Sustainable Conservation

Accelerating Restoration Projects on Private Lands with the Partners in Restoration (PIR) Permit Coordination Program

GavPac Committee Meeting, Gaviota, CA
December 15, 2010

Analysis
Draft Recommendations

Sustainable Conservation

- 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization (founded 1993)
- Based in San Francisco – offices in Modesto & Burbank
- Initiated Partners in Restoration (PIR) permit coordination program in 1996

Accelerating Restoration in California With the PIR Program

Goal: Greatly increase permitted erosion control & habitat enhancement projects implemented voluntarily on private lands

Method: *Programmatic* permitting of specified conservation practices & environmental protection measures

Focus: Streams & adjacent uplands on farmland, ranchland, rural residential

Benefits: Improved habitat complexity & connectivity, water quality, recovery of listed species, management of working lands

Partners:

- Sustainable Conservation
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Local Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs)
- Regulatory agencies
- Landowners, land trusts, conservancies & others

Accelerating Restoration with PIR

Challenges and Opportunities

- Farmers & ranchers eager for restoration but face arduous and time-consuming permit process
- Regulatory agencies can’t efficiently review, permit & monitor many small projects
- To reach difficult sediment reduction and species recovery goals, we need to accelerate restoration on private land
- 50% private land in California

Accelerating Restoration with PIR

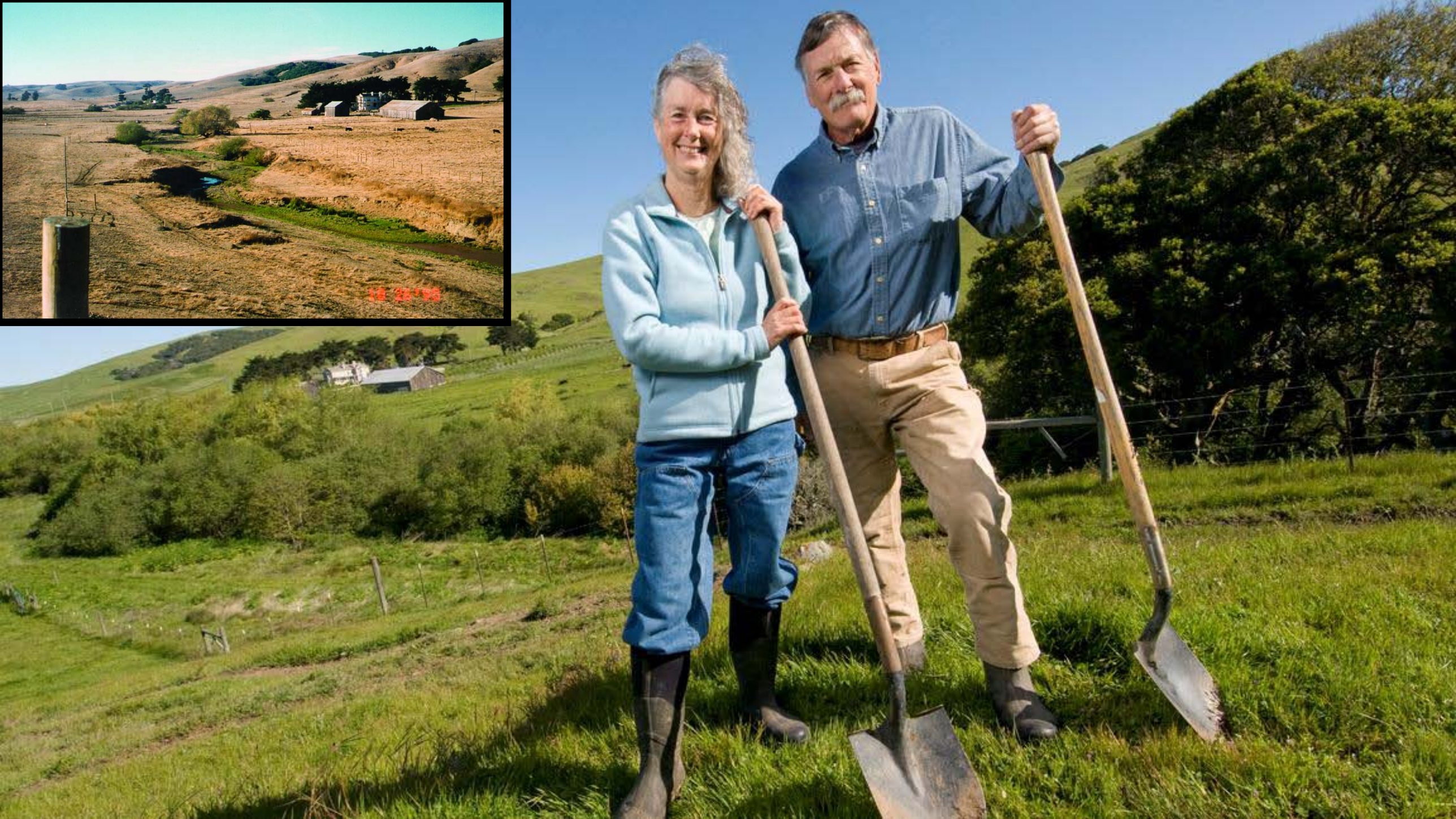
California's Forests, Waters, Fishes & Birds at Risk

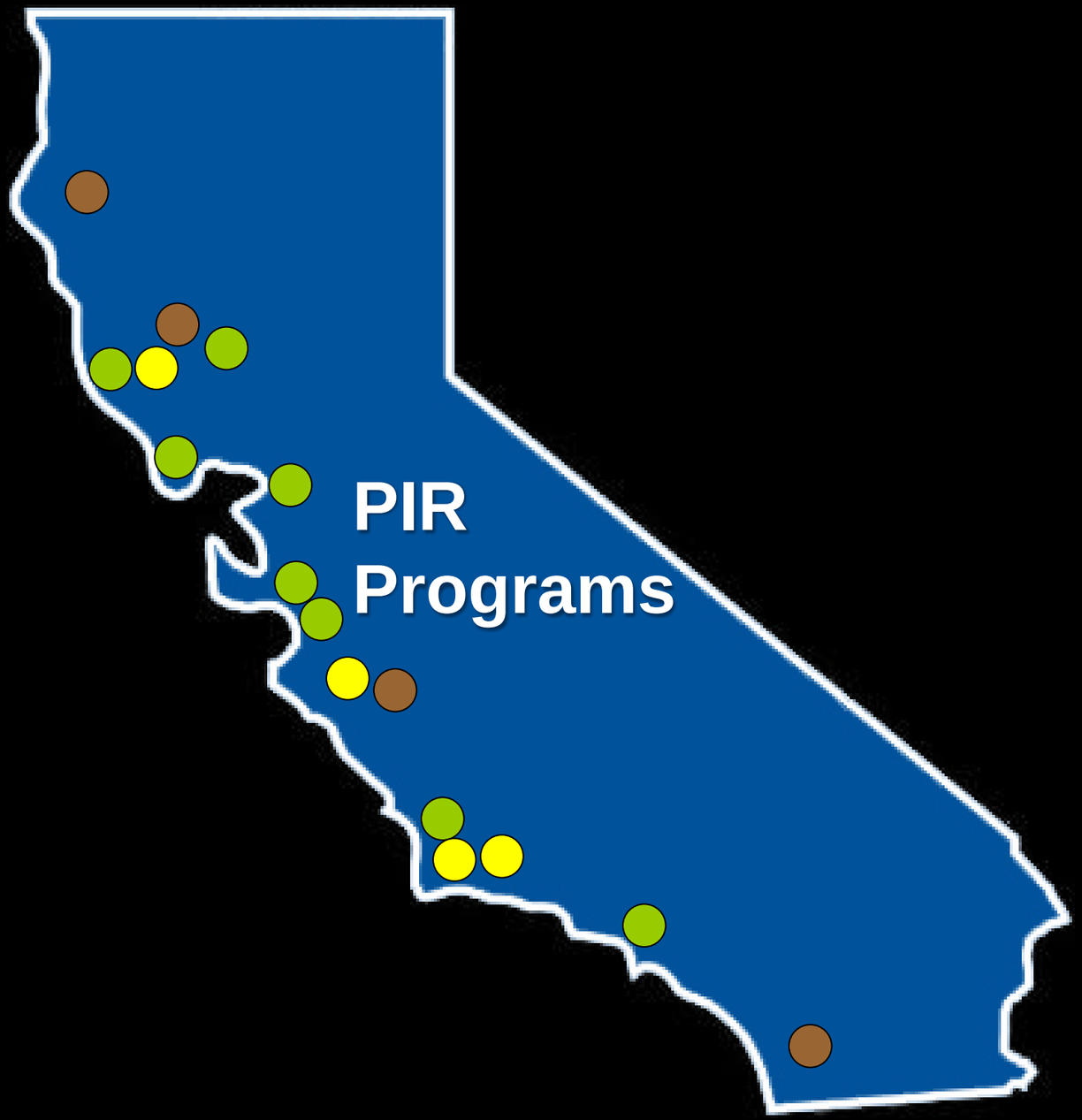
- Up to 95% of riparian forests removed – remaining forests fragmented and degraded
- 17,000 stream miles impaired by sediment
- Salmon & steelhead – 10 Federal & 4 State T/E listings
- Riparian-dependent T/E birds – Bank swallow, Bell's vireo, Willow flycatcher, Yellow-billed cuckoo

