

Mattole Restoration Council Strategic Plan

2014-2020

MRC Vision

We look forward to a Mattole that has healthy, self-sustaining, productive forests, meadows, and streams, with abundant native fish and wildlife populations. We envision a community that draws its sustenance from and lives in harmony with the environment. We seek to understand processes of natural healing and enhance them using best land practices in harmony with the local environment. We seek to enhance the exchange of knowledge among all community members toward that goal. We look forward to a time in the Mattole watershed when “restoration” will no longer be needed.

MRC Mission

The objectives and purpose of this corporation are the protection and restoration of natural systems in the Mattole River watershed and their maintenance at sustainable levels of health and productivity, especially in regards to forests, fisheries, soils, and other native plant and animal communities. The corporation will pursue this goal by:

- ◆ undertaking work in watershed rehabilitation and salmon enhancement in the context of watershed-wide planning processes;
- ◆ actively seeking affiliation with other groups in the Mattole watershed that share similar goals;
- ◆ pursuing the education and involvement of watershed residents and landholders in the process of watershed recovery, maintenance and preservation of natural systems, and sustainable harvest techniques;
- ◆ conducting research and encouraging the development of land-use techniques and cultural and economic activities which further the sustained productivity of the resource base in the Mattole watershed;
- ◆ entering into cooperative undertakings with private land owners and with federal, state, and county agencies toward the achievement of our goals;
- ◆ encouraging the development of regional and watershed-based self-reliance through creative, productive and interdependent human relationships with the Mattole watershed;
- ◆ advising individuals, agencies, and corporate entities whose activities might impact the health and productivity of the Mattole watershed; and
- ◆ cooperating and communicating with community-based groups with similar goals in other watersheds.

MRC General Principles

- The MRC will employ the best available science in conjunction with the precautionary principle to restore the watershed to a healthy state where human activities are integrated with a sustainable ecosystem where all native life forms and processes that sustain them are respected.
- The MRC will pursue the highest priority watershed objectives that directly address the factors limiting ecosystem recovery. Funding opportunities will not steer our efforts.
- The MRC will carefully weigh pros and cons for any capacity building efforts as we balance restoration opportunities with the needs for organizational stability and focus.
- The MRC will focus on restoration and habitat enhancement projects located in the Mattole watershed, with adjacent lands considered where ecologically, operationally, and economically appropriate.
- MRC will design projects at a scale that can be accomplished with high quality, and where feasible, with existing labor and regional expertise.
- All research, monitoring and assessment activities will be focused to answering specific, applicable research questions relevant to Mattole watershed issues.
- The MRC is a learning organization. It seeks to learn from its members, staff, directors and community and will share information transparently.
- It is a priority for the MRC to hire and train Mattole watershed residents and thus when all else is equal, hire local.
- The MRC shall increase opportunities for Mattole residents to volunteer in achieving its restoration and conservation goals.

MRC General Directives

The following directives are designed to guide the Mattole Restoration Council in the realization of its mission:

- The MRC shall direct its focus to accomplishing watershed restoration projects with high quality, improved financial stability, and transparent accountability through funding contracts that are no more complex than necessary.
- The MRC shall give priority to hiring and training Mattole watershed residents.
- The Mattole Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) shall provide scientific input in Mattole restoration and conservation activities. The TAC will continue to review project plans and outcomes at biannual meetings and conduct an annual field trip.
- On-the-ground surveys shall be completed before restoration treatments are conducted. All projects shall include clearly defined desired outcomes.
- All projects shall include a monitoring component to assess pre-and post-project conditions and overall project effectiveness.
- The MRC shall employ adaptive management strategies by using the results of past projects to inform new approaches.
- The MRC shall design proposals and projects that are of a scale suitable to the accomplishment of this plan.
- The MRC shall invite local student participation in order to facilitate exposure to restoration and conservation concepts, and to offer employment opportunities.
- The MRC shall invite community volunteer participation, and where feasible, all MRC programs shall have an active volunteer component.
- MRC shall be an example of sustainability and shall operate under a high environmental standard.
- The MRC shall purchase from and employ local businesses and contractors where feasible.
- The MRC shall seek to offer services to landowners as an integrated package incorporating various activities such as riparian reforestation, invasive plant eradication, fish passage improvement, etc.

