



Santa Clara River Conservancy

Conserving, Restoring and Enhancing the Santa Clara River Watershed for Environment and Community

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Santa Clara River Conservancy Launches New Habitat Restoration & Public Access Projects in the Santa Clara River Watershed

Ventura, CA: With funding from three major state awards, the Santa Clara River Conservancy (SCRC) has launched a significant new habitat restoration and public access program along the Santa Clara River near Fillmore and Santa Paula in Ventura County. Work began this spring at the Sespe Cienega near Fillmore in partnership with the University of California Santa Barbara, the Nature Conservancy, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Later this year, the Conservancy will begin additional river restoration work near Santa Paula, and public access and wetland restoration planning at Fillmore. Together with its partners, SCRC will be helping to implement projects with over \$7 million of funding received from the California [Wildlife Conservation Board](#), California [Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), and the [State Coastal Conservancy](#) to promote habitat restoration and public access along the Santa Clara River. Two of the grants will support removal of hundreds of acres of the giant invasive reed, *Arundo*, to restore native riparian habitat and woodlands along the river, reduce wildfire and flooding threats, and conserve groundwater that is vital to agriculture and the communities of the Santa Clara River valley. The third grant will support planning to restore historic wetlands near the Fillmore Fish Hatchery, and provide public access to the ultimately restored wetland and riverine area.

The mission of the [Santa Clara River Conservancy](#) (SCRC) is to conserve the resources of the Santa Clara River watershed, including preserving and restoring sensitive habitats, protecting agricultural lands to minimize urban encroachment, and providing public access to, and education about, the river and its watershed. The [Santa Clara River watershed](#) is biologically rich, located at the junction of five of California's ten identified bioregions, and it covers an area about the size of Delaware in Ventura and Los Angeles counties. The Santa Clara river is considered a "[flashy river](#)," and it has had substantial storm-driven flows to the ocean this winter, bringing the river to life. The river is often described as the last major coastal system in southern California retaining much of its natural hydrology. Remarkably, the watershed sustains more than 17 federally listed sensitive plant and animal species. SCRC's work was recently highlighted in the Ventura County Star: <https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/special-reports/outdoors/2019/05/24/santa-clara-river-ventura-county-southern-california-scrc/1123872001/>.

Since the early 2000's SCRC and its partners have restored over 500 acres of riparian woodlands, including work by the [Nature Conservancy](#), which has protected nearly 21 miles of river habitat, acquired with support of many private and public funders, including the [State Coastal Conservancy](#). Restoration and scientific research has been supported by the [RIVR lab](#) at UCSB, and the [Friends of the Santa Clara River](#) has been a strong partner, particularly at [Hedrick Ranch Nature Area](#) near Santa Paula. With the recent growth of SCRC's mission, and the need for both more restoration and increased community access to the river, SCRC brought on an Executive Director, [Dr. Charles Lester](#), who has been working in the field of coastal and natural resource management for more than 25 years. Dr. Lester also recently joined the [Marine Sciences Institute](#) at UC Santa Barbara, where he is directing the Ocean and Coastal Policy Center. SCRC also recently hired a Restoration Specialist, Laura Pavliscak, who has an extensive background in restoration ecology and invasive plants.



More about SCRC's Restoration Work.

The target plant for SCRC's restoration work is the invasive giant reed known by its scientific name, *Arundo donax*. *Arundo* has to a large extent replaced the native cottonwood-willow riparian woodland that heretofore provided many ecosystem services, including native habitat, water retention and a fire-resistant vegetative barrier to wildfire spread. SCRC is working at the *Sespe Cienega*, owned by the California [Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), to remove *Arundo*. This area was a natural

perennial wetland that served Chumash peoples as well as early settlers, but that was converted over time to agricultural land uses and the [Fillmore Fish Hatchery](#).

SCRC will also be working with the Nature Conservancy and UCSB to remove *Arundo* and other invasive plants from riparian habitat near Santa Paula. This work will build on restoration already completed on [Hedrick Ranch Nature Area](#) by removing *Arundo* from 250 acres of riparian habitat. By project completion, over 450 acres of *Arundo*-free and highly productive riparian and wetland habitat will serve as a conservation zone for listed and special status species. Wildlife specialists from the [Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology](#) in Camarillo will be on hand to monitor how sensitive birds and other species take advantage of the newly expanded habitat.

About the Santa Clara River Conservancy: The [Santa Clara River Conservancy](#) (SCRC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit collaborative land trust focusing on restoring native habitat to the Santa Clara River Watershed, one of California's most dynamic watersheds. The SCRC achieves this through education and outreach, land acquisition, habitat restoration, research, and community volunteerism. SCRC is looking for funding to quickly build capacity, including to address staffing needs to undertake its conservation work. [Contributions](#) to support the organization's mission and vision are welcome and appreciated.