Accelerating Restoration with PIR

PIR Supports Environmental Goals

- Listed species *Recovery Plans* (FWS, NOAA, DFG)
- TMDL sediment reduction targets (State & Regional Water Boards, EPA)
- Habitat restoration (NOAA, FWS, DFG)
- Watershed Planning (Local)





8 Implemented

Elkhorn Slough Watershed
Morro Bay Watershed
Navarro River Watershed
Marin Coastal Watersheds
Santa Cruz County
Alameda County
Yolo County Watersheds
Calleguas Creek Watershed (Ventura)

4 In Development

San Luis Obispo County
Santa Barbara County
Upper Pajaro River Watershed
Mendocino County

4 Unsuccessful/Suspended

Salinas River Watershed
SLRR/Santa Margarita Watersheds (SD)
Humboldt County
Lake County Watersheds

Accelerating Restoration with PIR

Assessing the PIR Program

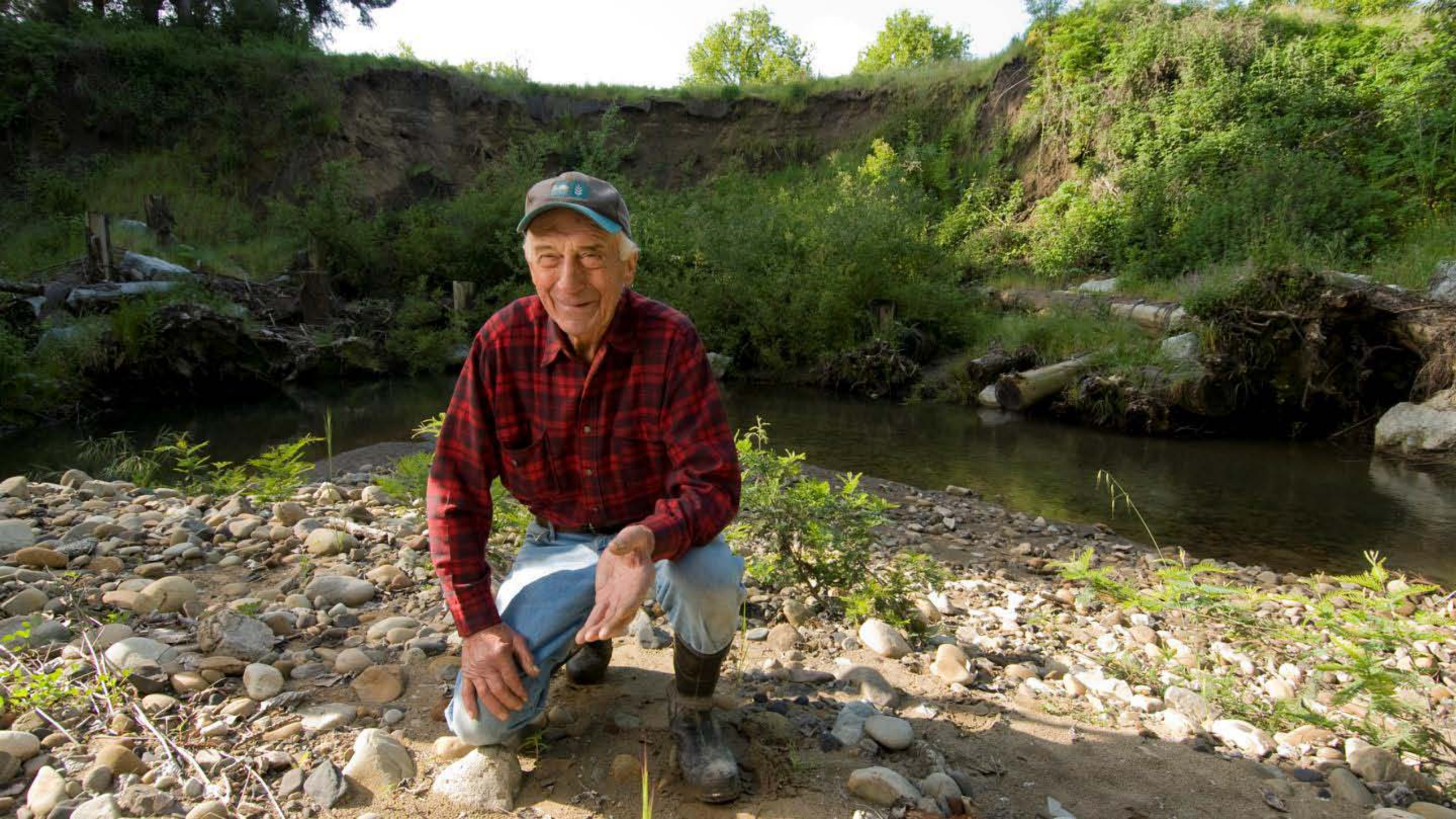
- Data analysis
- Survey
- In-depth interviews
- Draft report w/ comment period → Final report

Powerhouse PIR Program

Santa Cruz County

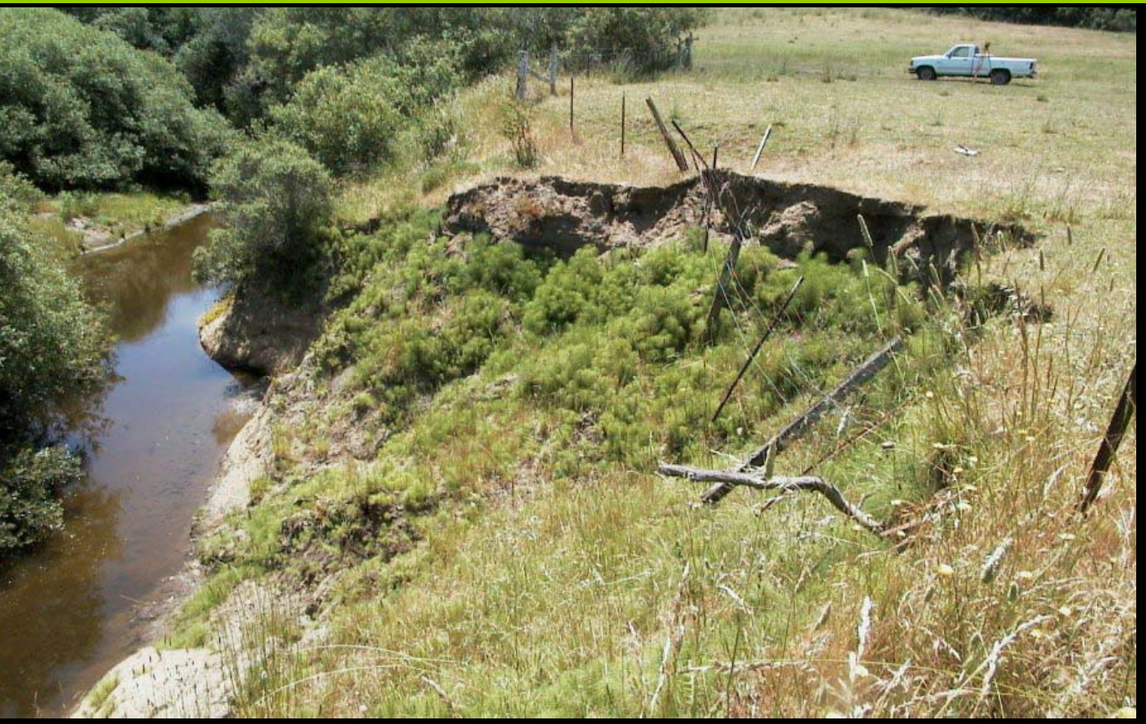
A Winning Team Approach:
Marin County PIR

