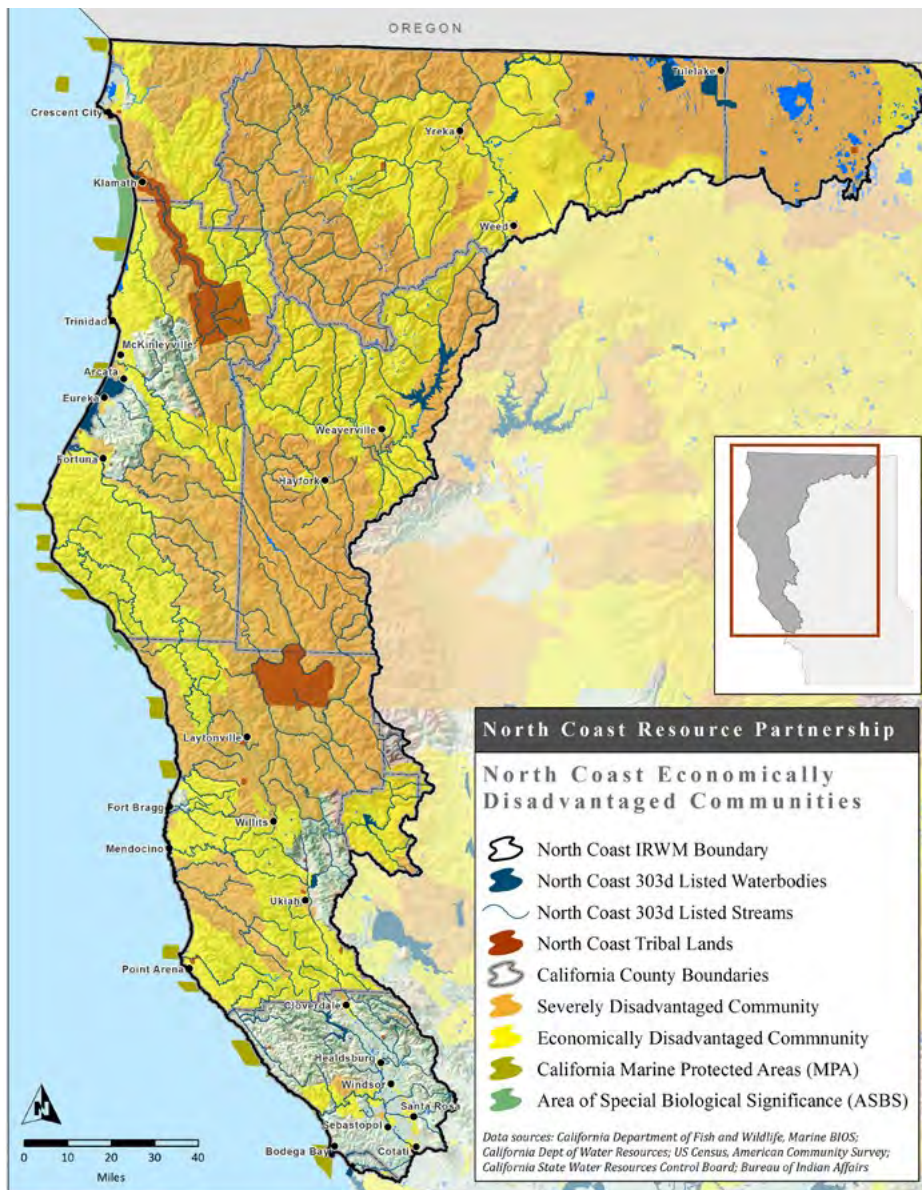


Project Highlight



North Coast Resource Partnership's Integrated Regional Planning for Healthy Communities, Functional Watersheds & Viable Economies



California's North Coast region stretches from north of San Francisco Bay to the Oregon border. Spanning 19,000 square miles, Tribal lands and the seven North Coast counties (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Modoc, Siskiyou, Sonoma, and Trinity) make up 12 percent of the State's land. Steep mountains, riverine valleys, vast agricultural areas, and dense stands of redwood, fir, and oak characterize the area and make access challenging. The population remains sparse—only two percent of the state's total—and largely rural. According to U.S. Census Bureau's *American Community Survey*, nearly 90 percent of residents are economically disadvantaged, and 57 percent are severely economically disadvantaged.

