

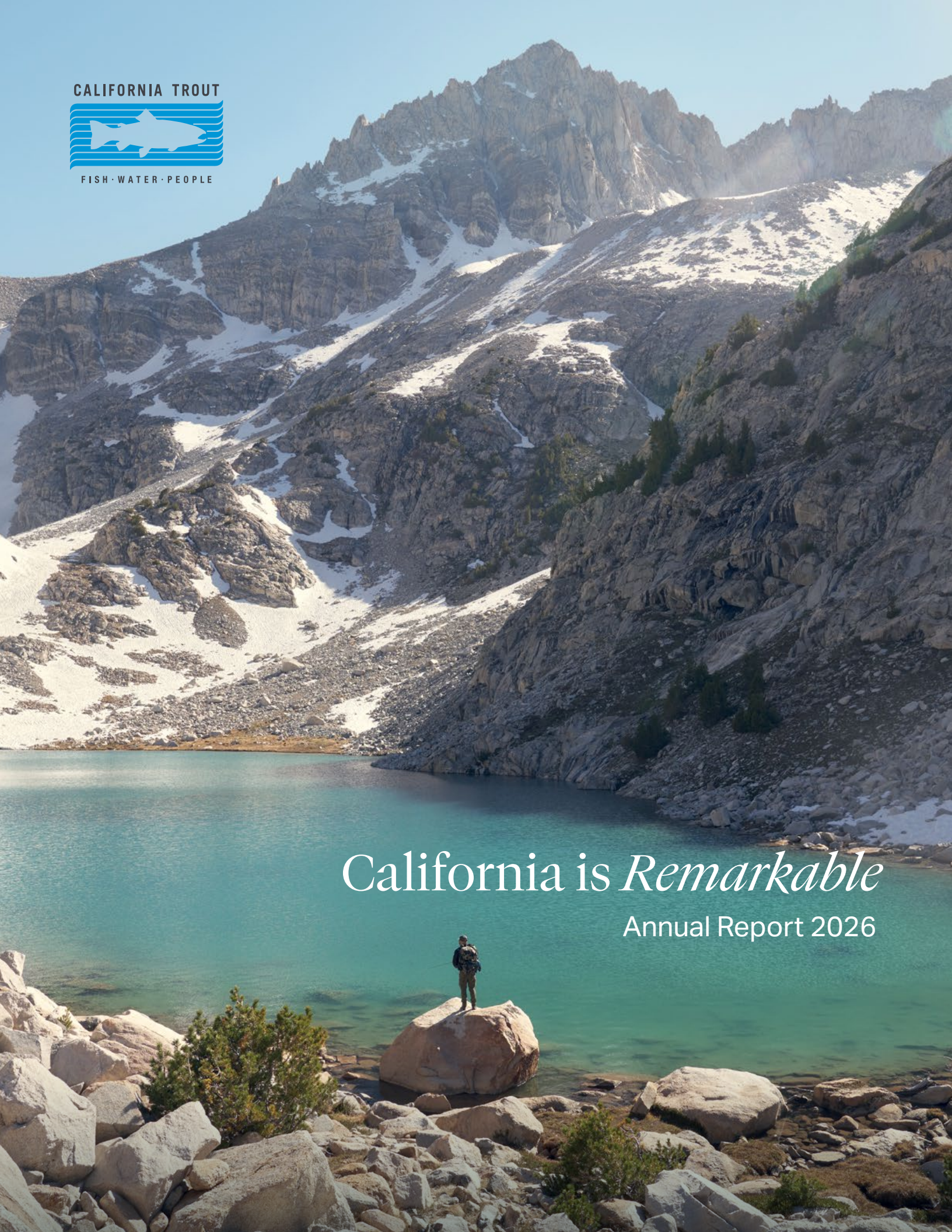
CALIFORNIA TROUT



FISH · WATER · PEOPLE

California is *Remarkable*

Annual Report 2026



Take a Tour of CalTrout's Highest Impact 2026 Projects

1. Big Chico Creek, Iron Canyon Fish Passage Project
2. Klamath River Salmon Monitoring Program
3. Scott River Restoration: From Headwaters To Mouth
4. Prairie Creek Restoration At 'O Rew
5. Elk River Estuary Restoration
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7. The Nigiri Project, Sacramento Valley
8. Alameda Creek, Sunol Valley Fish Passage Project
9. Glass Mountain Meadow Restoration, Sierra Nevada Headwaters
10. Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project
11. Trabuco Creek Watershed, I-5 & Metrolink Fish Passage Project
12. Santa Margarita River Bridge Replacement & Fish Passage Project

To see our Top 5 Dams Out projects, go to page 12.

Letter from Executive Director & Board Chair

If there's one thing I think we can all agree on, it's this: California is remarkable. As one of the most biodiverse places in the world, our state supports an incredible tapestry of ecosystems ranging from fog-draped redwood groves to floodplain valleys to arid deserts to the granite peaks of the Sierra Nevada. Among those many ecosystems, swim some of the most influential animals on our planet: wild salmon, steelhead, and trout.

