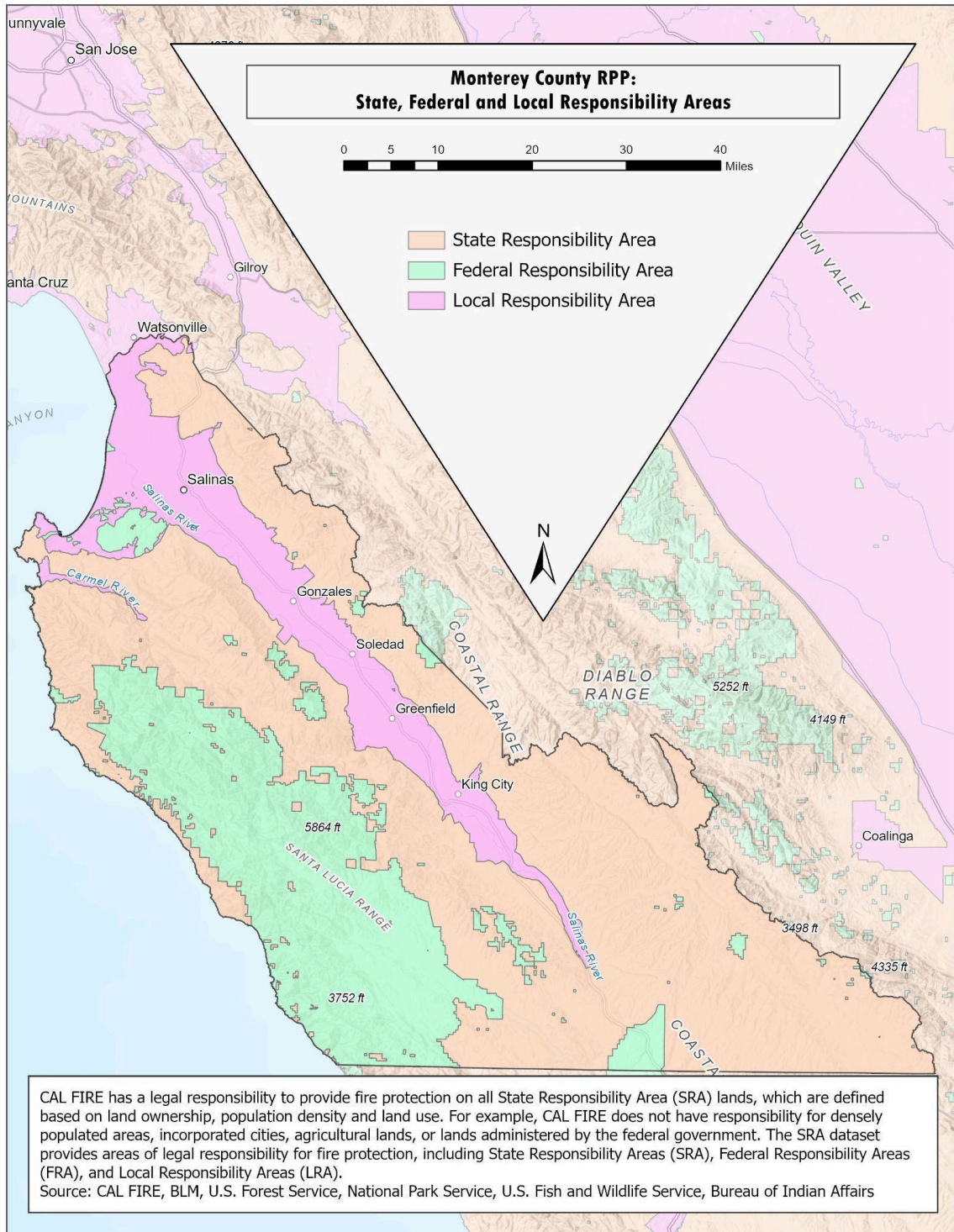
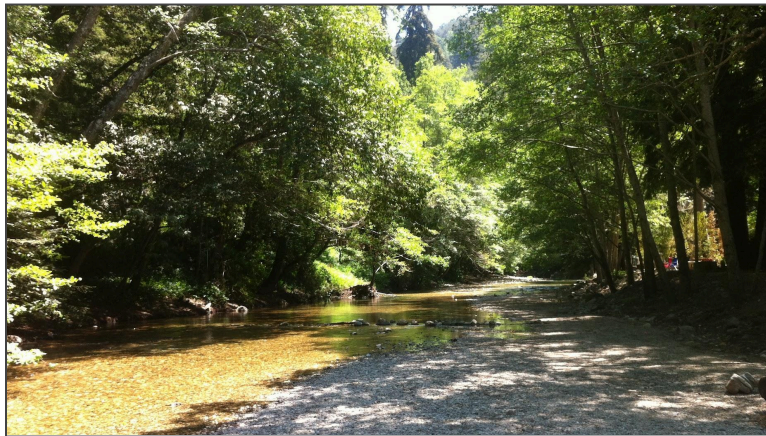


Figure 3: State, Federal, and Local Responsibility Areas in Monterey County; Data source: CAL FIRE; map by Megan Barker

Watersheds

A watershed is defined as “... an area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall to a common outlet, such as the outflow of a reservoir, mouth of a bay, or any point along a stream channel”¹¹. The United States Geologic Service (USGS) classifies watersheds using a nationwide system based on surface hydrologic features. This system classifies watersheds into regions (2-digit), subregions (4-digit), basins (6-digit), subbasins (8-digit), watersheds (10-digit), and sub-watersheds (12-digit)¹².

For the purposes of this document, we reference Monterey County watersheds using the USGS Hydrologic Unit Class “8” level or subbasin level boundaries, to define the landscape in which potential RPP ecological and fuels management work will occur. The geographic delineations can be used for reference and clarification in [Figure 4](#).



Carmel River; photo by RCDMC

¹¹ USGS Watersheds defined:

<https://www.usgs.gov/centers/california-water-science-center/science/science-topics/watersheds>

¹² USGS Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs) Explained: <https://nas.er.usgs.gov/hucs.aspx>

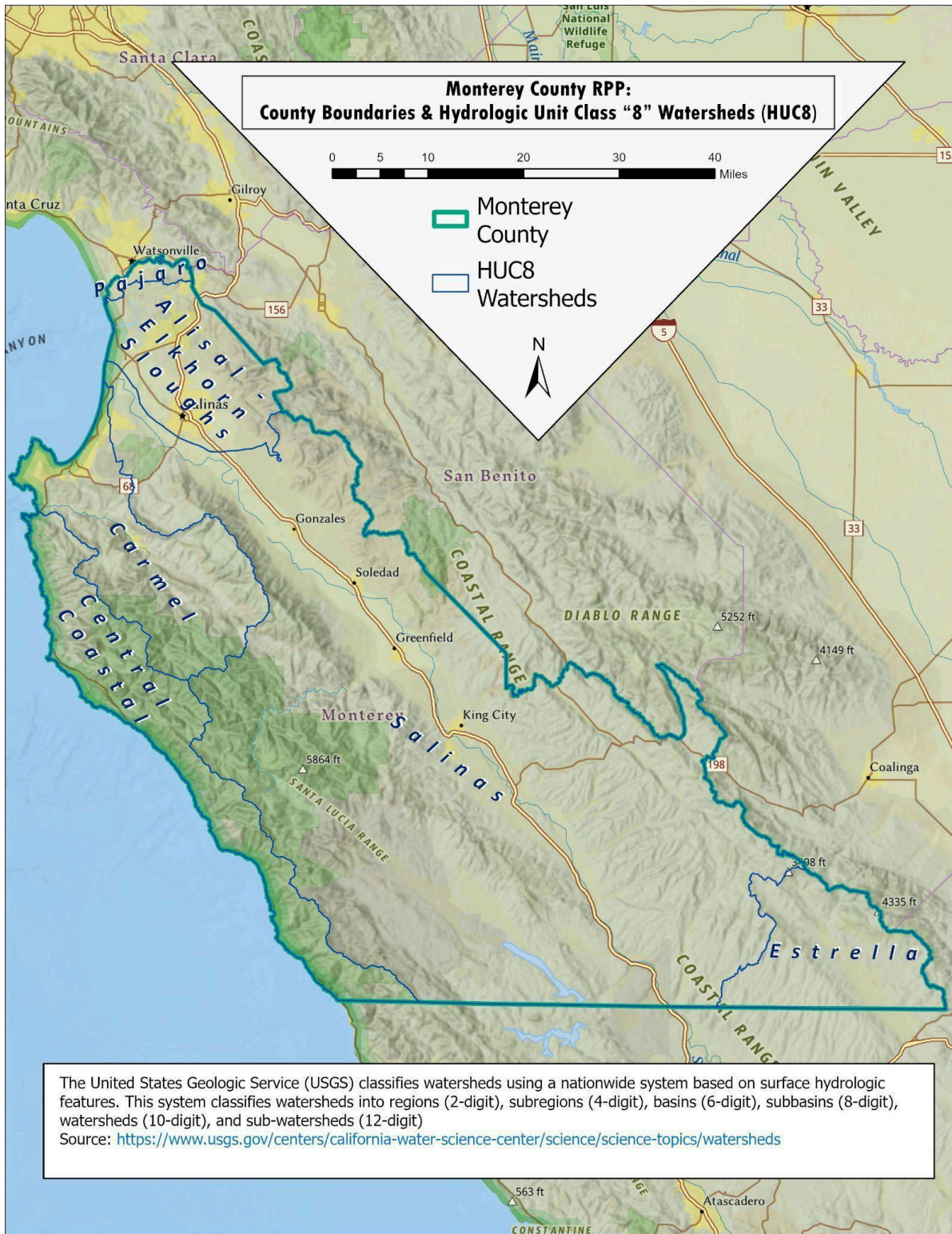


Figure 4: Monterey County Boundaries and Hydrologic Unit Class 8 Watersheds (HUC8); data sourced from USGS; map by Brenna Yunn Fowler