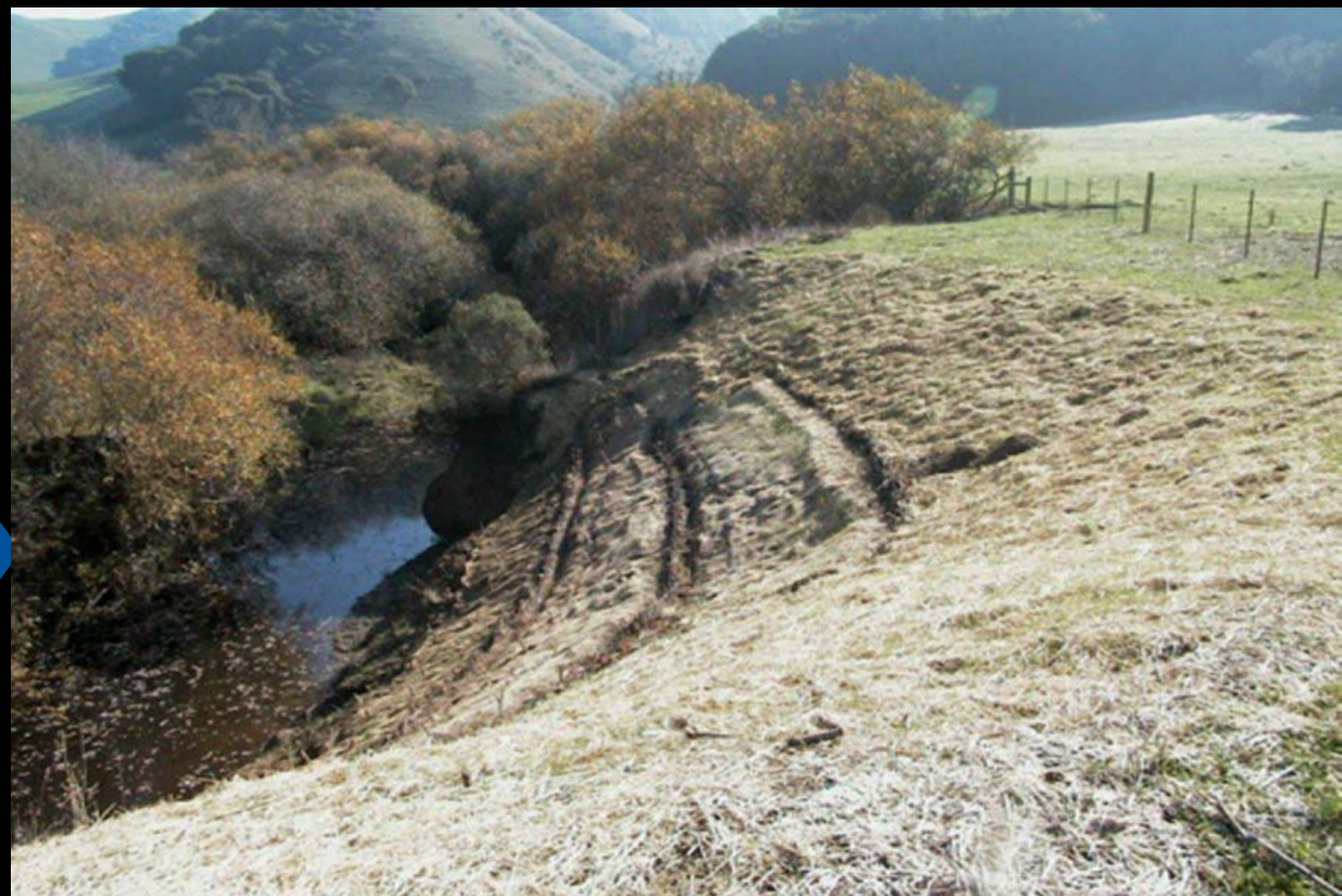
- Strong RCD leadership, broad community support
- Projects selected by technical team w/ cooperative monitoring
- 5 years' implementation, 34 diverse projects
- 35,000' riparian enhanced, 16,000T sedimentation prevented
- $3.8+ million leveraged for PIR projects
- County – PIR program consistent with LCP
- Cannot meet demand for PIR, and program renewed