California is definitively a salmon state despite the challenges these species face. It is also home to one of the most diverse arrays of native trout anywhere in the world. In California alone, we have 11 distinct populations of trout that are found nowhere else on Earth — the McCloud River Redband, Lahontan Cutthroat, and our iconic state freshwater fish, the Golden Trout, to name a few. These amazing fish are not only a source of joy, but they also serve as strong indicators for ecosystem integrity across the state. When the fish are struggling, it signals a larger problem — and today, many of them are sounding the alarm.

At CalTrout, we are listening, and we are committed to protecting and recovering these wild fish, the rivers and streams they migrate through, and all the natural places that make California remarkable. Through four regional programs and nine offices, we focus our conservation efforts on the rivers and fish that need our help the most. We reopen fragmented rivers so fish can migrate freely, restore streams from headwaters to estuaries, and ground every project in rigorous science. We back our work with over 50 years of policy advocacy across California and Washington, D.C., and we power it through partnerships spanning Tribes, ranchers, universities, local communities, and many more.

In our 2026 Annual Report, we invite you to join us as we take a tour of this remarkable state. We'll travel through each of our four regions, the fish and ecosystems they support, the people who call them home, and the work we are doing to ensure California remains vibrant, healthy, and accessible today and well into the future. We'll begin our tour together in the Shasta Cascade region, a place defined by volcanic springs, agricultural valleys, and mountainous watersheds, and where we're studying the response to the world's largest dam removal and river restoration project. Next, we'll move over to the North Coast, visiting redwood-lined coastal streams and rich lagoons

and estuaries, where we're restoring every piece of the Eel River, on track to be the state's largest free-flowing river. From there, we'll travel to our largest region, Central California, from the Sierra mountain streams where we're restoring meadows and protecting Lahontan Cutthroat Trout to the agricultural patchwork of the Sacramento Valley where we're reactivating floodplains as life-support for Chinook salmon to the urban streams of the Bay Area where we're removing barriers for steelhead and salmon. Finally, we reach Southern California, one of the most urban places in our country and yet still home to remarkable biodiversity, and where every project is laser-focused on preventing the iconic Southern Steelhead from disappearing altogether through large-scale urban fish passage projects. Our Science and Advocacy programs are strategically infused into all of this work, underscoring the strength of our working model — to lead with science, collaborate powerfully, and get the job done. And through our newly minted Connectivity Program, we are laser-focused on removing California's most harmful and least useful large-scale dams.

This tour of the remarkable, beautiful state we call home is a reminder of what's worth protecting and how the health of the fish is directly related to the health of our water and to California itself. None of our efforts are possible without you and our community of supporters. We only have one California, and we can't take it for granted. Thank you for joining us in protecting the wild fish and flowing rivers that make it remarkable.

With gratitude,



Curtis Knight,
Executive Director



Mitchell Zuklie,
Board Chair



1 2026 Highlighted Project

○ CalTrout Project



Cover photo: "Where Giants Sleep" by Shawn Fender,
CalTrout 2026 Photo Contest Submission
Map created by Rob George



PROJECT STATS

6

active projects

10

recently completed projects

400+

miles of habitat reopened on the Klamath River

450+

students connected with salmon at Shasta Big Springs Youth Days

The Shasta Cascade

Volcanic springs, working lands, and the world's largest dam removal

In the far northern reaches of California, where volcanic springs feed rivers cold enough to sustain salmon through hot dry summers, the Shasta Cascade region holds one of the most monumental stories in river conservation. It's a landscape of extremes — the snowmelt-fed headwaters of the McCloud and upper Sacramento, the agricultural valleys of the Shasta and Scott, and the Klamath Basin, where the largest dam removal in history unlocked over 400 miles of river.

Wild Chinook, coho, steelhead, and rare native trout like the McCloud River Redband share these waters with Tribal communities who have stewarded them since time immemorial and with the ranching and farming families who depend on the same rivers. Conservation here only works when it works for everyone and when solutions are built through trust, not around it. CalTrout has worked in the region for decades; today, we're learning what happens when a river is reconnected, understanding that dam removal is just the beginning of the restoration story.

1

BIG CHICO CREEK, IRON CANYON FISH PASSAGE PROJECT

On Big Chico Creek, a tributary to the Sacramento River, CalTrout removed a longstanding barrier at Iron Canyon that has kept Chinook salmon and steelhead from reaching miles of high-quality spawning habitat upstream. The project reopened a critical piece of the puzzle for Sacramento Valley salmon recovery while simultaneously providing restorative justice to the Mechoopda Tribe. Next steps include monitoring fish migration above the former barrier and replanting the construction site with native vegetation.

8.5 miles reopened; 60+ local jobs funded; 1000+ students engaged annually

Left: "Burney Falls; credit: Pusher, Inc. Right: Iron Canyon Fish Passage project construction; credit: Pusher, Inc. Bottom left: Klamath River monitoring team tags fish; credit: Pusher, Inc. Bottom right: Scott River mainstem restoration; credit: Pusher, Inc.



2

KLAMATH RIVER SALMON MONITORING PROGRAM

When the last of the Klamath's four dams came down, it created an unprecedented opportunity — and an unprecedented responsibility to study the response. CalTrout leads one of the most comprehensive salmon monitoring programs in the West, tracking how Chinook, coho, and steelhead respond to the return of hundreds of miles of newly accessible habitat. The program's findings from its first two years of operation have been published in Scientific Reports, part of the prestigious scientific journal Nature — and every fish counted and every redd surveyed continues to build this scientific record that will guide dam removal and river restoration efforts around the world for decades to come.