Monterey County Watersheds Hydrologic Unit Class "8" levels (HUC8)

Alisal-Elkhorn Slough

- The Alisal-Elkhorn Slough Watershed spans 142,402 acres, and includes Elkhorn Slough, one of the largest and most ecologically significant estuaries in California. The slough is essential for a range of estuarine species, including birds, marine mammals, plants and fish.
- The watershed is important economically for Monterey County, with over 30,000 acres of high-value agricultural land, the County seat of Salinas, and several small towns.
- The non-farmed lands of the watershed contain large stands of coast live oak and non-native eucalyptus trees, maritime chaparral, and grasslands.
- Identified resource issues:
 - Estuarine health, WUI expansion, flooding, wildfire risk, water quality and erosion impacts from agriculture



Elkhorn Slough; photo by Keith Ellenbogen

Pajaro River

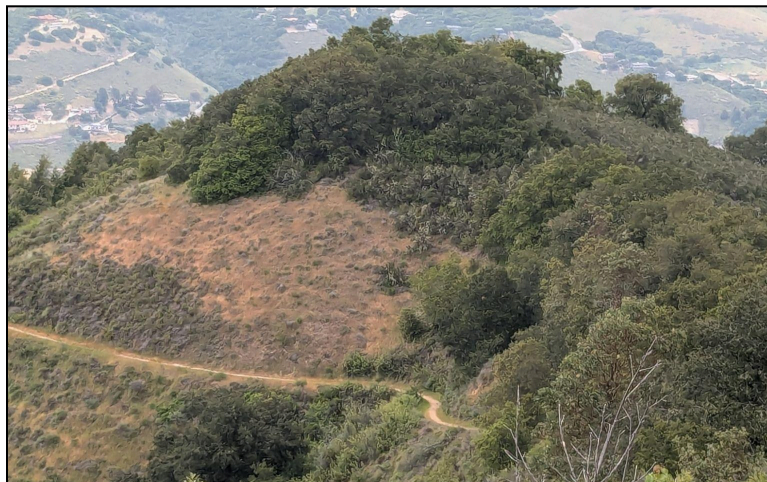
- The slice of the Pajaro River Watershed within Monterey County includes a total land area of 11,071 acres, dominated by the highly productive ag lands in the Pajaro River floodplain, and bounded to the north by the river and by the Elkhorn Hills on the south.
- The Pajaro River serves as Monterey County's northern border with Santa Cruz County.
- Dominant vegetation types include agriculture, coastal oak woodland and non-native eucalyptus, particularly in the southern part of the watershed.
- Identified resource issues:
 - Flood management, water quality and erosion impacts from agriculture and WUI expansion



Cattle grazing on the border of the Pajaro River Watershed and San Benito County; photo by RCDMC

Carmel River

- Encompassing a total area of 198,536 acres, the Carmel River watershed contains the cities of Marina, Seaside, Sand City, and the popular tourist destinations of Carmel Valley, Monterey, Pebble Beach and Carmel-by-the-Sea.
- The Carmel River cuts northwestward through the upper portion of the Santa Lucia Mountains and provides water for much of the Monterey Peninsula. The Carmel River Watershed serves as ecologically significant migration and spawning habitat for federally threatened South-Central California Coast steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*).
- Dominant vegetation types include coastal oak woodland, montane hardwood and conifer forest, and annual grassland.
- Approximately 37,028 acres of the southernmost portion of the watershed is part of the Los Padres National Forest and hosts hiking and camping access.
- Identified resource issues:
 - Wildfire risk, WUI expansion, water supply/drought, flood management



Vasquez Trail, Carmel Valley; photo by Jamie Tuitele-Lewis

Salinas River

- With a total land area of 1,420,064 acres in Monterey County, the Salinas Valley Watershed drains the largest river system in both the Monterey County and Central Coast regions--and includes portions of San Benito and San Luis Obispo counties.
- Salinas River Valley land use is predominantly highly-productive agriculture (more than 250,000 acres) and includes the cities of Gonzales, Soledad and King, along with several small unincorporated communities.
- The watershed is bounded on the east by the Gabilan Mountains and bounded to the southwest by the Sierra de Salinas and Santa Lucia Mountains, including approximately 312,131 acres of the Los Padres National Forest, Fort Hunter Liggett, two major reservoirs (Nacimiento and San Antonio), and major recreation areas in the region including the western portion of Pinnacles National Monument.
- Despite the dominance of agriculture, there are a variety of riparian ecotones along the Salinas River and its major tributaries--the Arroyo Seco, Nacimiento and San Antonio Rivers--that provide important habitat for wildlife.
- Dominant vegetation types include annual grassland, mixed chaparral, chamise redshank-chaparral, coastal oak woodland and agriculture.
- Identified resource issues:
 - Water quality, erosion, WUI growth, wildfire risk, flooding, river management, land conversion



Salinas River; photo by Emily Zefferman

Central Coast

- The total land area of the Central Coast Watershed within Monterey County is 206,333 acres, which includes the drainages of multiple smaller rivers and creeks along the Big Sur coast, including the Little Sur and Big Sur Rivers.
- It is heavily vegetated, primarily composed of montane hardwood-dominant forest, montane hardwood-conifer forest, mixed chaparral, and coastal scrub with the steep western flank of the Santa Lucia Mountains forming the headwaters.

- The community of Big Sur is situated along coastal Highway 1 and includes several small, scattered communities, many of which rely on tourism and recreation for sustenance. The watershed has a more limited WUI than the others because of its lower population density. However, subsequently, the Central Coast has a high fire risk due its size, topography, vegetation, and isolation. Heavy tourism and roadway landslides in this picturesque viewshed creates additional risks for accidental ignitions and safety concerns.
- Identified resource issues:
 - Wildfire risk, flooding, coastal erosion and landslides, WUI expansion, tourism impacts



Big Sur coastline; photo by Brenna Yunn Fowler

Estrella

- Located in the southeasternmost part of Monterey County, the Estrella Watershed has 141,693 acres of land area within the county. Most of the watershed is located in San Luis Obispo County.
- This watershed, including the Monterey County portion, is within the boundaries of the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District (US-LT RCD).
- The Estrella River flows south from the Gabilan Range, with much of its lands dedicated to rangeland use.
- Dominant vegetation types include annual grasslands, chaparral and blue oak woodlands.
- Identified resource issues:
 - Water management, vegetation type conversion, erosion



Cattle driving in the Estrella Watershed; photo by V6 Ranch & Parkfield

RPP Context

The following section is provided to inform both the reader's understanding of the driving forces behind regional resource concerns and provide insight for new project development. In addition to a discussion of climatic and physical drivers, this section provides historical, demographic, and land use context; an overview of indigenous peoples living in this region; a summary of challenges and information gaps faced by local land managers; and lastly a list of links to informational sources.

Climate Change

Climate change is now recognized as having a more immediate impact on ecosystems and land than previously understood. Since the late 19th century, the planet's average surface temperature has risen by approximately 2.12 degrees Fahrenheit (1.18 degrees Celsius), largely driven by increased levels of carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere due to human activities¹³. Since 1950, the frequency of record-low temperature events in the U.S. has decreased, while inversely record-high temperature events have increased; simultaneously, the U.S. has also witnessed increasing recurrences of intense rainfall events.¹⁴ Although there is no current scientific consensus for how accurately climate change models can predict future precipitation patterns in California, scientists agree that temperatures will continue to rise, more precipitation will fall as rain rather than snow, and extended droughts will become more common¹⁵.

These increased temperatures, higher atmospheric CO₂ concentrations, and shifts in both the amount and distribution of precipitation will put increasing stress on forests and wildlands. In the 1990s, predictive modeling of climate change forecasted significant changes in vegetation type distributions. Today, researchers are observing these altered landscapes in real time, ultimately validating their scientific forecasts. These stressors will negatively impact the health and resiliency of California's forested landscapes, diminishing carbon sequestration rates, and decreasing the quantity, quality, and stability of carbon stocks. Recent evidence demonstrates the link between climate change stressors and their impacts on wildlands: between 2003 to 2012, the U.S. Southwest experienced a 1,266 percent increase in burned area in comparison to the period from 1973 to 1982.¹⁶

¹³ NASA on Climate Change Evidence: <https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/evidence/>

¹⁴USGCRP, 2017: Climate Science Special Report: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume I [Wuebbles, D.J., D.W. Fahey, K.A. Hibbard, D.J. Dokken, B.C. Stewart, and T.K. Maycock (eds.)]. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, 470 pp, doi: 10.7930/J0J964J6

¹⁵ NASA on Climate Change Evidence: <https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/evidence/>

¹⁶ Westerling, A. L. (2016). Increasing western US forest wildfire activity: sensitivity to changes in the timing of spring. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, 371(1696). JOUR. Retrieved from <http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/371/1696/20150178.abstract>.