The Mattole Restoration Council realizes its vision through ongoing programs that undertake projects throughout the Mattole River watershed. The Mattole Restoration Council's activities are organized into four program areas: Native Ecosystems Restoration; Working Lands and Human Communities; Education and Outreach; and Watershed Information Systems. Within each of these program areas, numerous projects are undertaken each year to further the objectives set forth in this Strategic Plan. The administration of these programs is described in the final section of this document. In undertaking these projects, the Council does so with the above-listed principles in mind.##

1. Native Ecosystem Restoration

The goal of the Native Ecosystem Restoration (NER) Program is to promote healthy and productive native ecosystems including grasslands, oak woodlands, riparian corridors, wetlands, and forests. The NER program serves to promote and restore native ecosystems. This program has five principal ongoing sub-programs designed to accomplish this goal: Riparian Ecosystem Restoration, Native Grasslands Enhancement, Oak Woodland Enhancement, Invasive Plants, and Native Plant Materials. This program also supports an internship program.

1.1. Riparian Ecosystem Restoration

Goal: To improve the quality of streamside habitat for native flora and fauna

- Survey prospective riparian restoration and sediment reduction projects
- Design and implement riparian restoration projects including revegetation, bank stabilization, landslide stabilization, fish passage improvement, and riparian thinning
- Monitor the results of treatments
- Collaborate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other agencies to deliver services to local ranchers for developing and implementing ranch plans encouraging sustainable resource use while protecting watershed values

1.2. Native Grasslands Enhancement

Goal: To increase the native biodiversity of Mattole grasslands to support native flora and fauna, as well as compatible human uses

- Survey and map native grass populations within and adjoining the Mattole watershed
- Assess, design, and implement native grassland enhancement projects including revegetation and grassland reclamation
- Collaborate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other agencies to deliver services to local ranchers for developing and implementing ranch plans encouraging sustainable resource use while protecting watershed values
- Collaborate with the Fuels Reduction and Fire Planning (FRFP) program to design and implement native grass enhancement projects on fuels reduction project sites

1.3 Oak Woodland Enhancement

Goal: To gain a better understanding of the current distribution and ecological status of Oak Woodland/Savanna (OW) ecosystems within the Mattole watershed, preserve existing stands, and implement oak woodland enhancement (OWE) projects to restore historic structure and function

- Map the historic and current distribution of oak woodlands to assess changes in distribution and regeneration and determine the need for restoration or conservation projects
- Conduct assessments to develop and prioritize site specific prescriptions
- Implement projects to restore and enhance historic OW conditions including conifer removal, revegetation, and prescribed fire

- Monitor sites for project effectiveness
- Implement projects that protect stands from the spread of Sudden Oak Death (SOD)
- Monitor and map the spread of SOD through stream bait sampling and on the ground assessments
- Work with local FRFP Program, Fire Safe Councils, Cal fire, and local fire departments to integrate OWE projects with fuels reduction projects
- Work with local landowners, NRCS, UC Davis Cooperative Extension, HSU, and other agencies to implement best management practices to support oak regeneration and stand health
- Monitor and map the spread of SOD through stream bait sampling and on the ground assessments
- Educate landowners about SOD and the importance of oak woodlands through pamphlets, newsletter articles, the website, and workshops

1.4 Invasive Species

Goal: To prevent the spread of non-native plants that reduce native species diversity from ecologically significant and economically productive habitats in the watershed

- Monitor and map invasive plant populations throughout the watershed
- Prioritize, design and implement invasive plant removal projects
- Maintain and organize an invasive species infestation database for the Mattole watershed
- Continue to research best eradication techniques for high-priority species within the Mattole watershed
- Offer education and outreach within the Mattole watershed to raise awareness, interest and involvement in invasive species control
- Monitor treatments to ensure long-term success of projects
- Coordinate with local organizations and agencies to ensure use best management practices
- Promote Fee for Service invasive plant removal projects to local landowners

1.5 Native Plant Materials

Goal: To ensure that the Council's restoration projects have a supply of native seed and plant stock in order to protect native gene pools.

- Collect and maintain a seed bank of important tree, grass and shrub species for restoration projects
- Maintain one or more nurseries to provide locally raised seedlings needed for projects
- Make surplus production available to Mattole landowners to promote use of native plants for landscaping and associated projects
- Maintain a native seed farm to produce native seed for sale to local, state, and federal agencies as well as other restoration organizations
- Use revenue from plant and seed sales to fund ongoing NER projects

1.6 NER Internship

Goal: To provide internship to young adults to offer hands-on experience in the field of ecological restoration through field work in the Native Ecosystem Restoration Program

- Encourage local participation by giving preference to Humboldt County residents
- Provide an educational experience by mentoring participants and requiring the completion of an independent study project upon completion of internship

2.0 Working Lands and Human Communities

The goal of the Working Lands and Human Communities Program is to promote healthy land management practices on private and public lands that support functioning ecosystems and human communities. The Working Lands and Human Communities program serves dual interests of the Mattole community: ecologically and economically sustainable land-management practices. This program has three principal ongoing projects designed to accomplish this goal: Good Roads, Clear Creeks; Fuels Reduction and Fire Planning; and Sustainable Land Management.