400+ miles of habitat reopened; 20,000+ Chinook salmon passed former Iron Gate Dam since removal; 88% of documented historical range, reoccupied by Chinook salmon

3

SCOTT RIVER RESTORATION: FROM HEADWATERS TO MOUTH

CalTrout is restoring the whole Scott River, from the headwaters to the mouth, to address the biggest threats facing salmon and steelhead. In the headwaters, we're working with The Wildlands Conservancy, the Karuk Tribe, and other partners to restore the East Fork Scott River. This multi-year effort reconnects floodplains and improves habitat for threatened coho salmon, making the watershed more resilient to drought and climate change. On the mainstem, we're partnering with the Farmers Ditch Company, the Yurok Tribe, and local farmers to modernize aging water infrastructure to improve fish passage, water management, and river connectivity while supporting the agriculture at the heart of the Scott Valley community.

1 mile of high-priority tributaries and mainstem habitat restored; 6.7 miles to be restored on the East Fork; 4.5 floodplain acres to be reconnected on the mainstem



Voices from the Shasta Cascade

FISH SPOTLIGHT



California Chrome: Klamath River Steelhead

Anglers call them “chrome” for the bright sheen ocean-run steelhead carry back into freshwater — and on the Klamath, that chrome is returning to water it hasn’t reached in over a century. With The Conservation Angler, CalTrout co-authored a new monitoring framework tracking steelhead’s return across the newly reopened habitat: how fast fish return, whether resident rainbow trout re-express as ocean-going steelhead, and how genetic diversity shifts over time. A key piece of the framework: “angler-science,” training anglers and guides to collect samples and field data in places our crews can’t easily reach — turning steelhead anglers into partners in the recovery itself.

REGION BIODIVERSITY STATS

13

species or kinds of salmon, steelhead, and trout

30

conifer species

65%

of the state’s native plant species in 15% of its land

*Above: Big Chico Creek; credit: Pusher, Inc.
Right: Students engage with science on the Scott River; credit: Pusher, Inc.*



“Anglers have always been among the first people to notice when something changes on a river. The opportunity in the Klamath is to pair that deep, place-based knowledge with rigorous scientific methods. Angler-science allows us to expand our reach across this enormous watershed while creating a meaningful role for people who care deeply about the future of wild steelhead.”

Dr. George Pess, The Conservation Angler

ADA FOWLER, CALTROUT SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER



“People don’t realize how much of this basin’s salmon start their lives in the Shasta. Get that river right, and you’re helping fish

across the whole system.”

Ada can tell you, from memory and without missing a beat, how much of the Klamath Basin’s historic salmon production traces back to a single tributary, the Shasta River — a staggering 50%, from a short, spring-fed creek in the high desert north of Mount Shasta that contributes just 1% of the Klamath’s total annual flow. She’s spent the better part of her career restoring it, and there are few who know its intricacies better than her.

JAMES WHELAN, CALTROUT PROJECT MANAGER



“Every time we sample a fish in the waters of the Klamath River, in a place that’s been inaccessible to that fish’s relatives for a hundred years, it reminds me why

this work matters. We’re watching the recovery happen in real time. ”

James can often be found knee-deep in the Klamath River, helping to manage and implement the Klamath River Salmon Monitoring Program. Ask him what he loves most about his job, and he lights up describing the moment another Chinook salmon turns up in the team’s tangle net — ready to be tagged and tracked by scientists, and one more sign that dam removal is working.



PROJECT STATS

8

active projects

6

recently completed projects

288

miles to reopen on the Eel River

350+

community members at the Eel River Expo

Prairie Creek restoration at 'O Rew; credit: Michael Wier.

The North Coast

Rugged headwaters to fog-draped estuaries and California's best chance at salmon recovery

In the far northwestern corner of California, where fog-drenched coast redwoods rise taller than any trees on Earth and rivers empty into tidal lagoons before reaching the sea, the North Coast holds both the deepest scars of California's conservation history and some of its greatest recovery opportunity. It's carved by three priority watersheds — the Eel, California's third-largest, once home to over a million returning salmon and steelhead in a good year; the Elk, feeding Humboldt Bay; and Redwood Creek, threading through old growth redwoods to the Pacific. Less than 3% of the original old-growth redwood forest still stands, a legacy of industrial logging that also filled these rivers with sediment and cut off the side channels salmon need to survive.

Chinook, coho, and steelhead share these waters with Coastal Cutthroat Trout, Coastal Rainbow Trout, Pacific Lamprey, Tidewater Goby, Longfin Smelt, Eulachon, and Green Sturgeon, and with Tribal peoples whose villages and fisheries have centered on these rivers since time immemorial. Here, restoration isn't just about reconnecting habitat — it's about reconnecting people to place. CalTrout has worked on the Eel for over 50 years; today, we are removing its last major dams, rebuilding North Coast estuaries that salmon are born into, and returning land to the Tribes who stewarded it for millennia.



4

PRAIRIE CREEK RESTORATION AT 'O REW

At 'O Rew, 3.5 miles up Redwood Creek from the ocean, CalTrout, in partnership with Save the Redwoods League, has spent five restoration seasons rebuilding the floodplain rearing habitat salmon need most, the last such opportunity this far downstream in the watershed. In 2026, the project site itself came full circle: 125 acres were formally returned to the Yurok Tribe for long-term stewardship.

