

PAJARO COMPASS

The Pajaro River Conservation Partnership began meeting in 2012 with a loosely affiliated group of stakeholders from the conservation, natural resource management, ranching and farming communities, all focused on working together to advance stewardship in the Pajaro River watershed. This group was originally organized by the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County's watershed coordinator with the goals of identifying tools, resources, opportunities, and encouraging cooperation between willing land owners and managers and conservation organizations. The Pajaro River Conservation Partnership recognized the vitality of the region was tied to maintaining the region's ranches, farms and open spaces, as well understanding constraints to maintaining these land uses into the future.

In 2015, the RCD of Santa Cruz County, Nature Conservancy, and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority proposed gathering together again to create a framework plan, to be called the Pajaro Compass, that will identify conservation tools, resources, and communication and outreach mechanisms for broader local involvement in sustaining the watershed and neighboring communities. Existing planning efforts like the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint and the Valley Habitat Plan help to define strategic conservation efforts in the Pajaro River watershed. Similarly, we are looking to examples of how to protect working lands and advance conservation with willing land owners and managers. The hope is that the Conservation Compass will:

- Develop tools to advance understanding and priorities for maintaining the watershed
- Describe incentives to support working lands and stewardship of natural resources
- Encourage cooperation within the watershed
- Improve communication between agencies and organizations, land owners and managers

This work will take place through early 2016 with the engagement of interested stakeholders.

BENEFITS TO PARTNERS CREATING THE PAJARO COMPASS

Work together better – Establish a shared understanding of watershed issues and conservation values, partner priorities, resources, and needs in order to reach more effective conservation outcomes in the watershed.

Protect Working Lands – identify incentives to protect working lands and connect willing landowners with conservation organizations.

Catalyze action – Create a compelling narrative focused on the region's benefits to central California and to local communities.

Agree on priorities – Outline priorities and each partner's potential roles for achieving those priorities.

Recognize private land stewardship – Institutionalize our partnership's recognition of private lands stewardship as a tool that will continue to benefit the region.

Cooperate on outreach and communication – Provide a consistent way of presenting a compelling, clear, and transparent vision for the Pajaro River watershed that can be discussed in the community and with outside partners.

Be ready – Formalize a partnership recognized by all stakeholders that, if mobilized, will maximize opportunities, including funding.

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