Monterey County Fires Before and After 1975

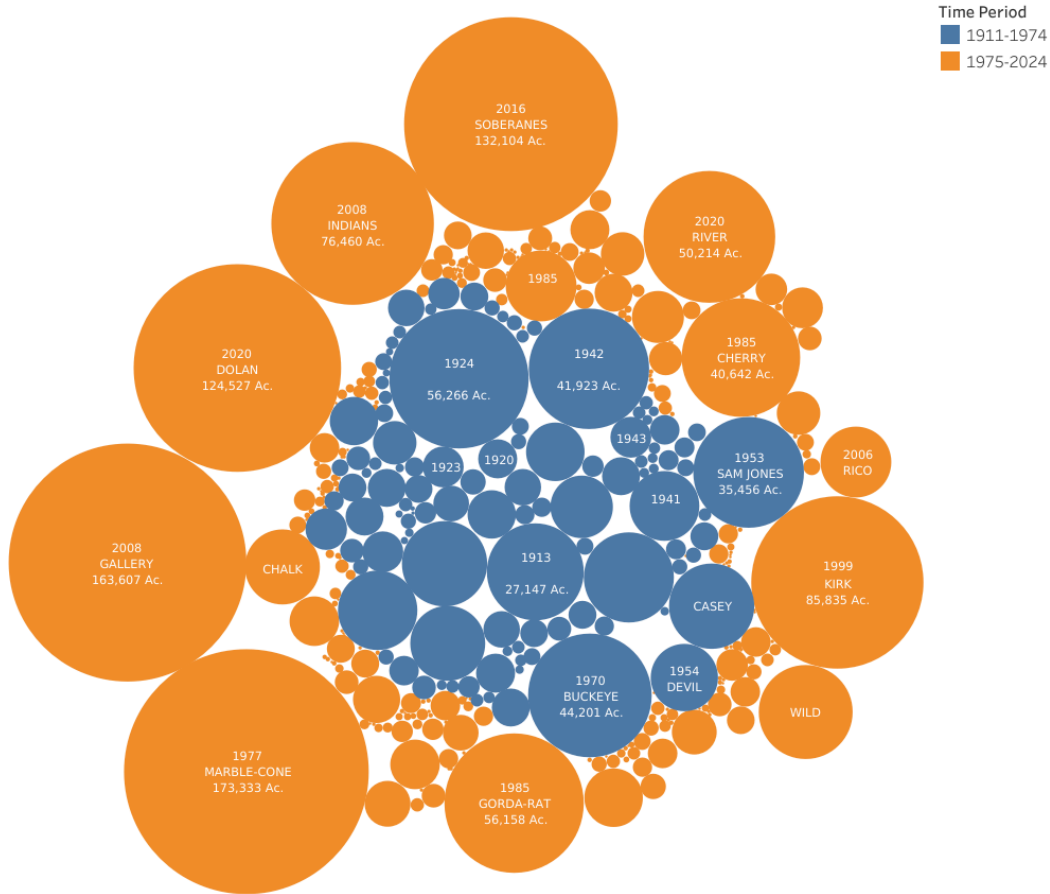


Figure 5: Monterey County Fires from 1911 to 1974 (blue) and 1975 to 2024 (orange). Data Source: CAL FIRE, 2025. Figure by Megan Barker.



River Fire (2020) aftermath; photo by Jamie T. Lewis

Impacts of Wildfires

Over the last decade, California's Central Coast and Monterey County have experienced an increase in the size and intensity of wildfires. [Figure 5](#) displays total acreage by fire and year. Prior to 1975, large wildfires occurred infrequently in Monterey County; this changed with the Marble Cone Fire of 1977 (155,414 acres), and the Kirk Complex Fire of 1999 (85,835 acres), proving a steep increase in size. Over the last 20 year period, wildfires have continued at an even greater increase to size, frequency and impact. The Gallery and Indians Fires in 2008 were some of the first signs of this shift, together burning over 240,000 acres. Significant wildfires followed those two, with the 2016 Soberanes Fire (132,104 acres) and the River (50,214 acres), Carmel (6,997 acres) and Dolan (124,527 acres) fires burning over 180,000 acres (combined) in 2020. [Figure 6](#) displays Monterey County's fire size data from 1911 to 2024. Monterey County's largest fires have more than doubled in size over the past 50 years. During 1975 to 2024, there were eight fires greater than 50,000 acres in size (1977 Marble-Cone, 1985 Gorda Rat, 1999 Kirk, 2008 Gallery, 2008 Indians, 2016 Soberanes, 2020 River, 2020 Dolan); whereas from 1911 to 1974 there was only one greater than 50,000 acres in size— an unnamed fire in 1924 that burned 56,266 acres¹⁷.

Of this Monterey County-specific list, it unfortunately does not include the horrific Camp Fire in Butte County of 2018, the deadliest and most destructive fire in California's history; the massive outbreak of wildfires statewide in 2020, particularly the record-breaking August Complex of 2020 (1,032,648 acres); or any of the numerous other unprecedented fires statewide that continue to surpass historic norms.¹⁸ This huge increase in wildfire activity, both in frequency and intensity, has been directly linked to climate change and its associated impacts. Geographic distributions of wildfire hazard potential (WHP) throughout Monterey County are shown in the Appendix ([Figure A.3](#)). WHP was developed by USDA Forest Service as a geospatial tool to depict the relative potential for high-intensity wildfire that may be difficult to manage¹⁹. Adding to this risk is residential expansion into forested and wildland areas by people in Monterey County, expanding the WUI zone dramatically in the last century. Spatial distribution of WUI is illustrated in [Figure 7](#). These factors have increased risks of local residents to an extremely high level.

¹⁷CAL FIRE Historical Fire Perimeters:

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/fire-resource-assessment-program/fire-perimeters>

¹⁸<https://34c031f8-c9fd-4018-8c5a-4159cdf6b0d-cdn-endpoint.azureedge.net/-/media/calfire-website/our-impact/fire-statistics/top-20-largest-ca-wildfires.pdf?rev=fba7bfc52eab4d5d87fbee5bd9416ed8&hash=270E810A7FCF091122EE2A18EB24ACB6>

¹⁹ Wildfire Hazard Potential: <https://research.fs.usda.gov/firelab/products/dataandtools/wildfire-hazard-potential>