Conservation Practices

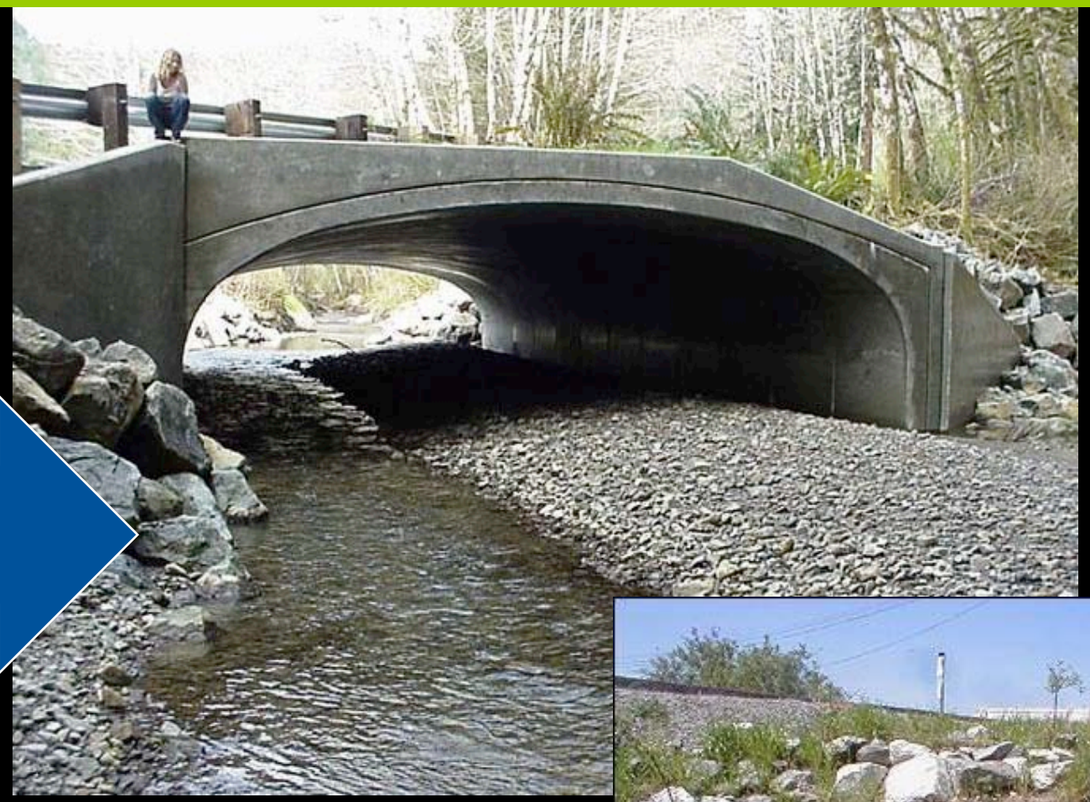
Streambank Repair

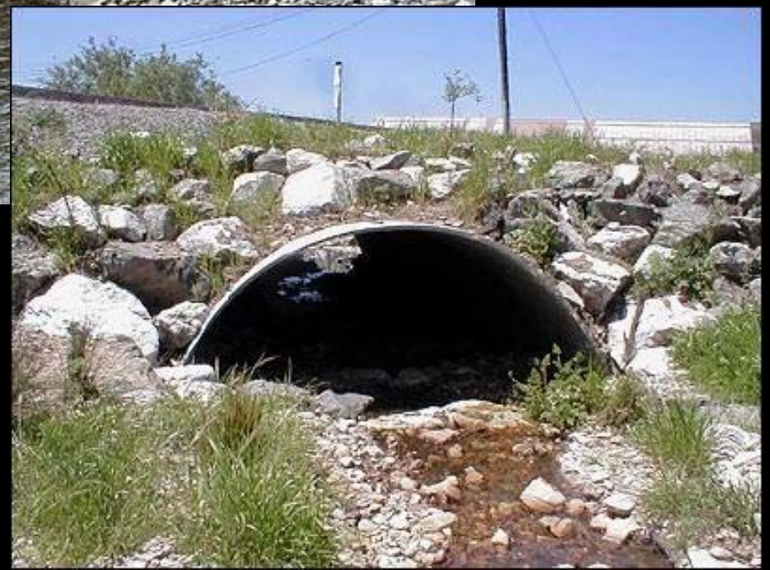




Conservation Practices

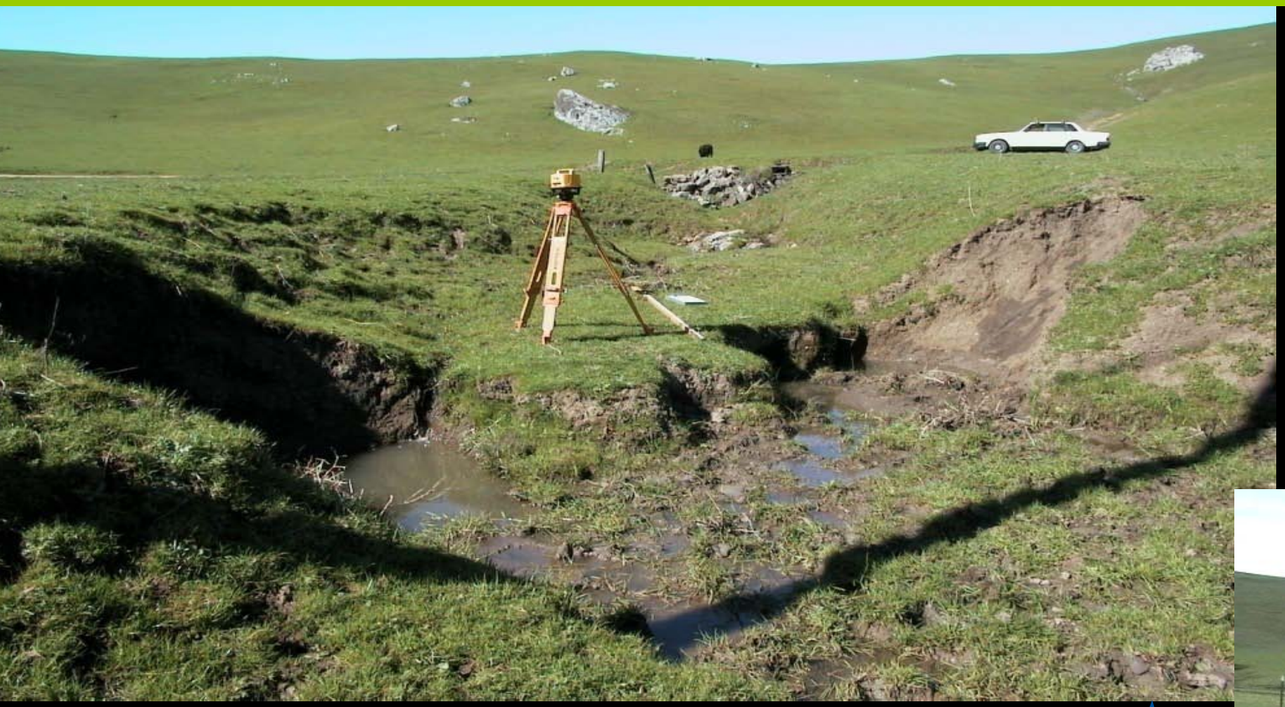
Replace Old Culverts & Fill w/ Natural Bottom Culvert or Span