2.1 Good Roads, Clear Creeks

Goal: To promote healthy streams and salmonid recovery by reducing erosion and stream sedimentation

- Work with private landowners, the Bureau of Land Management and California State Parks, as well as other governmental agencies, to treat selected sediment sources on their lands within the Mattole watershed
- Integrate the latest Department of Fish & Wildlife design criteria into all projects where appropriate
- Design and implement road related sediment reduction projects that include road upgrades, storm proofing, and road de-commissioning
- Monitor project effectiveness through turbidity monitoring
- Investigate the possibilities for sediment modeling

2.2 Fuels Reduction and Fire Planning

Goal: To improve watershed resilience to fire through community planning and projects that reduce fuels, increase fire breaks, and promote fire-adapted landscapes, as well as help restore proper function of landscape processes in the context of an inhabited landscape

- Assist and team with local Fire Safe Councils in developing, managing and implementing fire safety projects congruent with watershed restoration as identified in the Community Wildfire Plans maintained by the Fire Safe Councils
- Continue work with the County on the Fire-adapted Landscapes and Safe Homes program for creating defensible space for landowners
- Explore the topic of prescribed fire for ecological, restoration, maintenance, and wildfire hazard abatement purposes by working with the Prescribed Fire Council or other similar organizations
- Encourage the restoration of historic ridgeline prairie systems that can act as natural fire breaks between drainages
- Conduct outreach, education, and planning to encourage landowners to undertake stand manipulation or eradication to address fuels modification, species diversity, relative abundance, structure, age class distribution, timber stand improvement, grassland reclamation, increased groundwater infiltration capacity, sudden oak death, and other infestation mitigation

- Assist landowners in implementing projects in support of these objectives
- Research the development of a local market for thinning by-products. Encourage local entrepreneurs to commercialize thinning by-products
- Provide training, crews or tools where feasible to local residents for stand manipulation, fuels reduction, and grassland reclamation projects

2.3 Sustainable Land Management

Goal: To encourage Mattole residents to manage their land for overall ecosystem health and to promote sustainable forest and range management practices, particularly as an alternative to industrial paradigms.

- Review and comment on Timber Harvest Plans, Non-Industrial Timber Management Plans, Program Timber Harvest Plans (PTHPs) and other Forest Practices documents submitted in the Mattole watershed
- Participate in industrial timberland planning processes in the Mattole
- Track the Regional Water Quality Control Board's Watershed-Wide Waste Discharge Requirements process proposed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board as it affects the industrial timber ownerships in the Mattole. Participate to encourage regulatory relief and incentives for non-industrial landowners in this process.
- Conduct outreach and information exchange about forestry issues and land management options including, for example, new or amended Forest Practice Rules, sustainable forestry, holistic range management, etc.
- Assist non-industrial timberland owners with programs such as MRC's Program Timber Environmental Impact Report (PTEIR), Non-Industrial Timber Management Plans (NTMPs), and conservation easements. MRC will only assist plans that meet MRC's land management standards
- Assist landowners in taking advantage of new opportunities for the management of their forests and rangeland that are compatible with the Council's mission
- Promote voluntary tools that result in the protection of large parcels from development that would threaten watershed values such as wildlife habitat, water quality, and adequate streamflow
- Cooperate with the Buckeye Conservancy, the Institute for Sustainable Forestry, the Redwood Forest Foundation, and others to encourage sustainable land management
- Where feasible and practical, participate in County and regional planning efforts that encourage practices that promote ecological, social, and economical benefits for the long term
- Research and provide latest information on sustainable energy security that is compatible with the Council's mission
- Support resource-based cottage industry, when feasible, that is ecologically sustainable and locally beneficial

3.0 Education and Outreach

The goal of the Education and Outreach Program is to improve understanding of ecology, restoration, and stewardship among youth, community members, and the wider public. This program includes three on-going projects: Community Resource Center, Youth Education, and the Mattole Field Institute.

3.1 Community Resource Center

Goal: To promote access and exchange of knowledge among all community members by providing information to assist residents and staff working towards watershed health.

