Los Gatos Creek Watershed Restoration

Climate stressors have increased significantly in regional watersheds over the past two decades. Impacts to species and their habitats have outpaced these organism's ability to adapt and respond to stressors at appreciable scales. Multi-year drought and land use impacts combine with other stressors to reduce habitat quality for both terrestrial and aquatic species, effectively limiting opportunities for refugia and migration habitat critical to species' adaptive response and resiliency.

The Los Gatos Creek Watershed presents unique opportunities to restore and enhance climate refugia and core habitats for species most vulnerable to climate risk. This includes a host of special-status plants and wildlife (e.g., California red legged frog, foothill yellow legged frog, salmonids) and habitats at the edge of the climate envelope. With over 80% of the watershed comprising land managed specifically for conservation and resource protection, the Los Gatos Creek Watershed is uniquely situated for landscape-scale ecological restoration with multiple co-benefits for climate adaptation, resiliency and conservation management. However, funding for ecological restoration and planning is limited and landscape-scale efforts have been slow to implement due to funding constraints.

Through a block grant, CARCD will provide much needed funding to increase the scale and pace of ecological restoration in the Los Gatos Creek Watershed. Guadalupe-Coyote RCD (GCRCD), through a core partnership with San Jose Water (SJW), and South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition (SBCCC), will use funding to support restoration of streams, floodplains, and tributaries of the Los Gatos Creek Watershed on properties owned by SJW and other private landowners. These efforts will focus on restoration, protection, and creation of habitat and climate refugia for several high-risk special-status amphibians and fish, and support resiliency of broader ecological processes and populations through targeted, science-based actions.

The project coordinates the full life-cycle of ecological restoration from conceptual design to implementation. Specific project elements include:

- habitat creation and enhancement
- instream habitat restoration for salmonids and native amphibians
- revegetation and floodplain enhancement
- natural stream restoration design
- invasive species management
- sediment management activities
- water quality monitoring
- ecological and environmental flows

Permitting has been completed for most proposed activities. Additional permitting and regulatory compliance, including CEQA for those projects not otherwise exempt under SB-155, will be conducted concurrently with planning and design phases.

The core partners bring recent successful experience and expertise in ecological restoration, planning, permitting, design, outreach, project management, and implementation. The partnership leverages key existing collaboration and partnership initiatives and individual efforts to drive adoption of broader

regional environmental management and ecosystem restoration goals. The proposed project addresses key conservation and climate adaptation priorities and regional water resource and sustainability objectives. With support and funding from CARCD, the project will expand local capacity for restoration in alignment with regional priorities and efficiently mobilize resources and restoration actions that build greater climate resiliency.