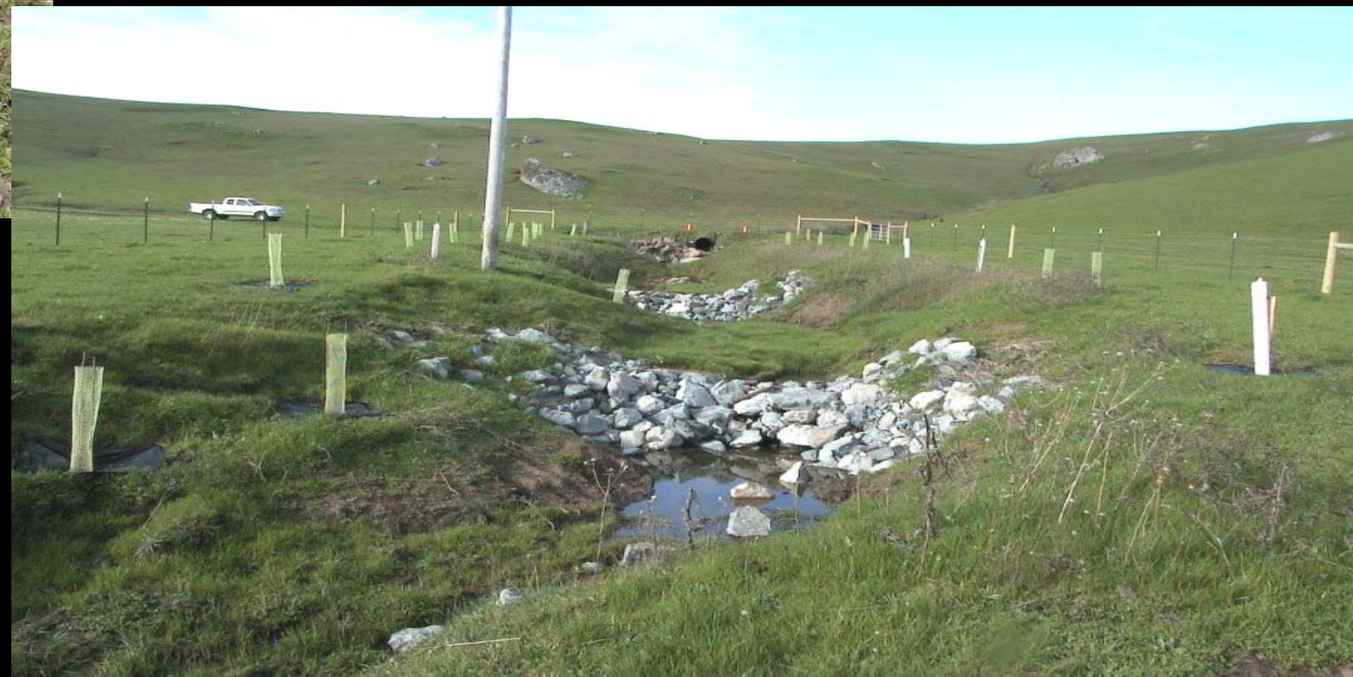




Conservation Practices

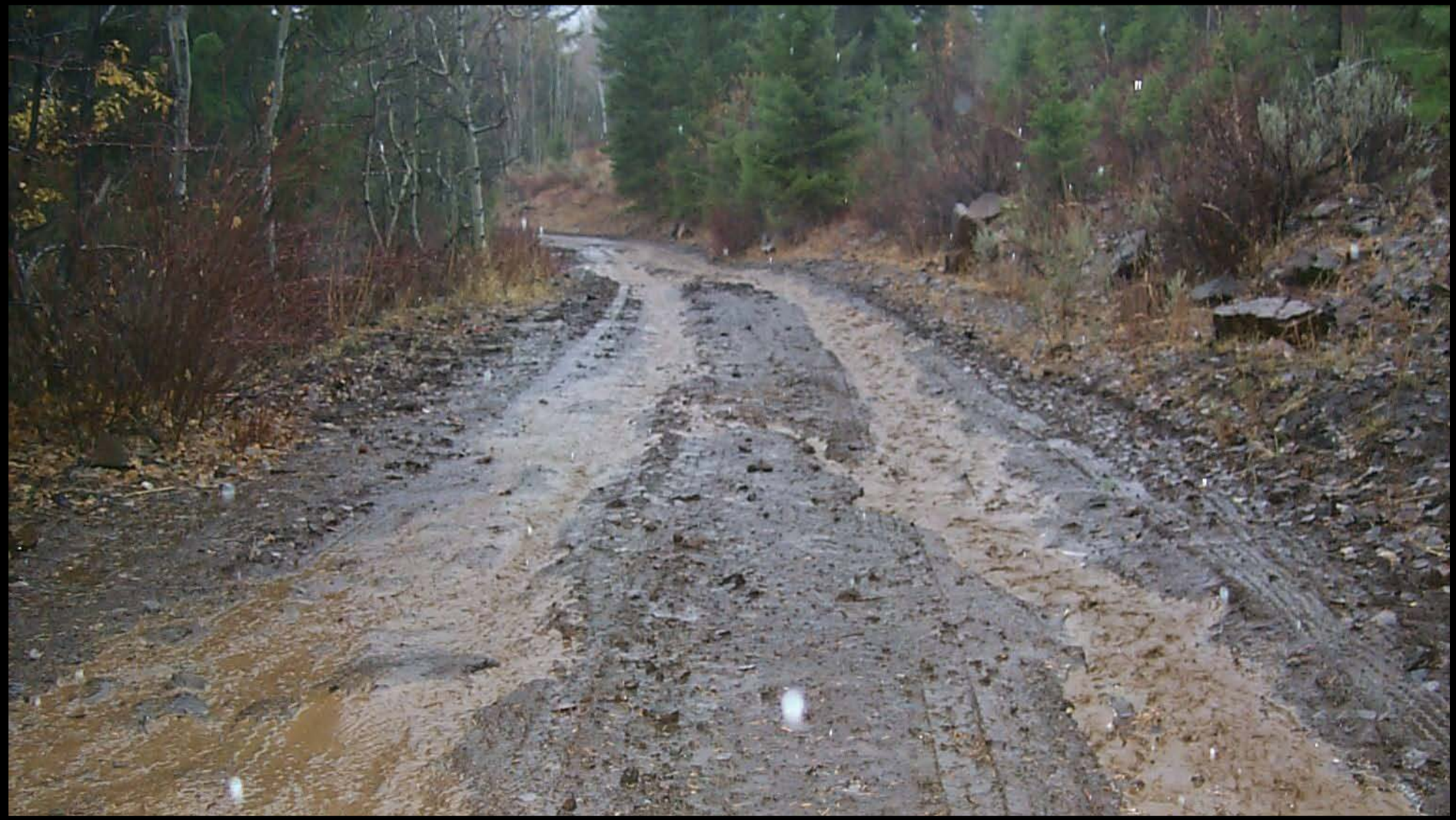
Grade Stabilization





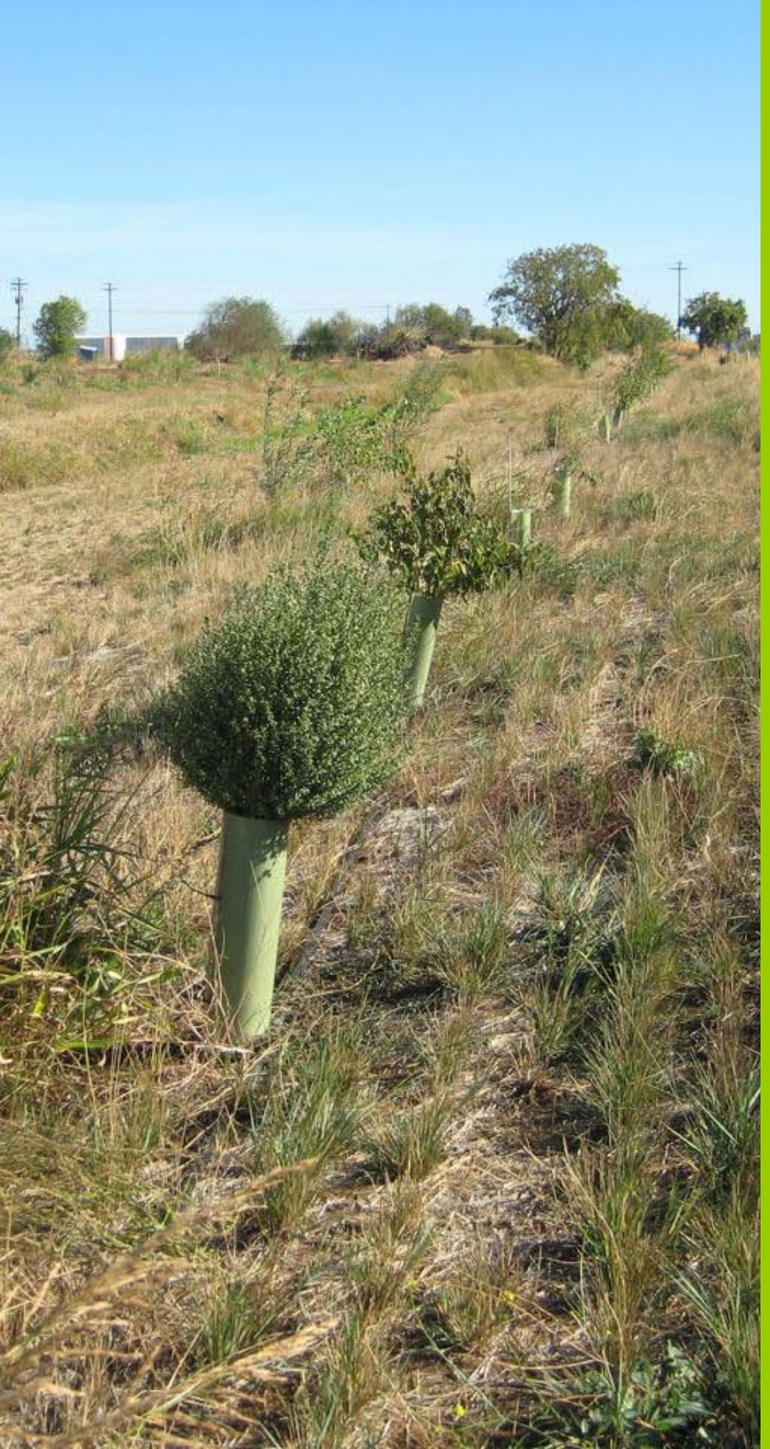
Conservation Practices

Access Road Improvements



Conservation Practices

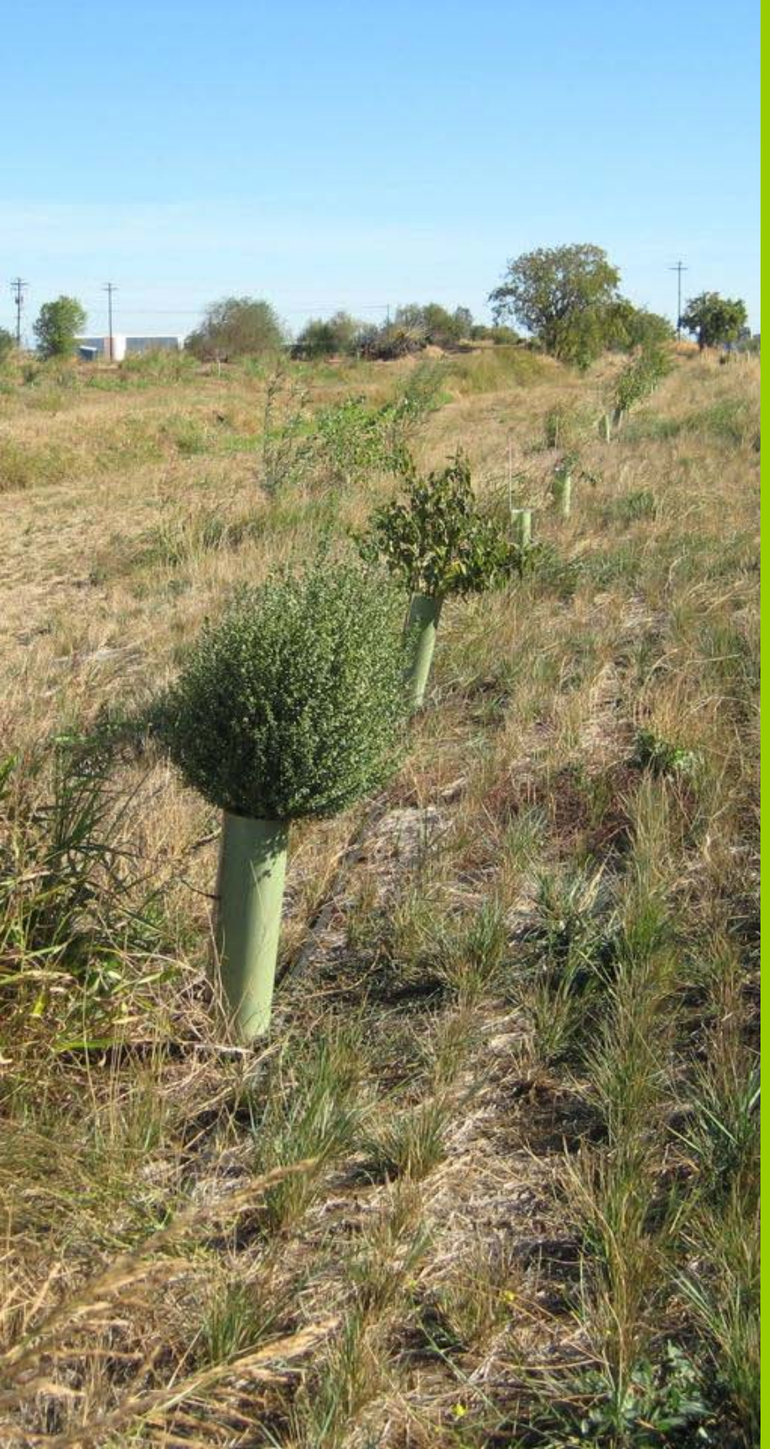
Fish Stream Improvement



PIR Data Analysis

Overall Program Outcomes

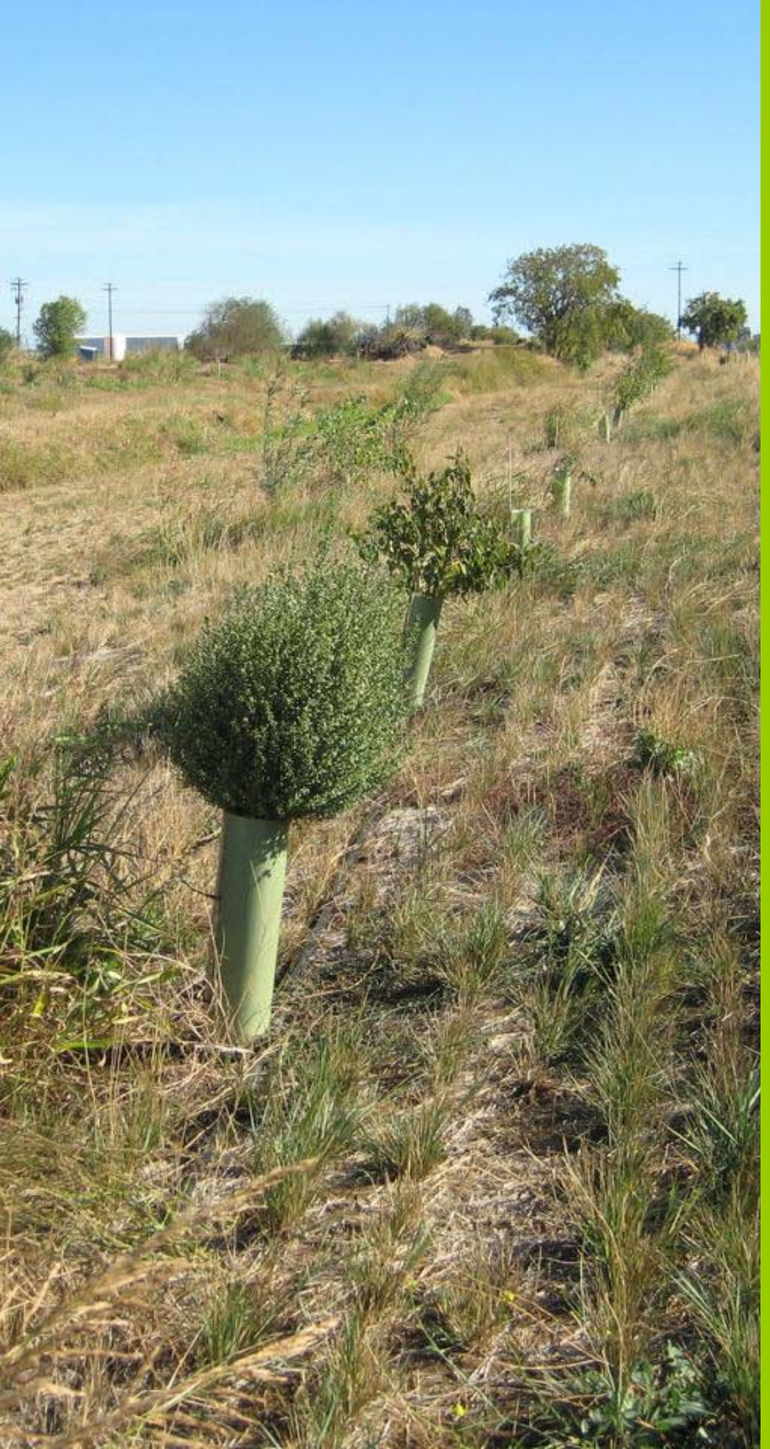
- 227 projects implemented in 13 years
- 200,000+ tons of soil loss prevented:
  - Morro Bay PIR: 2,200 tons/yr
  - Navarro River PIR: 9,800 tons/yr
    (each contributing ~ 6% toward TMDL targets)
- 17 miles of riparian habitat enhanced



PIR Data Analysis
Conservation Practices

- Average # practices **authorized** = 13/program
- Average # practices **actually implemented** = 7/program
- Average # practices **commonly implemented** = 4/program