- Promote gatherings for exchange of watershed information, including talks by local experts and informal sessions
- Engage in direct outreach such as tabling, poster sessions, presentations, and conference attendance to promote our work, educate the public, and network with larger communities
- Develop, enhance, and promote MRC's website, investigate establishing community bulletin boards in higher-traffic areas, and publicize the availability of Resource Center materials in each newsletter
- Distribute Watershed Wares to promote the organization
- In collaboration with Sanctuary Forest and the Mattole Salmon Group, support water conservation and streamflow enhancement in the Mattole

The Community Resource Center is comprised of multiple components:

3.1.1 Library

- Provide library services to the community
- Create and maintain an online catalog of materials

3.1.2 Newsletter

- Publish and distribute the newsletter no less than twice a year
- Pursue greater distribution of the newsletters
- Make the newsletter available on MRC's website
- Improve capacity to communicate readily via email with its members and anyone else interested in receiving the Council's communications, and disseminate updates of a more timely nature between mailed newsletters

3.1.3 Website

- Work to make the website interactive
- Update website content with information of interest to the public
- Promote increasing website visits

3.1.4 Volunteer coordination

- Maintain a directory of potential volunteers with their interests, expertise and capabilities, and track volunteer participation
- Improve our efforts to organize more regular resident volunteer participation

3.1.5 Journal club

- Journal club will aim to meet 4-6 times per year
- Provide access to relevant articles for journal club participants
- Facilitate discussion of articles and their implication for local ecosystems and restoration efforts

3.1.6 Workshop and Hike Series

- Provide educational experiences relevant to the MRC's mission through offering workshops and hikes to community members, as appropriate

3.2 Youth Education Program

Goal: To foster ecological education and restoration field experience for local youth
MRC's Youth Education Program has two principal components:

3.2.1 Mattole Ecological Education Program (MEEP)

- Provide in-class instruction and field trip experience
- Team with Public School teachers to achieve the above directives
- Monitor the progress of students

3.2.2 Nick's Interns

- Provide restoration field experience and paid work for local youth
- Collaborate with other watershed stewardship organizations
- Ensure safe work supervision

3.3 Mattole Field Institute

Goal: To provide university and college students and community members with field and classroom based instruction that enhances understanding of the Mattole watershed, current restoration techniques, ecological principles, and any other topic that will foster stewardship and ecological awareness

- Collaborate with local universities and colleges to develop, promote and offer courses

4.0 Watershed Information Systems

The goal of the Watershed Information Systems program is to collect, archive, analyze, and disseminate restoration information to learn about the ecological systems of the watershed and improve restoration and stewardship efforts in the Mattole watershed.

This goal will be achieved through the following principles: 1) The MRC shall be current with the latest available information technologies; and 2) The MRC shall seek to add functionality in support of restoration and educational activities. The Watershed Information Systems program has four principal components: Geographic Information Systems, Data Management, Watershed Monitoring, and Adaptive Management.

4.1 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Goal: To provide analysis and dissemination of geographic representation of watershed information in support of restoration and education programs in the Mattole

- Migrate to geodatabase (GIS) data structure and develop topologies and linear referencing
- Fully update data catalog and metadata for entire collection annually
- Update and improve key datasets including parcel boundaries, vegetation cover, roads, salmonid distribution, and restoration projects
- Promote the Custom Mapping Service for use by landowners, resource managers, and partnering organizations (work with Resource Center)

4.2 Data Management

Goal: To group, locate, archive, organize, and disseminate restoration-related data in support of MRC programs

- Develop a comprehensive data management framework
- Work with other MRC program managers to develop coherent, integrated, and documented data management systems for each MRC program
- Locate and integrate historical data relevant to Mattole restoration efforts
- Ensure outreach to local, regional, state, and national groups that are working toward similar goals

4.3 Watershed Monitoring

Goal: To collect baseline and post-project data in conjunction with restoration projects

- Collect baseline data in advance of potential restoration projects
- Work with the Mattole Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to prioritize restoration projects
- Collect post-project data that will be needed to assess the effectiveness of restoration projects and where, feasible, PTEIR harvest activities

4.4 Adaptive Management

Goal: To make its restoration projects good experiments

- Make learning an explicit objective of its projects
- Describe what the projects are expected to accomplish, and why, in enough detail that the extent to which the projects have performed as expected can be determined, and the reasoning underlying the project design and execution can be assessed
- Specify criteria to be used in the assessments
- Conduct monitoring that can provide the data with which to make the assessment
- Analyze the data to make the assessments

The projects should have clear objectives, performance criteria, an experimental design that is based on testable hypotheses, monitoring to provide experimental results to test the hypotheses, and analyses to test the extent to which the hypotheses are supported or contradicted, and the extent to which the objective has been achieved.