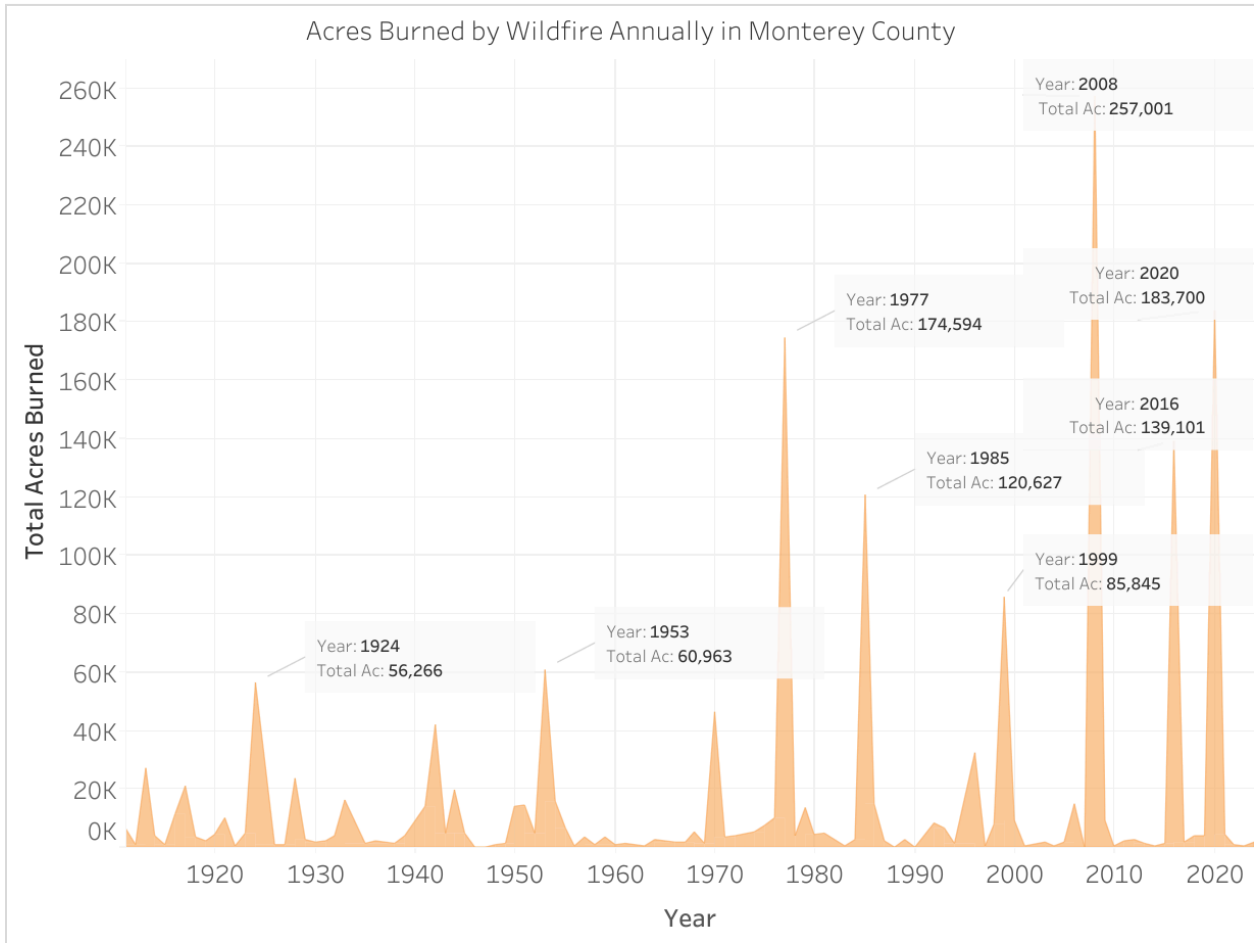


Figure 6: Total acreage of land area burned each year in Monterey County. In the past 50 years, Monterey County had six individual years (1977, 1985, 1999, 2008, 2016, and 2020) where the cumulative area burned exceeded 50,000 acres, compared with two years (1924 and 1953) from the period 1911 to 1974. Data Source: CAL FIRE 2025. Figure by Megan Barker.



Aftermath of the River Fire, Sierra de Salinas; photo by Jamie T. Lewis

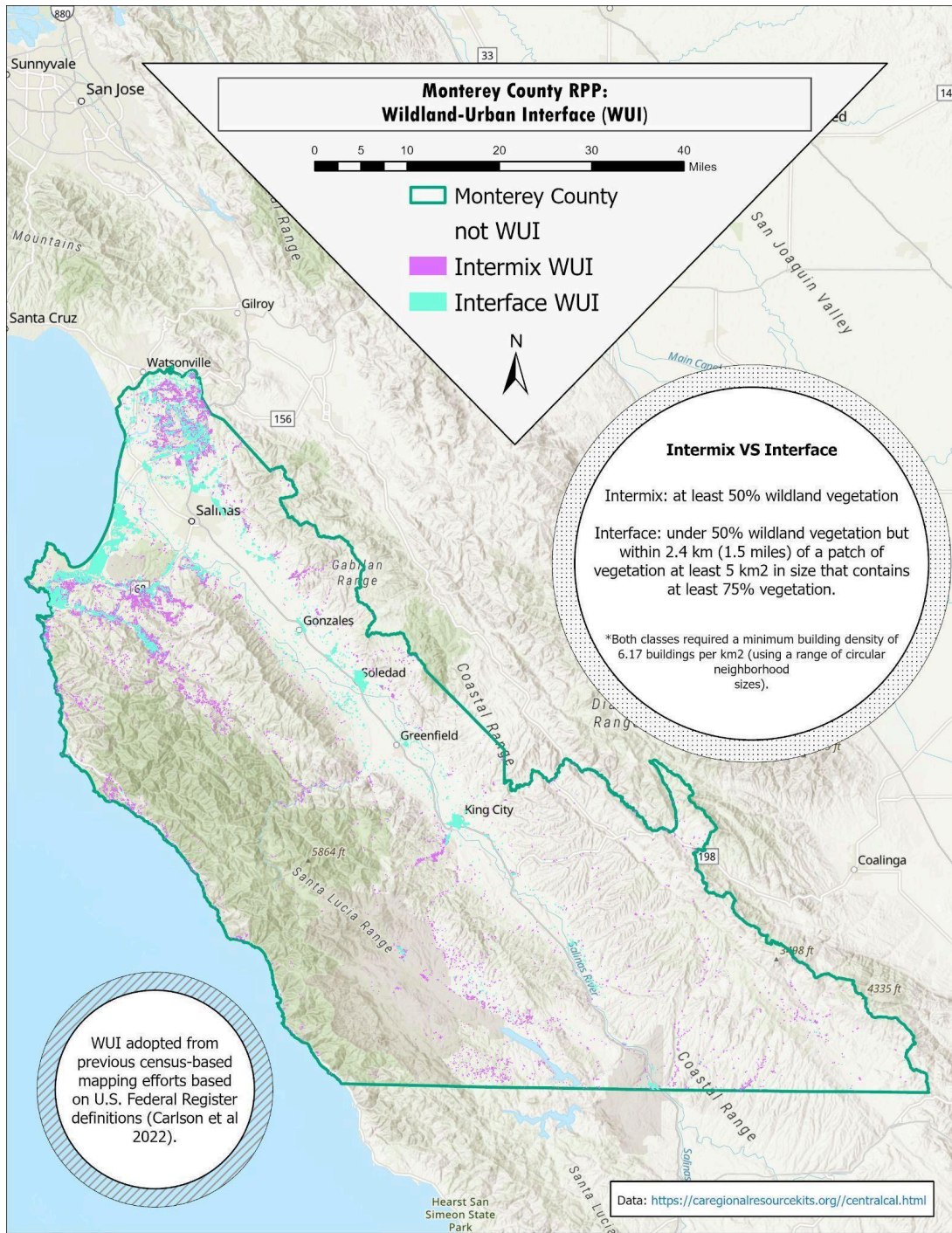


Figure 7: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI); data sourced from the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force Regional Resource Kit; map by Brenna Yunn Fowler

Historic Management

The Monterey County region has been prized for its abundant natural resources by native peoples for millennia and since the earliest days of colonization by Spanish missionaries and soldiers, dating back to the 18th century. The Salinas Valley currently serves as a globally important farmland for vegetable crops and vineyards. Farming during the Hispanic Period (1776-1846) was limited due to population size and economic focus on stock raising²⁰. The agricultural population was sparse, with cattle thriving on the unfenced lands. The discovery of gold in 1848 near Sacramento changed the region, leading to a population influx of other European settlers, which ultimately affected rancheros.

Much of the Monterey Peninsula and Santa Lucia Mountains were historically used for grazing cattle, sheep and goats. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, coastal redwood forests were heavily logged for lumber to build (and rebuild after the great 1906 fire) the burgeoning city of San Francisco. Since that time, logging has been reduced in scale. Timber operations are now focused on fuels management in the Santa Lucia Mountains, which are no longer considered a prime timber-producing region due to the component tree species being undesirable for timber, and the difficulty of access due to the rugged terrain of the range²¹.

Land Use Change

Development in Monterey County has been concentrated in the Salinas Valley, the forested and chaparral habitat areas near the Pacific Ocean, and the Elkhorn Slough watershed. Relevant to wildfire resiliency and natural resources management is a recent increase in the expansion of WUI areas in the Highway 68 corridor, Carmel Valley area, the Santa Lucia Mountains, and extending down to the southern county line (see [Figure 7](#)). This expansion of the WUI increases the risk of wildfire ignitions, human health hazards, and economic dangers. Other land use changes seen in the county include the expansion of urban areas (Monterey Peninsula, Carmel Valley, Salinas) and the conversion of Salinas River floodplains to vegetable crops, with a trend in recent decades for viticultural development on sloped valley flanks and highlands. The legacy of the California cattle boom that introduced extensive livestock ranching and grazing in the 1880s continues today in the Estrella and Salinas River watersheds²².

These land use changes have contributed to a range of resource impacts including habitat fragmentation, increased water use, loss of wildlife habitat, expansion of invasive species, increased pollution, and heightened wildfire risk. The spatial distribution of California wildlife habitat relationships (CWHR) vegetation types as well as USFWS and NOAA designated critical habitat are presented in the Appendix ([Figure A.2](#) and [Figure A.5](#)).

²⁰ National Park Service, The Spanish and Mexican period:

<https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/spanish-mexican-period.htm>

²¹ Monterey County Historical Society: <https://mchsmuseum.com/local-history/>

²² The California Cattle Boom, 1849-1862 – Monterey County Historical Society:

<https://mchsmuseum.com/local-history/american-era-settlement/the-california-cattle-boom-1849-1862/>