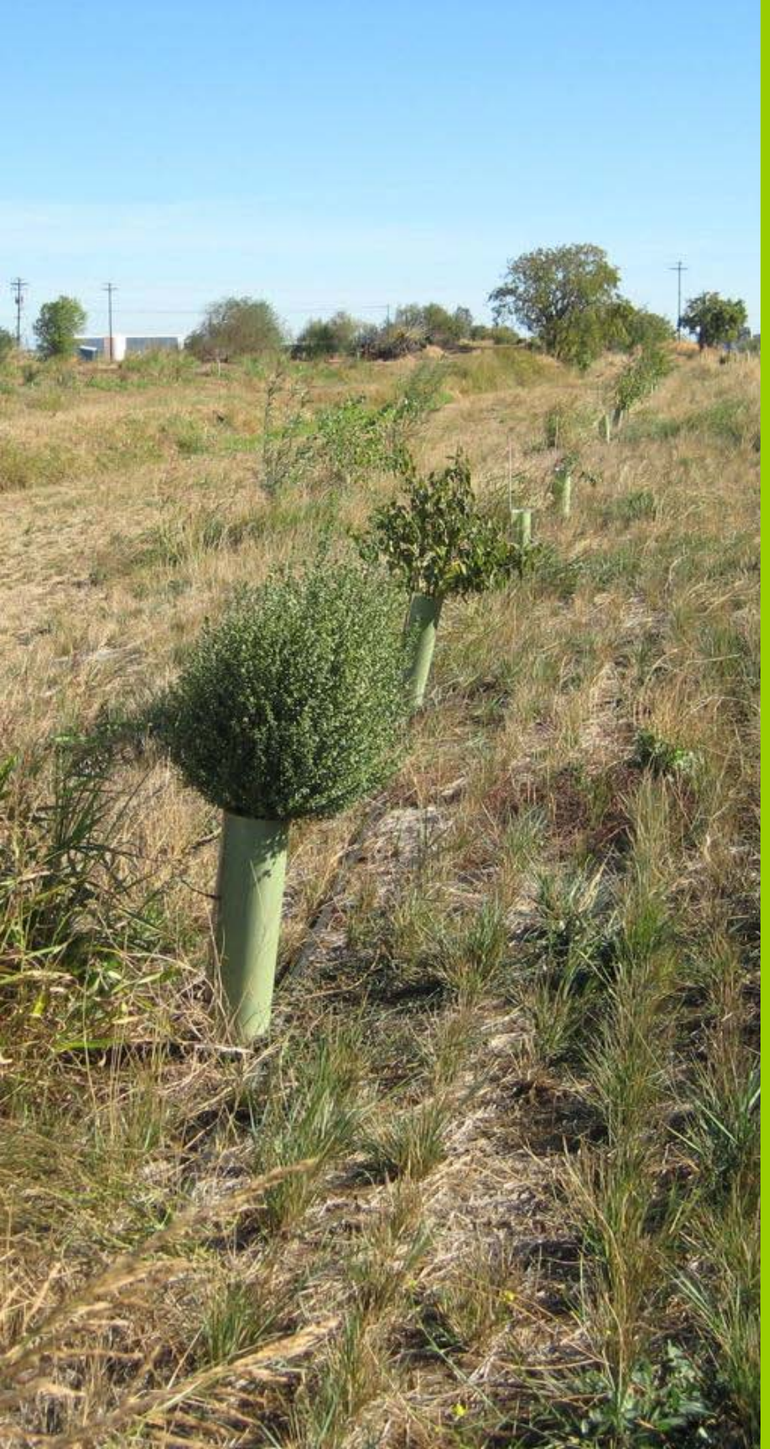
➔ Selecting core set of conservation practices is feasible



PIR Data Analysis

Individual Program Outcomes

- Average time required to develop PIR = 3.5 years ⇧
- Average cost to develop PIR = $373,000 ⇧
- Average # projects installed **before** PIR = 1/year
- Average # projects installed **with** PIR = 5/year

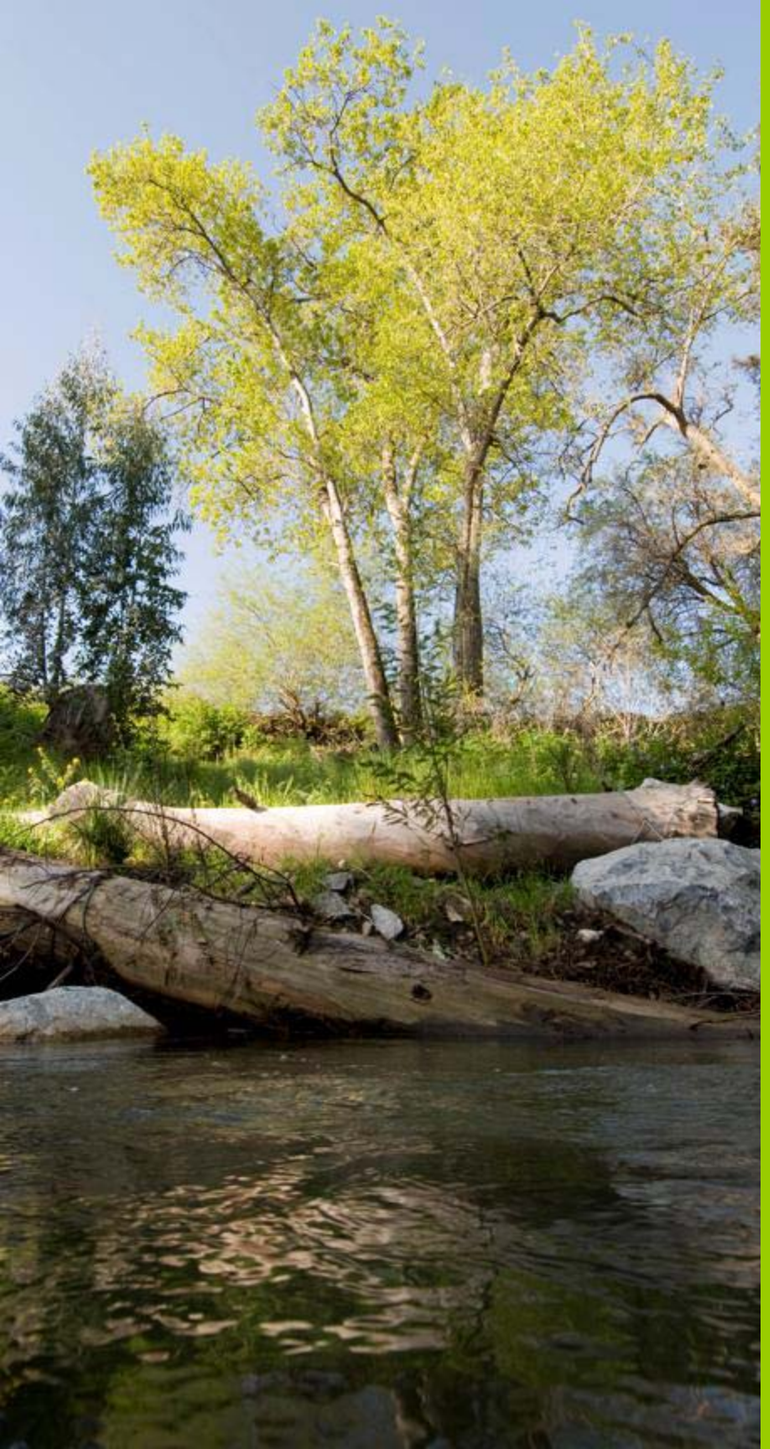


Comprehensive PIR Assessment
Conclusions

- PIR can significantly boost the pace of restoration
- Environmental protection measures for PIR considered strong/very strong
- Controlling sediment & enhancing habitat helps achieve TMDL targets & species recovery goals
- Successful PIR programs can help many private landowners do conservation work
- PIR costly & difficult to develop but worthwhile when enough projects are implemented

Sustainable Conservation's Proposal

Transition PIR permitting efforts from watershed and countywide basis to a statewide or multi-region program



Comprehensive PIR Assessment

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Build Support for Statewide or Multi-region Restoration Program