The North Coast is home to ecosystems that sustain biological diversity, provide abundant, clean drinking water, and sequester carbon. Yet past resource extraction industries,



like logging and mining, have also left a legacy of environmental issues. Triple bottom line solutions— those that maintain healthy communities, functional watersheds, and viable local economies— are needed. Yet, faced with degraded natural resources and failing built infrastructure and with limited political leverage at the state level, North Coast communities have long found it difficult to fund and launch the kinds of projects needed to improve quality of life while also protecting the region’s natural resources.

The Partnership

When Proposition 50 made \$50 million available for Integrated Water Management Planning in 2002, North Coast counties decided the only way to compete for the funds was to join together. In 2004, they— along with the 34 Tribes who also hold land in the region— formed the North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP), with the intent to ensure access to clean and reliable drinking water supplies, as well as working toward ecosystem conservation, energy independence, climate adaptation, public safety, and economic vitality in the region. The NCRP has been awarded funding through Propositions 50, 84, and 1, as well as the California Energy Commission. Oversight and direction are provided by a Policy Review Panel and Technical Peer Review Committee, both staffed with county and Tribal representatives.

NCRP projects support localities with the technical expertise and resources they need to solve pervasive natural and built infrastructure problems, such as failing water supply and wastewater systems. The NCRP tracks the multiple benefits of all projects through metrics that include economic benefits such as jobs and local economic impact, water supply, quality, and habitat enhancement measures, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Since the NCRP’s founding, California’s policy landscape has changed considerably. AB32 and SB 375 now require statewide cuts in greenhouse gases and integrated transportation and land use planning to foster more sustainable communities. The NCRP has expanded its work to include these objectives, building on a decade of good governance, trust-building, and collaboration. While the partnership has worked extensively to improve natural capital for human and ecosystem benefits, it sees opportunities to pair that work with more investment in the infrastructure and alternative energy resources of the region—and in the process, to pioneer a sustainable communities strategy designed for rural areas.

Locally-Driven Solutions

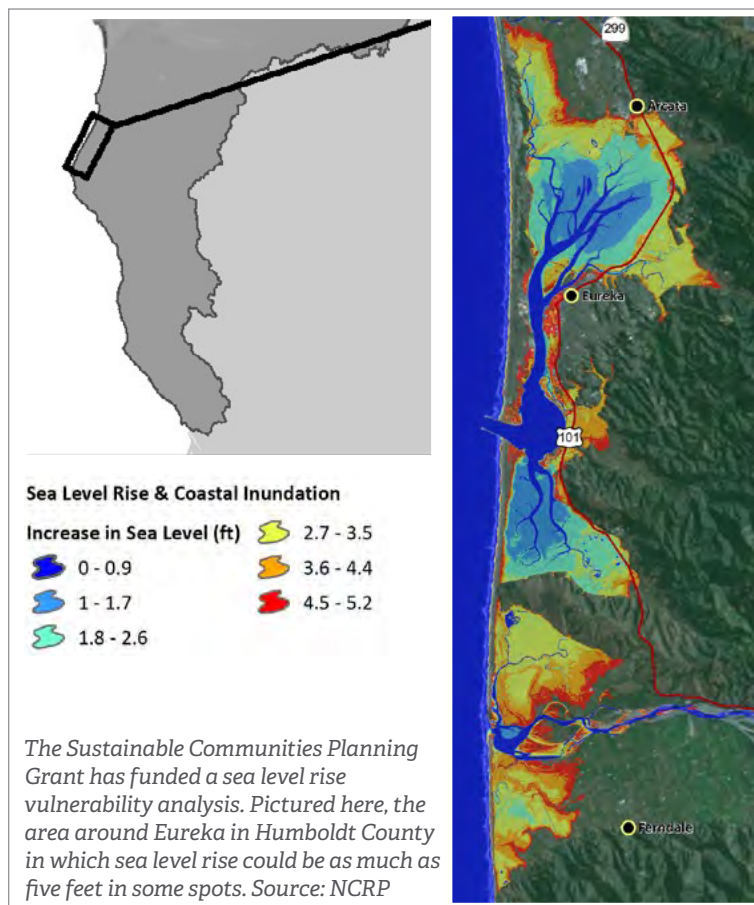
- Using GIS spatial analysis to find areas where projects can improve economic vitality, public health, and ecosystem function simultaneously.
- Expanding NCRP’s focus to more actively incorporate climate mitigation and adaptation work—and thereby capitalize on the North Coast’s role as a natural resource-rich region with extensive opportunities for carbon sequestration.
- Executing numerous studies to establish the state of natural and human capital in the region—and in turn, inform plans and projects that align rural localities’ socio-economic and public health needs with State objectives for climate change mitigation and water security.