“This project has meant so much more than the ecological wins, which are already extraordinary. Watching this public investment move through the local community — providing job opportunities, exciting scientific discoveries, and a sense of trust in collective action — I'll always carry it with me.”
- Ashley Shannon, CalTrout North Coast Project Manager

125 acres returned by Save the Redwoods League to the Yurok Tribe; 20 acres of wetland created; 212,000+ native plants replanted

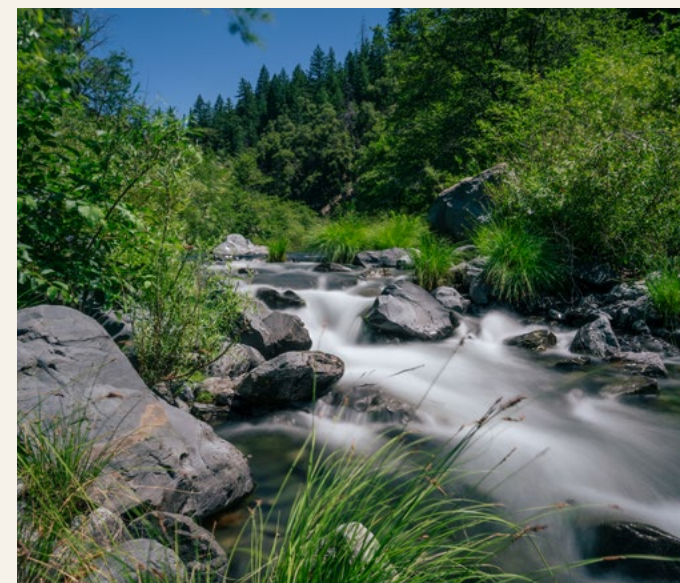


5

ELK RIVER ESTUARY RESTORATION

On the Elk River, CalTrout is leading an ecosystem-wide restoration of one of Humboldt Bay's most important tributaries — reconnecting tidal wetlands for Coho, Chinook, Steelhead, Coastal Cutthroat Trout, Tidewater Goby, and Longfin Smelt, while reducing the flooding that has long plagued the valley's farms and homes. This summer, construction began on the first of the project's 12 subareas: 40 acres at Swain Slough, with the rest of the estuary's restoration designs already 65% complete. As part of the broader restoration effort, CalTrout acquired 175 acres of former tideland and returned a historic site, Chwanuchguk, to the Wiyot Tribe for cultural restoration and stewardship.

40 acres restored in 2026 for a total of 857 acres to be restored in Planning Phase 1; 5.3 miles of channel to be restored in Planning Phase 1; 15+ partners working together on this project



6

EEL RIVER WATERSHED RESTORATION & CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The upcoming removal of Scott and Cape Horn dams, part of the PG&E-owned Potter Valley Project, will reconnect native salmon and steelhead with nearly 300 miles of pristine cold-water habitat — making the Eel California's longest free-flowing river. CalTrout's science-based Eel River Watershed Restoration and Conservation Program — built in partnership with the 22 public agencies, Tribes, and conservation organizations of the Eel River Forum — is the blueprint for the transformation and continued to progress this year.

3,864 square mile watershed; 3rd largest watershed in California; 22+ partners

Top: Native plants take root on the restored Prairie Creek landscape; credit: Max Whittaker. Middle: Elk River, Swain Slough restoration; credit: Matt Metheny. Bottom: Eel River headwaters; credit: Pusher, Inc.

Voices from the North Coast

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Eel River Expo

In September, CalTrout hosted the second annual Eel River Expo, in partnership with the Rotary Club of Eureka. The speaker series was headlined by Michael Kauffmann, with local organizations tabling and a strong community turnout. Community members made real connections with the Eel River watershed, learned about incredible science, and met others who care deeply about this vast, beautiful place.



KATY GURIN, NORTH COAST SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER



“It’s exciting to get to envision, along with Elk River stakeholders, what it would be like for the Elk to be healthier. I’ve spent so much of my

life swimming and fishing here. I know nine-year-old me would be so excited that I am doing this work today.”

Restoration project manager by day and poet by night, there is not much that Katy can’t handle. As a landscape-scale restoration effort kicks off on the Elk River, she’s been finding herself in the field more often than not these days. This work is personal to her — she grew up near the Elk River for the first nine years of her life, a period of time when the channel was experiencing severe impacts from sediment.

BILL MATSUBU, NORTH COAST REGIONAL DIRECTOR



“I am most looking forward to working alongside a passionate team to advance meaningful, on-the-ground restoration projects

that benefit both fish and communities.”

CalTrout’s newest regional director, Bill, holds a Ph.D. in Aquatic and Fishery Sciences and has research experience across Washington, Oregon, and California, with much of his career focused on fisheries, Tribal partnerships, and conservation efforts on California’s North Coast. He joined CalTrout in April to lead our North Coast team, and as much as he’s excited to lead the team, he’s equally excited to learn from the team around him.