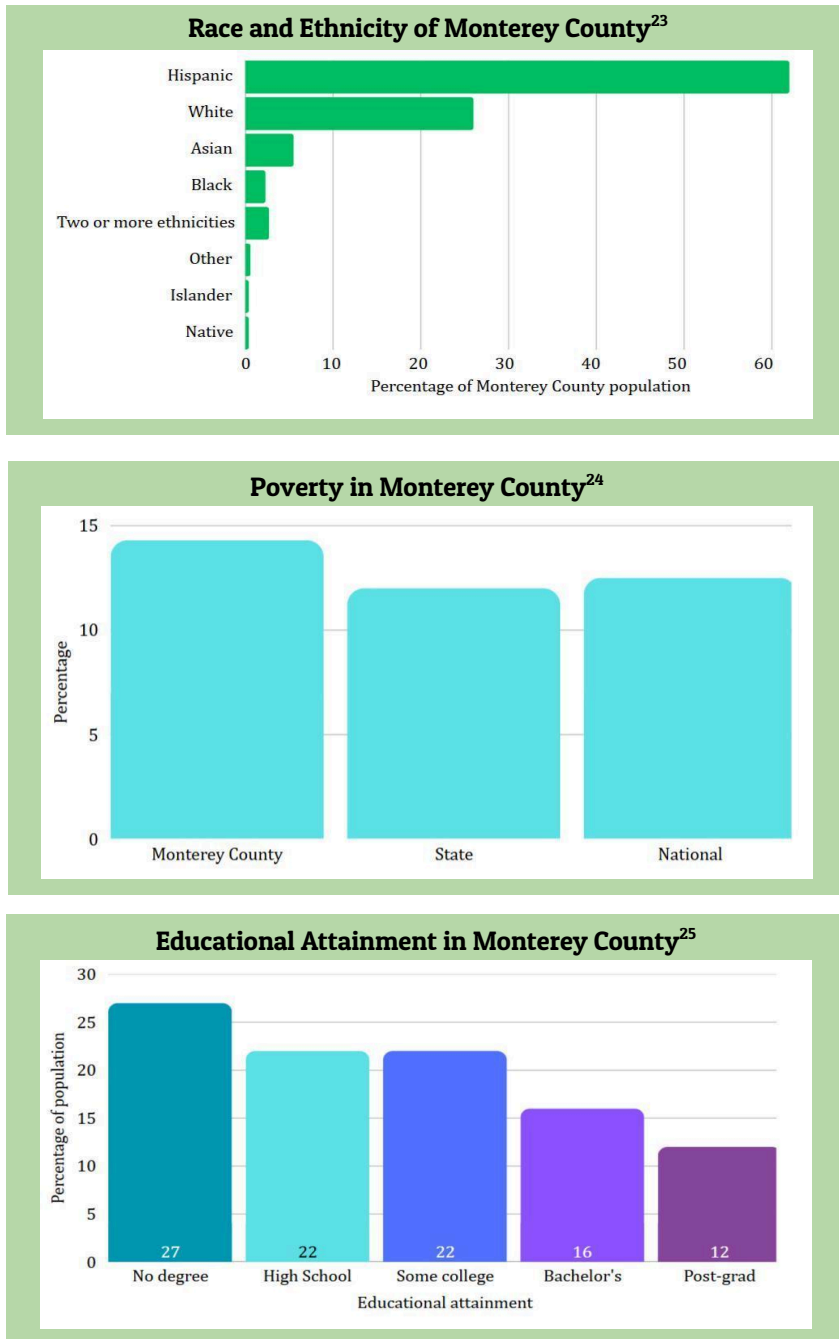


Figure 8: Monterey County educational attainment (a), ethnicity (b), and poverty (c)

²³ Census Reporter.org: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06053-monterey-county-ca/>

²⁴ Census Reporter.org: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06053-monterey-county-ca/>

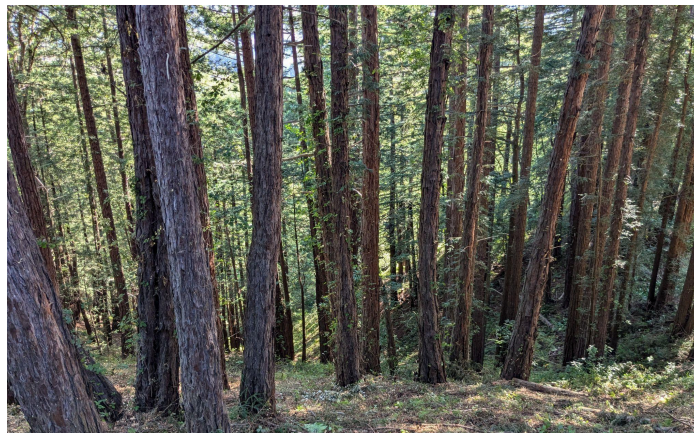
²⁵ Census Reporter.org: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06053-monterey-county-ca/>

Monterey County Demography

Large areas of Low Income populations exist in Monterey County ([Figure A-1](#)) with distinct pockets of Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), most of which are found in the Salinas Valley and Monterey Peninsula.

Demographic data exhibits approximately 62% of the county's population identified as Hispanic, followed by 25% as white, 6% as Asian, a little over 2% as two or more ethnicities, 2% as black, and less than 1% identified as Native American, Pacific Islander or other ([Figure 8a](#)). Educational attainment varies: 27% of the county's residents have no degree, 22% have a high school diploma, 22% have some college education, 16% have a bachelor's degree, and 12% obtained a post-graduate degree ([Figure 8b](#)). Economically, the poverty level rate in Monterey County is 14% - higher than both the California and U.S. averages ([Figure 8c](#)). Additionally, there is an area of northern Monterey County that has been identified as a Top 25% Disadvantaged Community, which overlaps both the Pajaro and the Alisal-Elkhorn Slough watershed areas ([Figure A-1](#)).

Demographic data will be utilized in future prioritization efforts, especially for identifying overlapping areas with underserved communities. As fine-scale vegetation mapping and associated wildfire spatial data products for the Monterey County region become available, that suite of information will help augment our region's ability to serve DAC and/or low income populations.



Overstocked Redwood forest stands; photo by Jamie T. Lewis

Monterey County Tribes

Monterey County is home to many indigenous tribes, whose emblems are shown in [Figure 9](#). The tribes have ancestral connections to the land and have important management concerns, such as maintaining access to their traditional lands, continuing indigenous cultural practices such as prescribed fire, and impacts from European colonization²⁶.

²⁶ Good Fire 2 - Current Barriers to the Expansion of Cultural Burning and Prescribed Fire Use in the United States and Recommended Solutions:
<https://www.karuk.us/index.php/information/62-announcements/652-good-fire-2-report-officially-released>

Including these tribes in the RPP is meant to increase their influence in the decision-making process of regional project prioritization. The delineations for territory boundaries are shown in the Appendix [Figure A.4](#) with data sourced from Native Land Digital.²⁷ Those listed are not Federally recognized, and most in Monterey County do not have any land base designated for the tribe itself or for tribal stewardship. Because of this current landless status—a direct effect from the historical aftermath of colonization—RPP partners found an expressed need for restoring land access and/or land ownership to these tribes. The RPP partnership hopes to support these efforts in tribal and land management relations, vocalizing the needs of tribes, and increasing transparency in the project planning process. It is also important to emphasize that the information that we have provided here, as mostly non-tribal members, is not exhaustive and could be subject to change as information is acquired from active tribal members and allies. RCDMC staff contact information is listed on the first page of this document should anyone want to request content changes.



Figure 9. Monterey County Indigenous Tribes; sourced from Native Land Digital

²⁷ Native Land Digital <https://native-land.ca/>; to make changes or updates to territories listed in maps, please email: research@native-land.ca

Known Barriers to Project Implementation

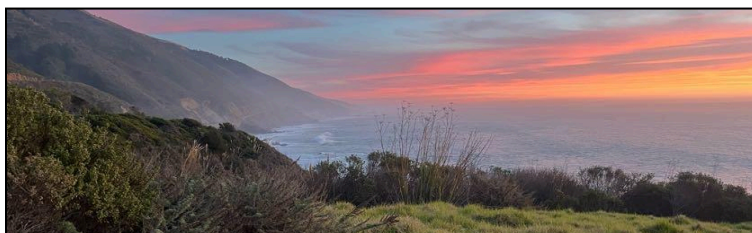
To increase the scale of forest health and fuels management work, there are several areas of policy, legislation, or regulation that could benefit from refinement or reconsideration. A partial list of these barriers and suggested actions are below.

Coastal Development Permits

Monterey County includes approximately 100 miles of scenic Central Coast coastline. The Coastal Zone (CZ) in Monterey County is quite large, a factor resulting from its width and the extensive Big Sur coastline. The scale of forested lands included in the CZ as well as the lengthy process to obtain a permit has slowed the pace of forest health and fuels management projects within it. The CZ is grouped into four Land Use Plan areas with their respective standards for development: North County, Del Monte Forest, Carmel Area, and Big Sur Coast.

Suggested actions

The RCDMC and the County of Monterey have developed a Public Works Plan (PWP) to streamline the Coastal Development Permit system. This PWP condenses submitted projects into a batched permit application process. In order to be eligible for the PWP, projects must fall under pre-determined forest health or fuels reduction categories and management activities. The RCDMC can help develop and review these bundled applications for expedited review as funding is available.



Big Sur sunset; photo by Brenna Yunn Fowler

In 2025, Governor Newsom's administration made a State of Emergency Proclamation, which allows land managers to expedite environmental analysis and permitting for wildfire resilience projects across the state²⁸. This proclamation is a temporary action, with all projects submitted by the end of 2025 and to be completed by the end of 2027. However, it does demonstrate governmental acknowledgement that permitting for forest health and wildfire resilience in the State of California is seen as a major hurdle. This may trigger future iterations of similar orders or a re-evaluation of the permitting process for coastal development permits as it pertains to vegetation management in the state.