The Project

With funding from the Grant Program, the NCRP has funded a set of studies that will enhance the partnership's ability to plan for climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as regional environmental, economic, and community resiliency. Grant money has funded regional assessments related to carbon sequestration, climate adaptation, renewable energy, natural capital valuation, local land use planning, and economic development. These include:

- A regional renewable energy analysis and greenhouse gas accounting framework (a collaboration with Schatz Energy Research Center and Redwood Coast Energy Authority);
- Regional mapping of forest-based carbon sequestration (a collaboration with the Climate Action Reserve and Dogwood Springs Forestry);
- Application of the Basin Characterization Model to understand likely climate change impacts at the regional and local levels (a collaboration with USGS and Pepperwood Foundation);
- A regional economic valuation of natural capital (e.g. land-based carbon) and regional economic analysis, which will enable the North Coast to document the values and multiple benefits of its natural assets (a collaboration with Earth Economics and EcoNorthwest);
- A regional climate change adaptation analysis, which will pinpoint areas particularly vulnerable to climate change and opportunities to mitigate those impacts.

Also, the NCRP has issued a series of subgrants to counties and Tribes to perform more localized assessments supporting the aforementioned analyses and to develop localized models, strategies, and tools. Together, these studies will expand the NCRP's understanding of areas of vulnerability and sources of resilience within the region. This will allow the NCRP to weave climate change planning together with existing objectives into a truly integrated multi-benefit strategy—one that will achieve on-the-ground outcomes for the region and its communities.



Most of these assessments are nearing completion. In early 2017, the NCRP will hold a technical summit with its many partners and consultants to examine the new data within a GIS spatial-analysis framework. Looking at the results of the many analyses across the North Coast landscape, the team will look for opportunities to maximize on-the-ground benefits for public health, the economy, and watersheds. For instance, areas where forest management would yield high water recharge and carbon sequestration opportunities could overlap with important watersheds for improving drinking water quality. Opportunities for biomass energy generation might overlap with areas where forest management is needed or there is high vulnerability to catastrophic wildfire. These areas might in turn overlay areas where particular species are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

With this information about areas of opportunity in hand, the NCRP will invite their members, partnering NGOs, State agencies, and past funders to join them in April for a NCRP Strategy Session in Sonoma County. There, they will present integrated strategies

and get feedback from the panel on where to place their emphasis in the context of new and upcoming legislation and funding opportunities.

Local/Regional Connection

The NCRP's success as a regional collaborative is based on two guiding principles: (1) to work on common ground issues and (2) to respect local autonomy. Early on in the partnership, there were multiple conflicts among stakeholders, but the group made a conscious decision to set those aside in order to work on issues all of them faced. In addition, the NCRP provides solutions that allow local jurisdictions to choose whether to participate or to opt out, depending on their specific needs. Recognition of the independence and diversity of jurisdictions within this vast region extends to the NCRP's careful use of language. For instance, the NCRP tracks multiple benefits for every project, but counties and cities participating in an energy conservation project may frame it in terms of its climate benefits or its contribution to energy independence and lower energy bills, depending on their constituents' priorities.

Rather than a top-down relationship, the NCRP sees itself as a mechanism to sync the needs of localities with State policies and priorities. Many of the North Coast counties do not have a population large enough—nor enough resources—to advocate their

agenda at a state level, but as a representative for the whole region, the NCRP can articulate its unified needs and its importance as a source region to help the State achieve its climate, water, and biodiversity objectives. Many State agencies and their programs are geared toward urban areas, but the NCRP's size allows the North Coast to more effectively attract funding and then redirect it in ways that address rural problems.