FISH SPOTLIGHT



California Coastal Coho Salmon and the South Fork Eel River Science and Monitoring Program

Unlike Chinook in the Eel River, coho salmon spend a full year rearing in freshwater before heading to sea — making them especially dependent on the cold, slow-water habitat most North Coast rivers have lost, and the most imperiled of the region’s native salmonids. CalTrout’s North Coast team tags and tracks juvenile coho salmon in the South Fork Eel River while building our understanding of a growing threat from within the river itself: Sacramento Pikeminnow, an invasive predator whose upstream migration overlaps with young salmonids’ journey to the sea. Run in partnership with UC Berkeley, Cal Poly Humboldt, and NOAA, the program’s findings are shaping how — and when — restoration dollars get spent. As we prepare for dam removal, the program will also expand to monitoring salmon in the mainstem.



REGION BIODIVERSITY STATS

1M

adult salmon and steelhead historically supported in the Eel

8

conifer tree species found only in this ecoregion

<3%

of old-growth redwoods remain today, the tallest trees on Earth

Right: Eel River Expo engages community; credit: Pusher, Inc.
Above: Eel River; credit: Pusher, Inc.



“We’re not removing dams just for the sake of removing dams. Each of our Connectivity Program’s projects was chosen strategically to help upgrade California’s outdated infrastructure while recovering the rivers and wild fish that need our help most. We’re proud to lead the way on dam removal projects that are long overdue. Left unaddressed, these aging dams will remain a safety risk and keep harming rivers for generations to come.”

Charlie Schneider, Connectivity Program Lead

*This photo: Klamath River post-dam removal;
credit: Pusher, Inc.*

Connectivity Program

Facilitating California’s Largest Dam Removal Efforts

California’s 1400 major dams are aging, and many are in poor condition. While water storage remains a critical part of California’s water security, many of these dams have sediment-filled reservoirs, defunct hydropower facilities, or pose safety risks. Removing these dams restores rivers, protects downstream communities, improves water quality, sustains wild fish, and supports recreation and local economies.

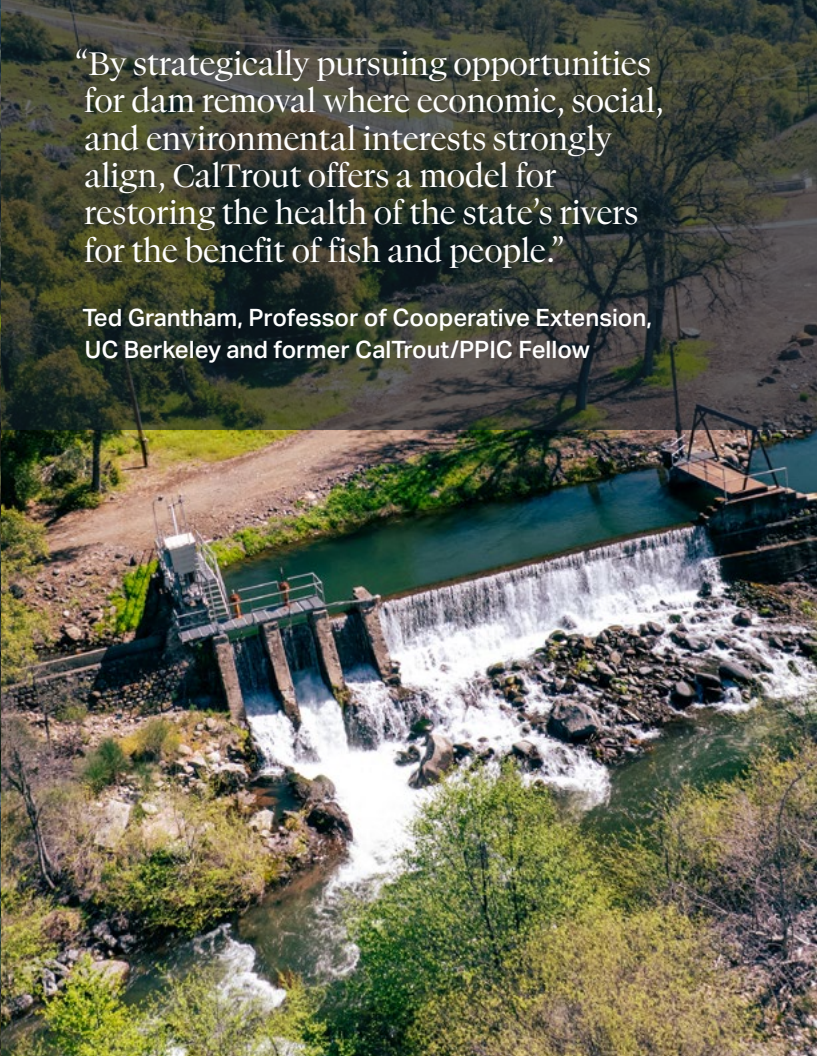
The removal of dams is often time consuming, expensive, and politically charged — but it doesn’t have to be. CalTrout has made the important decision to invest in a dedicated Connectivity Program. This team of experts builds coalitions and works in partnership to evaluate, plan, and advance complex dam removal projects in priority watersheds across the state. Through the Connectivity Program, we will increase the pace and scale of large-scale dam removal in California, and our team of dam removal experts, paired with regional project managers who live in these downstream communities, are uniquely suited to complete these watershed-wide transformation projects.