²⁸ State of Emergency Proclamation:

<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/03/01/with-growing-fire-risk-governor-newsom-proclaims-state-of-emergency-to-fast-track-critical-wildfire-prevention-projects-statewide/>

Prescribed fire implementation

There is a new push across the United States to increase the pace and scale of prescribed fire management across fire-adapted ecosystems²⁹. These are proven management tools that can accomplish historically and ecologically-aligned goals while also being relatively cost-efficient. There are multiple barriers to implementing prescribed fire on the scale that is needed or desired, including:

- Air district permitting fees and restrictions
- Cultural practitioner hurdles
- Agency bias and perceptions
- Public perception
- Lack of insurance covering burn practitioners
- Liability concerns
- CEQA analysis time and costs for certain projects
- Need for more State-certified burn bosses



CCPBA members lighting a controlled burn near San Juan Bautista during the Central Coast TREX (2023); photo by Jared Childress

Suggested actions

A collaboration between the University of California Cooperative Extension, University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCCE/UC ANR) and State representatives is underway to introduce new legislation that can reduce barriers related to insurance, liability, CEQA and state-certifications. This can address the main hurdles that thwart practitioners' advancement of prescribed fire on the landscape.



BurnBot creating fuelbreak at a controlled burn at Rocks Ranch; photo by Jared Childress

Remaining issues like public perception, agency bias, and lack of cultural burning are specific topics the RPP partnership intends to address.

²⁹ Ryan, K.C., Knapp, E.E. and Varner, J.M. (2013), Prescribed fire in North American forests and woodlands: history, current practice, and challenges. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 11: e15-e24. <https://doi.org/10.1890/120329>

Biomass processing/carbon capture

The Monterey County region lacks a biomass processing facility and adjacent programs to capture carbon as a by-product of its removal. Local partners and neighboring counties have made initial efforts to remedy this, but, as of July 2025, a permanent biomass processing facility doesn't exist in the region. Mobile air curtain burners and biochar kilns are the only currently available options provided for landowners looking to process biomass and reduce carbon footprint. Options exist outside of the region, but are offset by the increased emissions it would take to truck locally-generated biomass to those facilities. The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) have made attempts to start a potential regional hub for biomass processing, including southern Santa Cruz county. Barriers to this effort include:



Carbonator (biochar kiln) processing eucalyptus at Elkhorn Slough Reserve; photo by Jamie Tuitele-Lewis

- Difficulties in identifying funding sources
- Logistics of biomass transportation
- Limited local organizational capacity

Suggested actions

Regional partners seeking a stable source of funding to support the establishment of a biomass facility in the Monterey Bay region. Implementation can be either through establishing a permanent facility or deploying mobile units to remote areas as needed. Other solutions to these known barriers are garnering productive partnerships between regional organizations, universities, and technological start-ups to promote and fund research on biomass processing and carbon capture methodologies.



Big Sur coastline; photo by Brenna Yunn Fowler

Organizational Capacity

The Monterey County region is home to over 200 non-profit organizations³⁰ and multiple federal, state and local governmental entities. The cost of living on the Central Coast area is higher than the average in California, which is already higher than the national average. In addition, the relative percentage of the population over the age of 65 is increasing, while people between 20 to 34 years of age are decreasing.³¹

These facts contribute to the current state of land management organizational capacity, in which local agencies and non-profit organizations are limited and often struggle to attract and retain appropriately skilled professionals. Barriers include:

- An average grant timeframe of two to four years (short windows of funding)
- Grants offering limited support (only a fraction of the award towards capacity)
- High cost of living with little affordable housing

Suggested actions

Partners work with elected officials and funding agencies to advocate for organizational capacity-dedicated grants with longer time frames. This includes encouraging grantor agencies or entities to allow more funding support for organizational capacity building, even in implementation-focused grants. Other actions that would be supportive (but outside the scope of the RPP partnership) include economic measures that focus on increasing affordable housing.



Wetland on Santa Lucia Preserve; photo by Jamie Tuitele-Lewis

Regional and Statewide knowledge sharing

Scientific research on forest and wildland management in California is limited. Active coordination and grant funding can provide opportunities for academic institutions and scientists to collaborate. Newly acquired knowledge could not only deepen our understanding of and ability to manage local natural

³⁰Monterey County Gives! partnership: <https://www.montereycountygives.com/nonprofits>

³¹USAfacts: <https://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/california/county/monterey-county/>

systems, but also inform our relevant studies and recommendations that guide project prioritization and development.

Gaps in Knowledge and Areas to Investigate Further

- ❖ Promote scientific research in Monterey County forests and wildlands
- ❖ Collaborate with academic institutions and scientists through active coordination and grant funding
- ❖ Develop recommendations for areas of inquiry most relevant to RPP
- ❖ Develop ways to benefit and honor cultural resources in coordination with tribal organizations, including but not limited to historic sites/villages, access to land, assistance with natural resource management and other tribal cultural goals.
- ❖ Identify and protect critical habitat for threatened/endangered species
- ❖ Observe and document long term impacts of fire suppression activities and stewardship practices on sensitive species and their ecosystems, both during and after implementation
- ❖ Identify areas where minimal suppression tactics should be used
- ❖ Determine appropriate fire return intervals for different habitat types
- ❖ Engage landowners in surface water management and riparian corridor best practices to slow, sink, and store more water throughout the watershed



Salinas River; photo by Emily Zefferman

RPP Info & Resources (A-Z)

Below are several informational resources that can be used to plan wildfire resilience projects. This is not an exhaustive list of all information sources used in the development of the RPP, but provides more of a background to support further independent research, in addition to sources referenced in the footnotes of the documents.

CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP)

A statewide program that conducts periodic assessments of vegetation and wildfire data, provides policy and grants guidelines, and holds a repository of GIS mapping and data analytic resources for California's forests and rangelands.

Links:

- **FRAP:** <https://frap.fire.ca.gov/>

California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP)

A California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining tool developed by the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to increase the pace and scale of vegetation treatment projects statewide. Designed to support project proponents under CalVTP Program Environmental Impact Reports (PEIR), to serve as a resource library, to preview proposed and completed projects, and to guide online submissions.

Links:

- **CalVTP:** <https://calfire-umb05.azurewebsites.net/projects-and-programs/calvtp-homepage-and-storymap/>

Central Coast Regional Resource Kit

A natural resource and disaster resilience dataset that provides readily available mapping information for regional planning assembled and created by the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force Science Advisory Panel.

Links:

- **Regional Resource Kits:** <https://wildfiretaskforce.org/regional-resource-kits-page/>
- **Map Viewer:** <https://app.planscape.org/map>

Fire Safe Council for Monterey County and Firewise® USA Communities

The Fire Safe Council for Monterey County and its local FireWise USA program offer resources and grants to communities looking to augment their defensible space and harden their homes from local wildfires.

Links:

- **Free workshops:** <https://www.firesafemonterey.org/workshops.html>
- **Join a FireWise community:** <https://www.firesafemonterey.org/firewise-usa.html>
- **MC wildfire risk facts:** <https://www.firesafemonterey.org/the-need-to-reduce-fuels.html>

Elkhorn Slough Foundation and Elkhorn Slough Natural Estuarine Research Reserve Data

Elkhorn Slough Foundation (ESF) is a nonprofit land trust founded in 1982 to conserve and restore habitat, protect native species, improve water quality, support healthy farms and ranches, and nurture connections between people and nature. View the Elkhorn Slough Natural Estuarine Research Reserve's water quality testing stations in live time.

Links:

- **ESF Water Quality Data:** <https://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/pwa/index.html?stationCode=ELKSMWQ>

VegCAMP Finescale Vegetation Mapping

As part of a statewide effort spearheaded by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and California Native Plant Society (CNPS), new mapping products and other useful spatial data resources are being developed from light-detecting and ranging (LiDAR) data. CDFW, CNPS, CALFIRE and State Coastal Conservancy are supporting this project that will map vegetation cover to the Manual of California Vegetation (MCV) association-level in Monterey, San Benito and San Luis Obispo counties.

Links:

- **Central Coast Landscape Data Project Storymap:**
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d0b373936cf5468784269da16c5102e0>;
- **Manual of California Vegetation:** <https://vegetation.cnps.org/>