5.0 Administration

The goal and responsibility of administration is to ensure that the Mattole Restoration Council is a corporation that is financially sustainable, accountable to the Mattole community, a fair employer, and operates with optimal efficiency and effectiveness. The administrative arm of the MRC meets these goals by: 1) Operating as efficiently as possible and seeking to maintain the lowest overall costs of completing administrative tasks; and 2) Operating as effectively as possible, pursuing excellence in all administrative tasks.

MRC administration includes the following components: Finance, Fundraising, Membership, Personnel Management, Board of Directors, Office and Facilities, and General Administration.

5.1 Finance

Goal: To maintain accurate financial tracking and organizational solvency

- Maintain integrity, honesty and transparency in all aspects of financial management
- Expedite all invoicing and pursue prompt payment from all funders
- Maintain adequate insurance to protect the organization against potential liabilities
- Meet all local, state and federal laws regarding employment, contracting and financial management of non-profit corporations, including the timely submittal of tax returns, payroll taxes, etc
- Maintain adequate cash and credit reserves sufficient to meet payroll and pay subcontractors at agreed-upon terms
- Continue to develop and define the Endowment Fund as directed by MRC's Board of Directors
- Undergo an annual audit of MRC finances, as required, and take corrective actions as recommended by the auditor
- Conduct an annual review of all financial services: insurance, audit, banking, credit, payroll, investments, legal, etc.
- Track volunteer contributions to the organization
- Develop strategies to encourage community donations such as planned giving
- Annually Post IRS form 990 on the MRC website

5.2 Fundraising

Goal: To raise sufficient funds to carry out MRC's mission

- Do not compromise MRC's general principles in the pursuit of funds
- Unless otherwise authorized by MRC's board of directors, fundraising will be limited to address Strategic Plan objectives
- Diversify funding sources
- Develop a policy for proposal generation, including a framework for how the organization pursues funds
- Maintain and expand efforts to identify, recruit and reward donors

5.3 Membership

Goal: To expand and track MRC membership, resident and otherwise

- MRC seeks a diverse membership within and beyond the Mattole watershed
- Maintain a membership database including members who are residents and/or landowners in the Mattole watershed, others may support the MRC as Friends of the Mattole
- Maintain and expand efforts to identify and recruit new members

5.4 Personnel Management

Goal: To recruit and maintain a staff that is skilled, motivated, enthusiastic and involved

- Be honest, open, forthright and fair in all personnel matters
- Recognize the value of long-term employees
- Maintain a local hiring preference for residents and landowners of the Mattole watershed
- Describe specific personnel practices in the MRC's Personnel Policy
- Hold staff meetings regularly
- Offer training opportunities to all regular employees, at the discretion of the Executive Director
- Comply with all applicable local, state and federal laws regarding personnel management, hiring, and contracting
- Maintain salaries, wages and benefits competitive with other local employers and regional watershed restoration employers
- Offer benefits as described in the Personnel Policy
- Provide written job descriptions that for all regular positions
- Review job descriptions annually
- Review and update the MRC Safety Policy as needed

5.5 Board of Directors

Goal: To provide direction to keep the MRC focused in accomplishing its mission and goals

- The MRC Board of Directors is elected by the membership as described in the Bylaws
- Maintain a membership of nine to eleven members
- Maintain the following committees: Executive Committee (minimum of 3 board members, serves as decision-making body between full Board meetings), and Personnel Committee (minimum of 3 board members, oversees implementation of the Personnel Policy)
- The Personnel Committee will conduct an annual evaluation of the Executive Director
- The Executive Director will conduct an annual self-evaluation
- The Board will identify and recruit Board candidates that reflect the diversity of the Mattole watershed, and potential members with expertise in watershed restoration/science, financial, and legal matters shall all be sought
- The Personnel Committee will review the Personnel Policy annually

- The Board of Directors will perform all duties mandated by law related to overseeing the organization, or otherwise described in the Board-approved Annual Plan of Work

5.6 Office, Equipment, and Facilities

Goal: To maintain sufficient workspaces and infrastructure to adequately and safely support the MRC

- Maintain adequate office space, supplies and computers for employees to perform office tasks efficiently and safely
- At the discretion of the Executive Director, telecommuting and flexible work schedules will be allowed
- Maintain a remote access system to its internal server that contains all relevant MRC digital documents, both programmatic and administrative
- Maintain an inventory of all equipment, supplies and fixed assets, updated annually
- Maintain appropriate facility security to protect MRC assets
- Provide regular maintenance for machines and vehicles

5.7 General Administration

Goal: To effectively run the organization

- Maintain project management and fundraising calendars to assist in the overall management of workflow
- Complete all projects on time and within budget
- MRC subcontracting shall contain a clause specifying penalties for non-performance and negligence
- Collaborate with partner organizations to mutually strengthen programs and projects relevant to our mission