



## PRESS NOTE

August 19, 2022

While California is currently in the grips of a “[megadrought](#),” it could soon experience an even more devastating “[megaflood](#).” Climate change has doubled the risk of catastrophic flooding that could displace millions of people and rack up \$1 trillion in damages.

The good news is that the landscape and infrastructure changes needed to adapt to warming and drying can also help reduce flood risk. And, with an unprecedented amount of state and federal money available for water, forest and farming projects, California has a chance to build resilience before the next disaster.

The [2022-23 state budget](#) has \$1.2B for wildfire and forests, \$3.5 for nature-based solutions, \$1.1B for climate-smart agriculture, and [\\$2.8B for drought response](#). California will also receive \$3.5B in drought funding from the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#), and benefit from the \$4B in drought funding included in the [Inflation Reduction Act](#).

But, there is no guarantee that these funds will go to projects that will help California prepare for weather whiplash. In fact, the pressure to get dollars out the door fast often extends business as usual.

So what kinds of projects can help California withstand more extreme weather?

- **Climate-proofing the landscape, one property at a time.** Rebates and incentives help to drive change at both the [parcel](#) and [community](#) level, funding rain gardens, catchment basins, cisterns and other projects that catch and store water.
- **Replacing pavement with plants in cities.** Green streets, urban parks, and other planted areas (like those funded by [LA’s Safe Clean Water Program](#)) cool neighborhoods, reduce flooding, and provide water for drinking, outdoor watering and more.
- **Protecting and restoring floodplains.** By giving rivers more room to swell, natural floodplains help to sink more water into the ground to reduce flooding. Projects like [Dos Rios Ranch Preserve](#) (soon to be a state park), also provide habitat for wildlife and nature access for people.
- **Repurposing farmland:** Implementation of California’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act will [require 500,000 acres of Central Valley farmland](#) to go unplanted, opening up opportunities for [parks, wildlife refuges, and groundwater recharge zones](#). This kind of work is underway in [Madera and Tulare Counties](#).
- **Improving forest health:** Healthy forests are the cornerstone of healthy watersheds, but climate change is drying them out, and fueling more fires that set the stage for

[flash flooding](#) and [mudslides](#). One solution is [reintroducing beaver](#), whose dams slow water and spread water. [Cultural burning](#) can also help the land hold more water to reduce catastrophic fires and floods.

What all of these solutions have in common is the idea of working *with* nature as opposed to trying to control it. In addition to specific projects, we also need to invest in new ways of working together across jurisdictions:

- **Working at the watershed level.** Floods and droughts take place in watersheds, and are best solved at this scale. The Water Solutions Network [has created a roadmap for resilient watersheds](#), and [The Mid Klamath Restoration Partnership](#) co-led by the Karuk Tribe, is a great example of how issues like jobs, food security, fires and river health can be addressed in an integrated fashion.

### **Monterey Resource Conservation District Demonstrating the Potential**

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Our arundo population on the Salinas River is huge, currently ~800 acres down from 1500ac when we started treatment in 2014. The arundo impedes flow with its dense, tall stands, and those stands, by slowing flow, further reduce conveyance capacity by encouraging sediment deposition in the floodplain that raises the effective floodplain elevation. Arundo also consumes more water than native vegetation, so its removal serves both water conservation and flood risk reduction purposes. Our Groundwater Sustainability Agency is looking at these as a unified program for enhancing habitat, conserving water and reducing flood risk.

More information is available at:

<https://www.rcdmonterey.org/salinas-river-arundo-and-tamarisk-control>

### **Experts that can share more:**

- [Debbie Franco](#), **Water Solutions Network**: Can talk about water policies and working at the watershed scale. (530)902-3531
- [Regina Hirsch](#), **Watershed Progressive**: Can talk about what home and business owners can do to build resilience.
- [Nataly Escobedo Garcia](#), **Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability**: Can talk about farmland repurposing in the Central Valley.

Prepared by the [Water Hub](#). Another great source of information!