Fuel break in Carmel Valley; photo by Megan Barker

Appendix A. RPP Maps

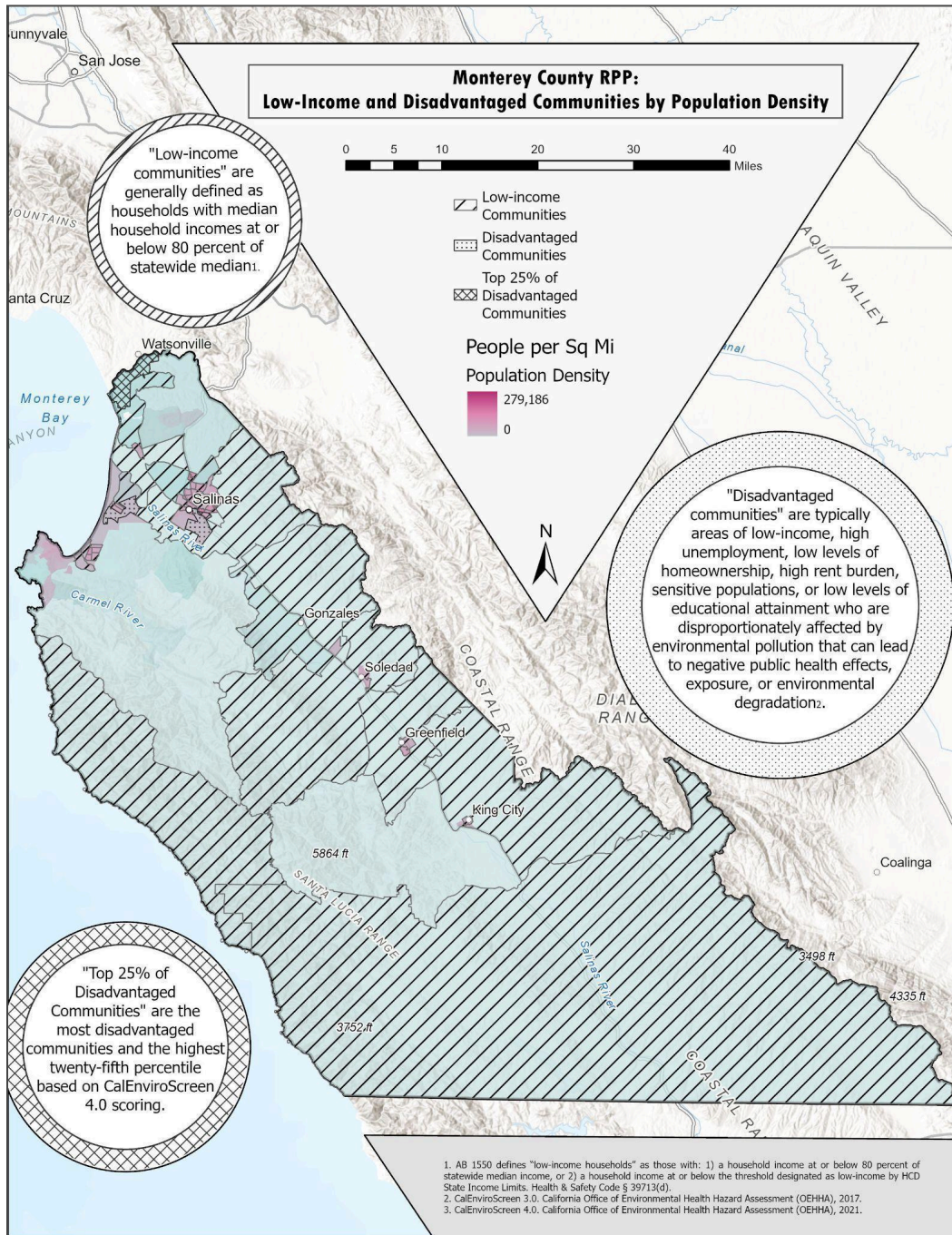


Figure A.1: Map of Monterey County Low Income and Disadvantaged Communities by Population Density; data sourced from the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool: CalEnviroScreen 4.0; map by Megan Barker

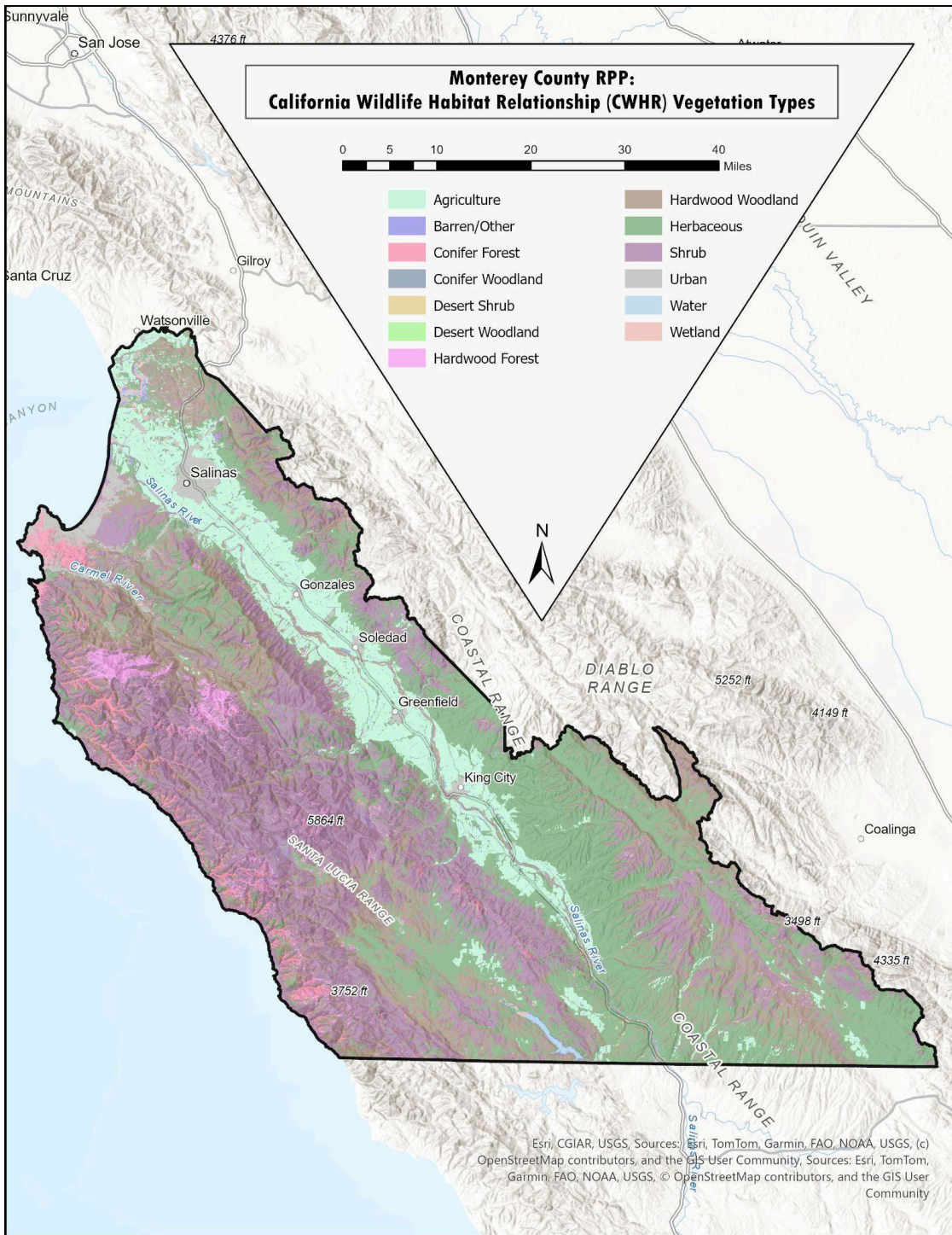


Figure A.2: Map of California Wildlife Habitat Relationship (CWHR) Vegetation Types; data sourced from CDFW; map by Megan Barker

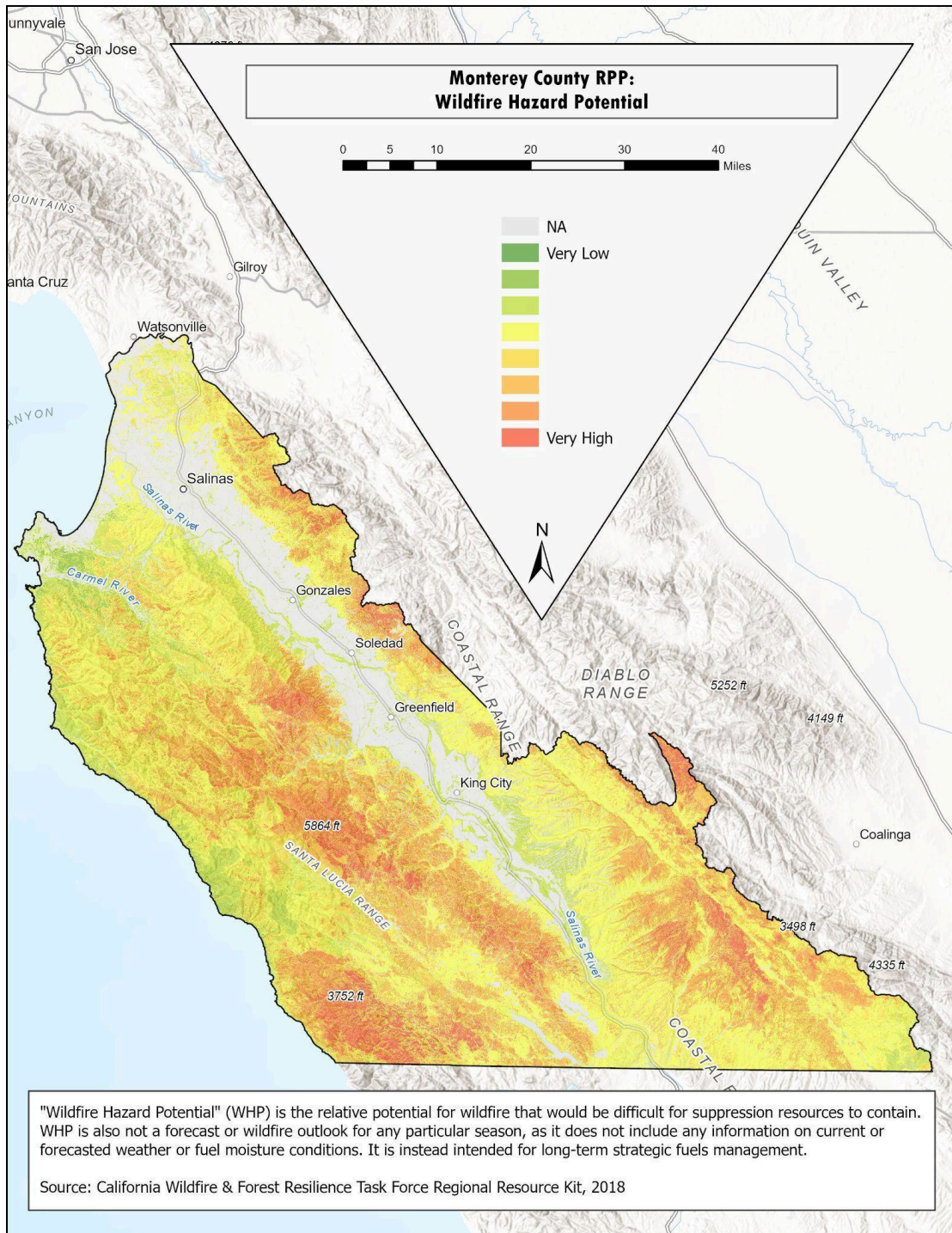


Figure A.3: Map of Wildfire Hazard Potential (WHP); data sourced from the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force Regional Resource Kit, as originally designed by the USDA Forest Service; map by Megan Barker