Top 5 Dams Out

CalTrout identified the state’s highest-priority dam removal opportunities — large projects with the greatest potential to restore fish passage, improve river health, and reconnect communities with healthy waterways. Since then, the successful removal of the four lower Klamath River dams has demonstrated what’s possible. Today, five priority watersheds are California’s next major river restoration opportunities.



✓ Klamath River Dams	Complete
1. Eel River Dams	Active
2. Battle Creek Dams	Active
3. Searsville Dam (San Francisquito Creek)	Active
4. Matilija Dam (Ventura River)	Active
5. Rindge Dam (Malibu Creek)	Active



“By strategically pursuing opportunities for dam removal where economic, social, and environmental interests strongly align, CalTrout offers a model for restoring the health of the state’s rivers for the benefit of fish and people.”

Ted Grantham, Professor of Cooperative Extension, UC Berkeley and former CalTrout/PPIC Fellow

COMPLETE



KLAMATH RIVER DAM REMOVAL

For more than a century, four dams on the Klamath River blocked salmon and steelhead from reaching hundreds of miles of the productive habitat their ancestors once relied on, while the reservoirs behind them bred toxic algae blooms and steadily degraded water quality downstream. This was a Tribal-led effort, and CalTrout spent 24 years supporting dam removal, sitting at the negotiating table alongside a broad coalition of partners. That work culminated in the largest dam removal and river restoration project in U.S. history. The results came quickly. Within the first year, post-removal monitoring documented thousands of salmon returning to newly accessible habitat.

400+ miles of spawning and rearing habitat reopened; 4 dams removed; 24 years of CalTrout involvement, from early negotiations to dam removal

1

EEL RIVER DAM REMOVAL

For nearly a century, Scott and Cape Horn dams have blocked the upper Eel River from the fish that depend on it. After PG&E announced it would surrender its license rather than relicense the aging Potter Valley Project, CalTrout — after 50 years of working in this watershed — helped negotiate the path forward, including the design of new water infrastructure for the communities who depend on the same system. When the dams come down, the Eel will overtake the Smith as California’s longest free-flowing river, and nearly 300 miles of spawning habitat will reopen to Chinook, coho, and steelhead for the first time in generations.

288 miles of habitat to reopen for salmon and steelhead; 100+ years the dams have blocked the headwaters; \$278M projected regional economic benefits from dam removal

2

BATTLE CREEK DAM REMOVAL

Battle Creek flows through ancestral Yana lands near Red Bluff, stewarded today by the Wintu Tribe of Redding Rancheria and the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians. It holds something increasingly rare in the Central Valley: cold, spring-fed water where Sacramento River Winter-run Chinook Salmon can spawn successfully. For over a century, PG&E’s hydroelectric project has blocked these runs from 48 miles of that habitat. CalTrout and our partners have reopened it in stages, including eight miles through the Eagle Canyon fish passage project in 2021. After PG&E chose not to renew its license, full dam removal can now reconnect all 48 miles.

48 miles of habitat to reopen for Winter-run and Spring-run Chinook Salmon; 8 dams and 42 miles of canals and pipelines built since 1919; 51 feet: height of the tallest remaining dams

3

SEARSVILLE DAM REMOVAL, SAN FRANCISQUITO CREEK

On San Francisquito Creek, Stanford’s 134-year-old Searsville Dam has blocked one of the Bay Area’s last wild, independent steelhead runs. After two decades of advocacy in partnership with Beyond Searsville Dam, full removal is now formally under environmental review, with a draft EIR expected by the end of 2026. If removed, the dam would reopen more than 10 miles of upper-watershed habitat and could make this creek a cornerstone of Central Coast Steelhead recovery.

10+ miles of habitat to reopen for steelhead; 130+ years that Searsville Dam has blocked steelhead migration; 90% of the dam’s original water storage capacity lost to sediment; 7+ partners collaborating with CalTrout to secure steelhead passage and keep dam removal on the table

4

MATILIJA DAM REMOVAL, VENTURA RIVER

Matilija Dam has blocked Matilija Creek, a tributary of the Ventura River, since 1948 and today holds back so much sediment it provides essentially zero water storage — a concrete barrier serving no purpose except keeping steelhead and the watershed from flowing between. CalTrout has spent decades pushing for its removal, which would reopen 17 miles of the river’s best remaining habitat. After more than \$70 million invested in studies and design, removal is now targeted for between 2029 and 2035.

17 miles of habitat to reopen for endangered Southern Steelhead; ~80 years since Matilija Dam filled in with sediment and was rendered obsolete; 9M cubic yards of sediment trapped behind the dam; 168-foot-tall dam