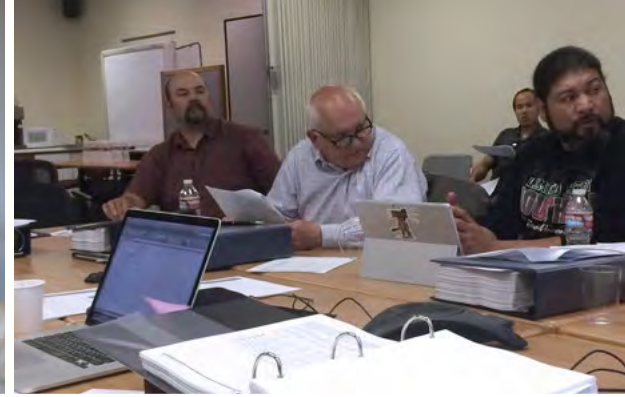
Agency Collaboration for Action

While the governance of the NCRP is led by county and Tribal representatives, its *Memorandum of Mutual Understanding* binds the partnership together and convenes nearly 100 local governments, water providers, non-governmental organizations, watershed groups, resource conservation districts, and other stakeholder groups who are actively involved in NCRP projects. The diversity of participants has provided the partnership with a much broader capacity to plan and implement effective projects throughout the region.

The partnership is particularly notable for the active participation of the North Coast Tribes. From the outset of the effort, the Tribes were invited to participate, and the recognition and use of Tribal Ecological Knowledge was included as an explicit program goal. Early on, Tribal representatives presented a proposal to have representatives in the governance structure, an offer that was welcomed by the NCRP leadership.

The rich natural resources of the North Coast make it a source region, providing a wealth of ecosystem services like carbon sequestration and water recharge that benefit the entire state. From left to right, Eel River, Humboldt County, Point Arena, Mendocino County, and Scott Valley, Siskiyou County. Source: NCRP





Left to right: Tribal Representation and the integration of Tribal Ecological Knowledge in NCRP planning is a vital part of the partnership's success in addressing the ecological and economic concerns of the entire region. Conferences around the region keep local constituents up-to-date on project progress and lessons learned. Representatives on Policy Review Panel participate in project review. Source: NCRP

Effective Community Engagement

Given its broad constituency, the NCRP has prioritized community and stakeholder outreach since its inception. Via this outreach, the partnership keeps localities informed of opportunities to provide input on regional priorities, to participate in the planning process, to identify important projects, and to apply for technical assistance and funding for these projects. Regular outreach includes:

- Quarterly meetings of the NCRP Policy Review Panel and Technical Peer Review Committee, attended by regional stakeholders and elected officials;
- Regional conferences which present learning related to technical and scientific assessments, project outcomes, and lessons learned;
- Workshops for local agencies and non-profit partners multiple times per year in all areas of the region to provide information on opportunities for funding of NCRP objectives;
- A regional website with thousands of followers;
- Technical support to economically disadvantaged communities to ensure their ability to participate and apply for funding;
- Regional polling to determine highest priorities, to evaluate financial need of stakeholders, and estimated costs of projects;
- Small meetings and small group engagement on particular themes and topics (e.g. forest carbon sequestration and forest health; failing water/wastewater infrastructure and GHG emissions);
- Targeted Tribal outreach, integration, planning, and project solicitation.

While all these efforts are important, NCRP's credibility is dependent on the leadership and governance by locally elected Tribal and county officials. This representative approach ensures transparency and accountability for the NCRP. Since most land use decisions are made at the local level, this local leadership and governance is a critical component of successfully engaging the public.

Sustainability Benefits for California

Implementation of the *North Coast Resource Partnership's Integrated Regional Planning for Healthy Communities, Functional Watersheds and Viable Economics* will help to advance many of California's sustainability objectives, particularly in the areas of:

- Economic Prosperity
- Energy efficiency and conservation
- Equity
- Improved infrastructure systems
- Natural resources and agricultural lands conservation
- Public health
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Water supply and quality

For More Information

Name: Karen Gaffney, Ecologist
Agency: West Coast Watershed
Telephone: 707-433-7377
Email: kgaffney@westcoastwatershed.com
Website: www.northcoastresourcepartnership.org