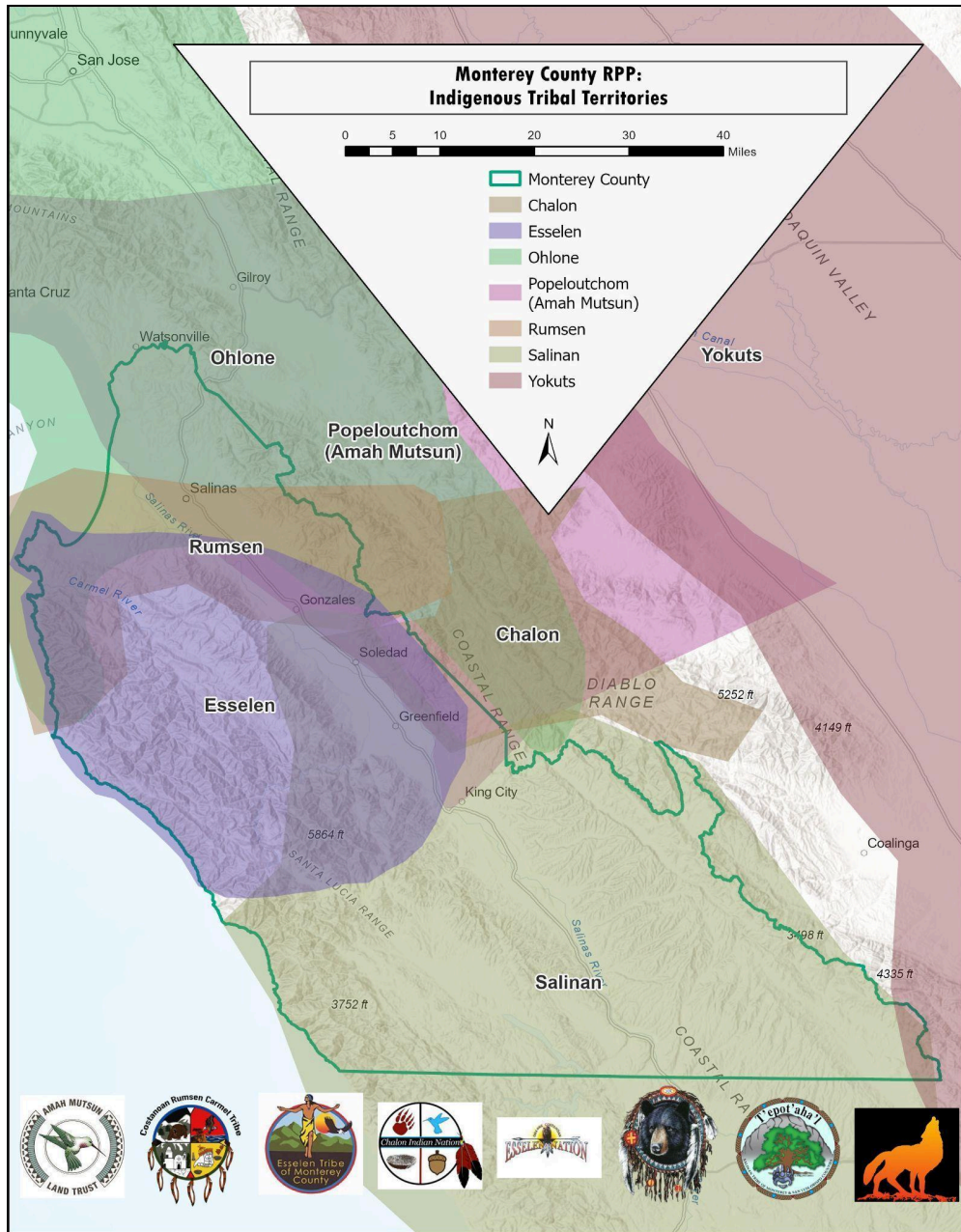


Figure A.4: Map of Monterey County Indigenous Tribal Territories; sourced from Native Land Digital; map by Brenna Yunn Fowler

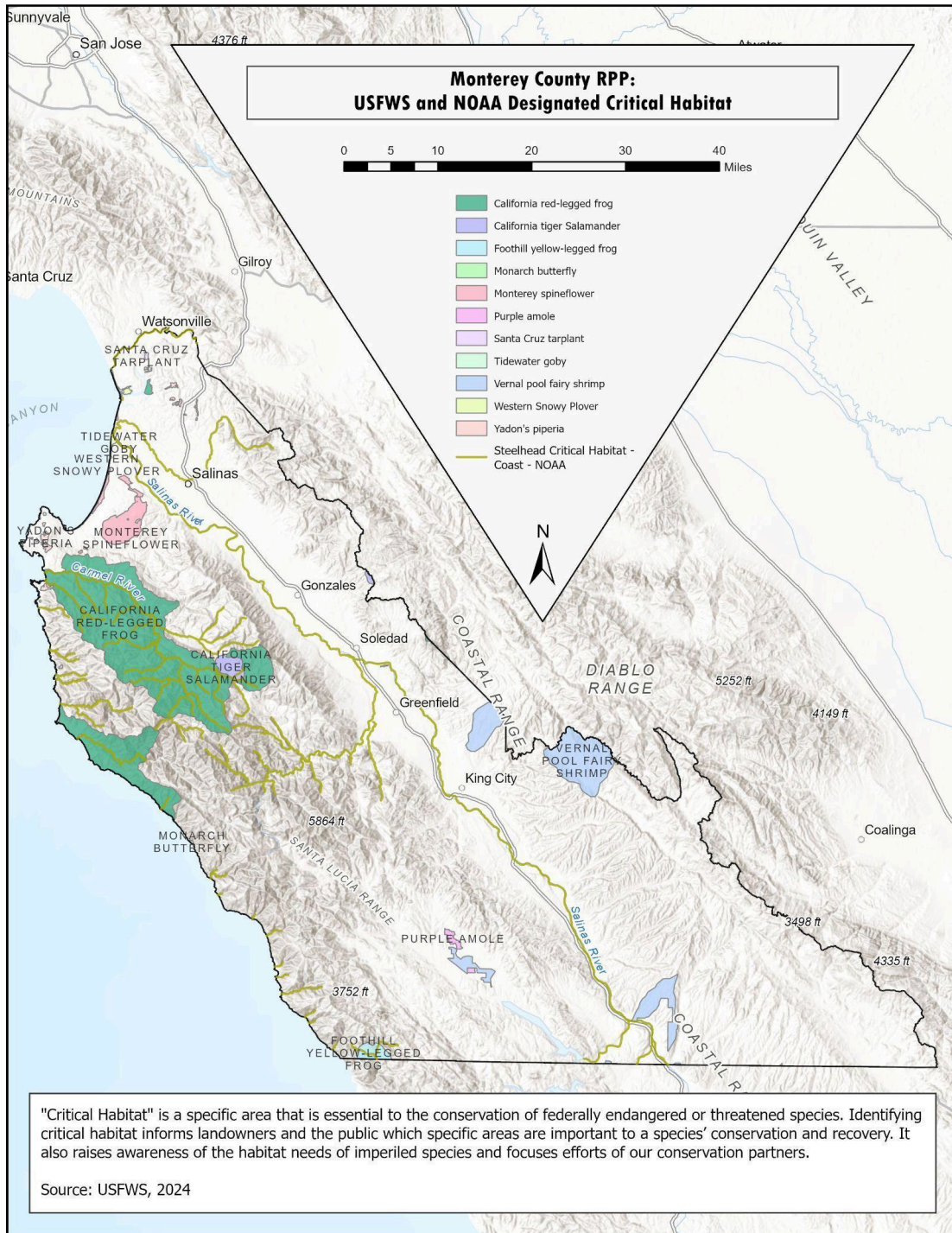


Figure A.5: Map of USFWS and NOAA Designated Critical Habitat; data sourced from USFWS; map by Megan Barker