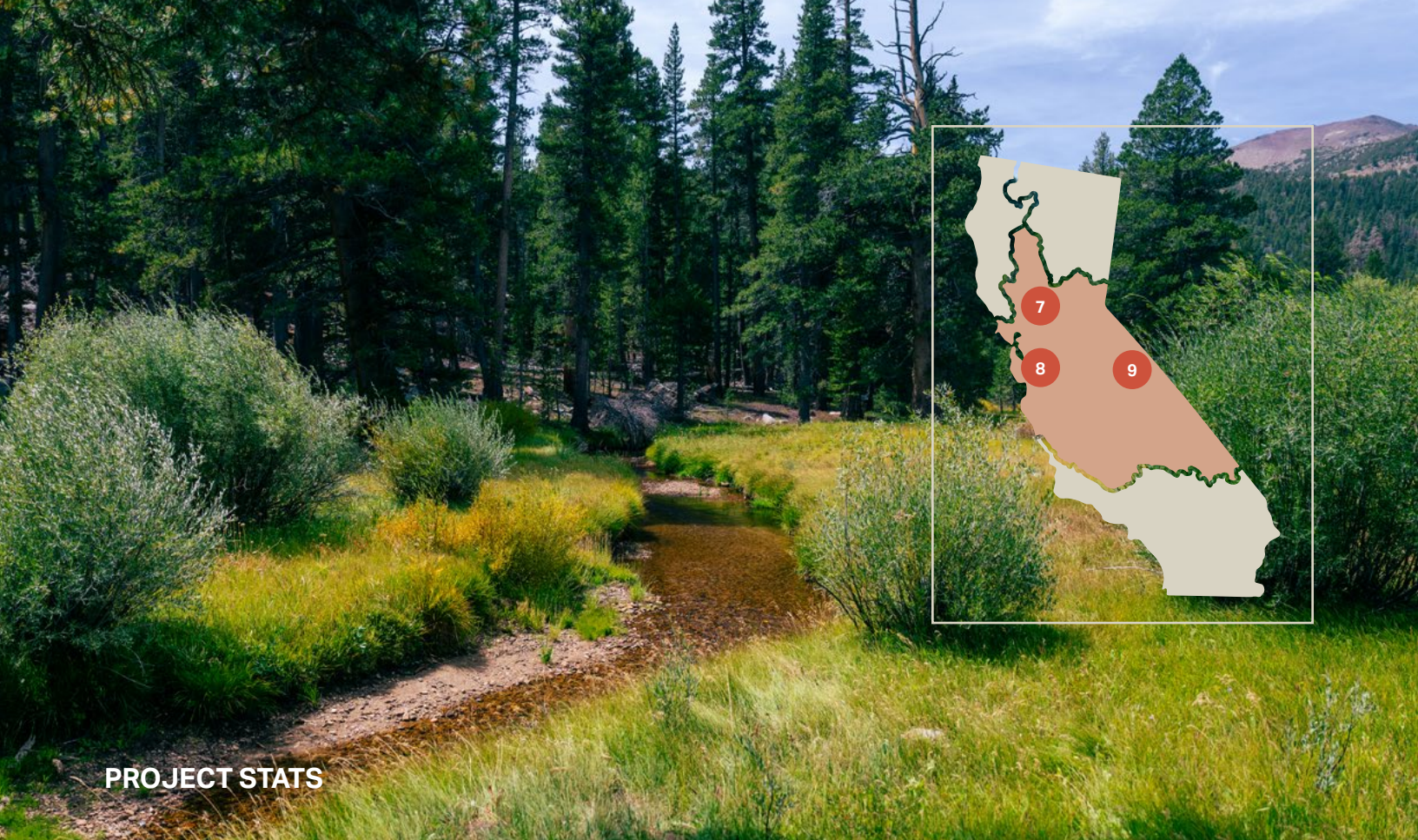
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RINDGE DAM REMOVAL, MALIBU CREEK

For nearly 90 years, the 100-foot Rindge Dam has sat just three miles from the ocean on Malibu Creek, cutting off nearly all of the watershed’s steelhead habitat. Removing the dam — along with eight additional barriers upstream — will reopen 15 miles of habitat for endangered Southern Steelhead. Removing the dam also helps coastal Southern California residents prepare for sea level rise: about 780,000 cubic yards of trapped sediment will be used to rebuild local beaches instead of being lost to the ocean floor. The Army Corps signed off on the plan in 2020; full removal is now in design, with completion targeted for around 2030.

15+ miles of habitat to reopen for endangered Southern Steelhead ; 780,000 cubic yards of sediment will be removed from behind the dam to replenish Southern California beaches; 100-foot-tall dam

Top left: Matilija Dam; credit: Pusher, Inc. Top right: Cape Horn Dam on the Eel River; credit: Pusher, Inc. Bottom left: Searsville Dam; credit: Pusher, Inc. Bottom right: Battle Creek Dam; credit: Pusher, Inc.



PROJECT STATS

15

active projects

20+

miles reopened on Alameda Creek

30+

miles of stream on track to be recovered for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout by 2027

Above: Sierra headwaters; credit: Pusher, Inc. Top left: Sacramento Valley; credit: Michael Wier. Middle left: Former barrier on Alameda Creek; credit: Matthew Benton. Bottom left: Glass Mountain meadow restoration tour; credit: Michael Wier

Central California

From granite headwaters to rice-field floodplains to the edge of the Bay

The Central California region stretches from granite Sierra Nevada headwaters through the Central Valley’s farmland to the tidal creeks of San Francisco Bay — beginning in a landscape of headwater streams that are largely pristine and intact before transitioning into a landscape where nearly every river has been reshaped by canals, levees, and dams. It’s defined by three very different watershed areas: the Sacramento Valley, where levees have cut Chinook salmon off from 95% of the historic floodplain they depend on for food; the Bay Area’s urban creeks, including Alameda Creek and San Francisquito Creek, still recovering from decades of fish-blocking barriers; and the high Sierra’s meadows and streams,

many of them degraded by a century of grazing, mining, and fire suppression, but still supportive of California’s remarkable inland trout.