Recommendation 2

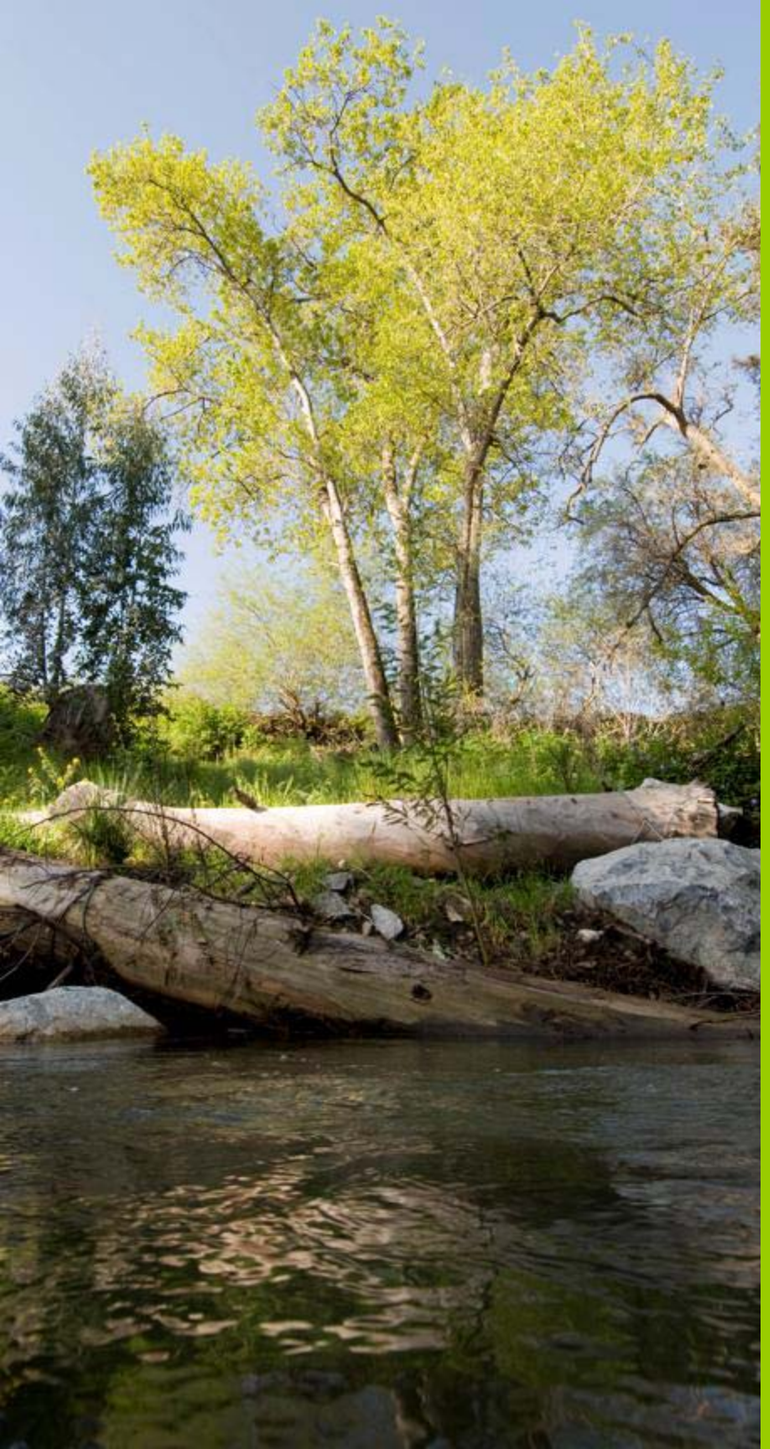
Select Core Set of Conservation Practices & Environmental Protection Measures

Recommendation 3

Programmatic Permitting for Scaled-up PIR (DFG, CCC, SWRCB, Corps, NOAA, FWS)

Recommendation 4

Standardize Monitoring & Reporting for PIR



Comprehensive PIR Assessment

Recommendations

Recommendation 5

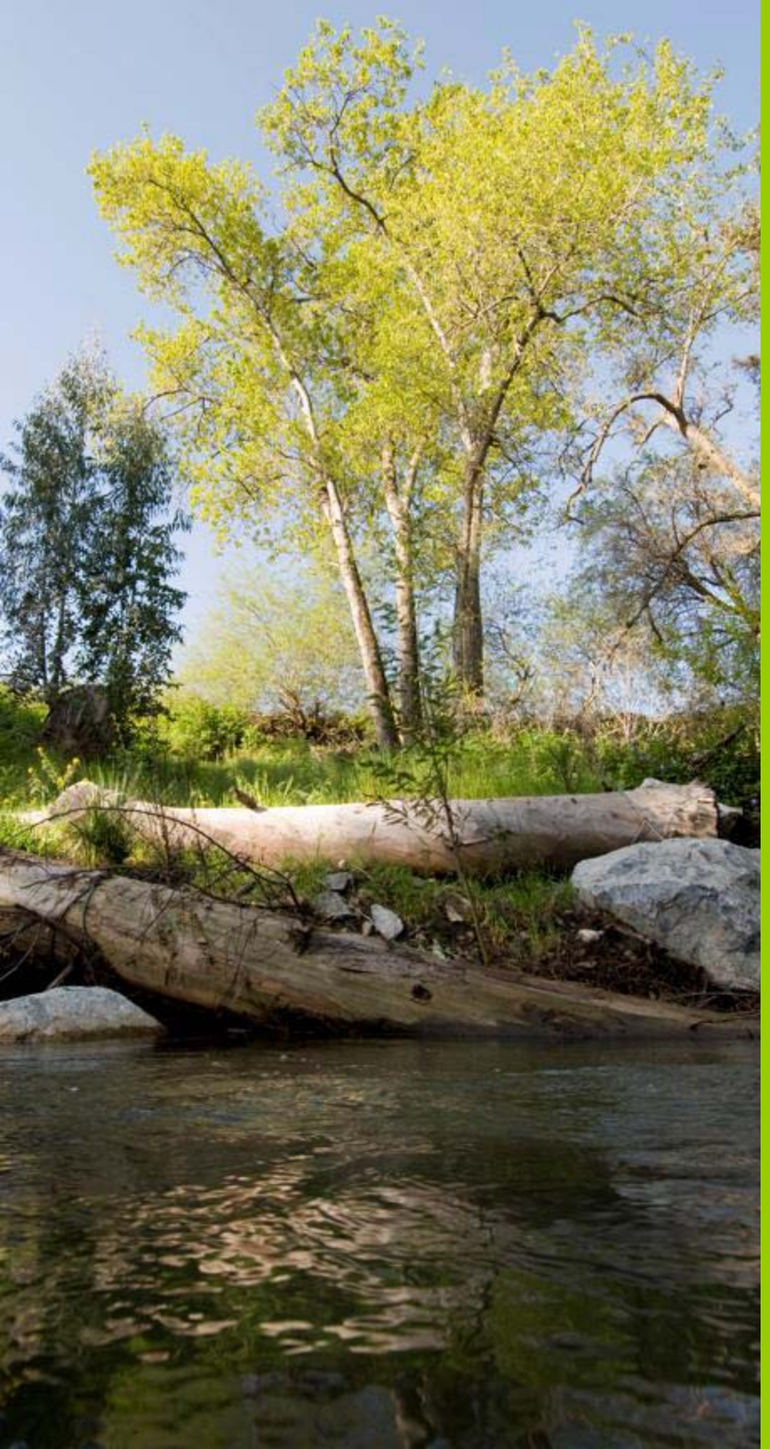
Statewide CEQA Process for PIR & Revise CEQA Guidelines for Restoration Programs

Recommendation 6

Provide ESA & NHPA/SHPO Coverage for Entire PIR Program

Recommendation 7

Integrate Federal & State Safe Harbor Agreements into PIR Program



Comprehensive PIR Assessment

Recommendations

Recommendation 8

Demonstrate How PIR Helps Achieve Environmental Goals & Seek Greater Funding

Recommendation 9

Increase RCDs' Capacity for PIR Development & Implementation

Recommendation 10

Help Other Parties to Use the RCDs' Programmatic Permits & Authorizations

Next Steps for PIR Assessment Process

- Draft and Final PIR Assessment reports
- Continue outreach
- Collaborate with agencies and partners to establish statewide or multi-region restoration program (3-5 year effort)

Thank you!

Sustainable Conservation

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