

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### CONTACT:

Robert Mazurek

(831) 295-3390, robert@californiamsf.org

## **CALIFORNIA MARINE SANCTUARY FOUNDATION AWARDED \$71.1 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT TO LEAD MONTEREY BAY AREA CLIMATE CHANGE EFFORTS**

*NOAA Grant is One of the Largest Grant Awards in California History; Grant Prioritizes Climate Resilience Adaptation Strategies to Address River Flooding, Wildfires, Sea Level Rise, Storm Surges*

**JULY 26, 2024–SANTA CRUZ, CALIF** – The California Marine Sanctuary Foundation (CMSF), dedicated to protecting and enhancing coastal and marine environments through marine conservation, water quality, climate change adaptation and coastal restoration, today announced it has been awarded more than \$71 million through a nationwide grant competition managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to lead a coalition of 21 partners to implement an extensive program to combat climate change in the Monterey Bay area.

The grant from [NOAA's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge](#) is one of the largest in the history of California. This transformational award is funded through the Inflation Reduction Act, which was signed into law by President Biden on August 16, 2022. It will deliver vital investments in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties through dozens of projects to be implemented by a diverse coalition that includes local governments, academic institutions and nonprofit organizations.

The grant brings focus to the needs of coastal communities impacted by storm surge, sea level rise, and flooding from the San Lorenzo, Pajaro, Salinas and Carmel rivers, as well as areas prone to wildfire in coastal watersheds.

“Monterey Bay communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis have faced disastrous consequences from flooding and fires these past several years,” said Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA). “Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, this transformational investment will bolster climate-resilient infrastructure, protect fragile coastal ecosystems, and empower disadvantaged working families as Monterey Bay adapts and prepares for future disasters.”

“Last Congress, we worked hard to do our job and pass historic legislation to confront climate change,” said Rep. Panetta (D-CA). “Today we are hearing about the effects of our work with the announcement of this major federal investment in local conservation programs, workforce development and our infrastructure to reduce the risks of damage from wildfires, flooding, storm surges and sea level rise. California's 19th Congressional District will soon be feeling the impact of this federal investment as we strengthen and bolster the resiliency and security of our community and, ultimately, the future of our country.”

“California is no stranger to the destructive consequences of the climate crisis,” said Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. “From

wildfire to catastrophic flooding, we must ensure our community is equipped with the resources to tackle these climate risks. The Biden-Harris Administration has committed to doing exactly that since day one, and this investment—made possible by the Democratic-led Inflation Reduction Act—is no exception. I am pleased to see NOAA support the Monterey Bay area in creating equitable climate adaptation and mitigation strategies while emphasizing collecting local input and building up a workforce necessary to take on this effort. I look forward to working with NOAA as this investment makes an impact.”

“This new funding represents a major investment in tangible, positive change for our local communities and environments that are experiencing worsening impacts from climate change,” said Robert Mazurek, California Marine Sanctuary Foundation Executive Director. “We’re truly thankful that NOAA has focused these federal funds on the Central Coast. The coalition of 21 partner organizations that has come together for this effort is historic and represents the skill and dedication needed in the urgent effort to combat climate change.”

## **GRANT-FUNDED CLIMATE RESILIENCE ADAPTATION ACTIVITIES**

**Flood Risk Reduction:** Ten projects will be supported to improve the condition and function of habitats on the coast, in estuaries and along rivers to moderate extreme flood flows. Many of these projects are designed to deliver benefits to some of the most vulnerable communities in the state, including the City of Watsonville and the communities of Pajaro and Castroville.

**Fire Risk Reduction:** Five fire risk reduction projects will be supported across 7,150 acres, including installation of six miles of shaded fuel breaks, fuel load reductions, and prescribed and cultural burning to reduce high-severity wildfire risk.

**Monterey Bay Climate Adaptation Revolving Fund:** A climate adaptation revolving fund will be established to offer critical bridge funding for climate adaptation projects, as well as rapid response to urgent needs.

**Monterey Bay Climate Adaptation Action Network:** The Monterey Bay Climate Adaptation Action Network will be established to coordinate and plan for future adaptation and resilience actions, and act as a forum for planning and information sharing that will encourage coordinated, integrated implementation of climate adaptation activities. MBCAAN will ensure participation of local and regional government agencies, researchers, non-government organizations, and other stakeholders, with meaningful engagement of disadvantaged communities and tribes.

**Workforce Development:** Workforce development efforts will be supported to recruit recent high school graduates, and provide field training, certificates and job placement; offer training and support for undergraduate and graduate students in climate adaptation programs, along with climate technology training and certifications; offer paid internships, externships, and wrap-around support for undergraduates; as well as fellowships for graduate students and support a professional certificate training program for Monterey Bay area professionals.

The grant will support 15 local jobs at 100% time, 270 jobs at less than 100% time, and more than 350 paid internships.

## **COALITION PARTNERS**

In addition to CMSF, grant coalition partners include: Big Sur Land Trust, California State Parks, California State University Monterey Bay, Central Coast Climate Collaborative, Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association, Central Coast Wetlands Group, City of Santa Cruz, City of Watsonville, Coastal Conservation & Research, Collaborative for Right Relations, Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, Ecology Action, Elkhorn Slough Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Four Directions, Groundswell Coastal Ecology, Hartnell College, Land Trust Santa Cruz County, Monterey Bay Climate Justice Collaborative, Monterey Bay Climate Project Working Group, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency, Pajaro Storm Drain Maintenance District, Peninsula Open Space Trust, Regeneración, Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, Santa Lucia Conservancy, University of California Santa Cruz, and Watsonville Wetlands Watch.

## **ABOUT CALIFORNIA MARINE SANCTUARY FOUNDATION**

For 29 years, the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation (CMSF) has been dedicated to protecting and enhancing coastal and marine environments through marine conservation, water quality, climate change adaptation and coastal restoration programs. With offices in Santa Cruz, Monterey and Santa Barbara, CMSF builds impactful programs and leads groundbreaking projects that benefit the California coast and surrounding communities. Learn more at <https://www.californiamsf.org>.

###