Winter-run and Spring-run Chinook, steelhead, Rainbow Trout, the rare Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, and more all depend on this region’s water being shared wisely among farms, cities, and rivers alike. CalTrout’s work here spans that entire range: reopening Bay Area creeks to salmon and steelhead, restoring Sierra meadows that store the snowmelt California depends on, reconnecting floodplains for Chinook, and defending wild trout refuges like Hot Creek from new threats.

7

THE NIGIRI PROJECT, SACRAMENTO VALLEY

In the Sacramento Valley, CalTrout has spent nearly a decade turning dormant winter rice fields into floodplain nurseries for salmon — flooding fields in the Yolo and Sutter bypasses to grow the zooplankton-rich “fish food” young Chinook need to survive their journey to the ocean. More than 10,000 acres are planned across both bypasses, addressing a stark problem: levees have cut Central Valley salmon off from 95% of their historic floodplain. Nigiri South, in the Yolo Bypass, is largely complete; Nigiri North, in the Sutter Bypass, is targeted for 2028.

10,000+ acres of floodplain planned across the Yolo and Sutter bypasses; ~10 years CalTrout has spent developing this floodplain-as-fish-food model



8

ALAMEDA CREEK, SUNOL VALLEY FISH PASSAGE PROJECT

After nearly 70 years, salmon and steelhead can access high-quality upper Alameda Creek watershed habitat. In late 2025, CalTrout and PG&E completed removal of the last major barrier on mainstem Alameda Creek, relocating a natural gas pipeline that had blocked passage for decades. Two adult Chinook salmon were spotted migrating past the site that same day — the first documented salmon to access that reach since the 1950s. Steelhead access to the newly reopened reach is still being confirmed, but the path is clear for the first time in most residents’ lifetimes.

20+ miles of stream reopened; 70+ years since steelhead last had consistent access; 2 months after barrier removal, nearly a dozen Chinook migrated upstream; 18 barriers remediated in the watershed by partners



9

GLASS MOUNTAIN MEADOW RESTORATION, SIERRA NEVADA HEADWATERS

High in the Glass Mountains above Mono Lake, CalTrout is restoring more than 300 acres across seven subalpine meadows — repairing stream channels, thinning encroaching conifers, and converting the removed wood into biochar that locks away carbon for a thousand years or more. It’s part of a broader push across the Sierra, where roughly 70% of meadows are degraded, to restore the natural sponges that store snowmelt and feed California’s rivers through the dry summer months. A similar effort is in planning at Double Bunk Meadow in the Kern River watershed, aimed at protecting native Kern River Rainbow Trout.

300+ acres across 7 subalpine meadows targeted for restoration; 70% Sierra Nevada meadows statewide are degraded; 60% California’s domestic water supply originates in Sierra Nevada headwaters



Voices from Central California

CLAIRE BUCHANAN, CALTROUT REGIONAL DIRECTOR



“I want my kids to grow up in a California where they can still catch a wild trout in a river that’s alive with fish, birds, and everything in between.”

That’s what keeps me going.”

Claire oversees CalTrout’s work across the Sierra Nevada, Central Valley, and San Francisco Bay — one of the broadest conservation portfolios at CalTrout. She joined in 2022 to build out the Bay Area team and has spent her career working across California’s eleven native trout species. As a mother and an angler, this work is deeply personal to her.

ANDREW NOTTER, CALTROUT FIELD TECHNICIAN



“I’ve always been a fish person, even since I was a little kid. But it wasn’t until I started diving deeper into the world of fly fishing that I developed

a real appreciation not just for the fish themselves, but for native fish and the healthy ecosystems they depend on. Fieldwork gave me a way to take that passion and put my energy toward something I genuinely care about.”

For Andrew, one of CalTrout’s field technicians, most days in the Eastern Sierra start calmly with a stretch circle and morning meeting to plan and assign roles. From there, things ramp up. The work is physically demanding — on a single day, he might make three trips up and down a small mountain with a heavy haul pack, carrying pipes, pumps, and other equipment to the section of creek his team is treating. He and his team work eight days on and six days off, dewatering different sections of creek to ensure non-natives are no longer present and that the native Lahontan cutthroats will be able to thrive.

JEFF MILLER, FOUNDER, ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE



“We put all these barriers in their way, and yet fish were still trying to come back. It was amazing and inspiring to witness their determination.”

The return of salmon heralds hope for more healthy ecosystems and these charismatic fish are excellent ambassadors for protecting and restoring our local watershed. We’re seeing results from two decades of restoration projects, and we hope Alameda Creek will have an outsized impact on the recovery of steelhead in the region. It’s profoundly gratifying to see watershed residents and local water agencies taking pride in bringing back native fish and wildlife.”

In between writing an “irreverent” guide to Bay Area wildlife, leading birdwatching tours, and wild river rafting trips, Jeff Miller made sure he found time to celebrate the removal of the final fish passage barrier on Alameda Creek. It was all the way back in 1997 when Alameda Creek first caught his attention, and he founded the Alameda Creek Alliance in response to declining steelhead populations. Since then, he has spent three decades pushing for the creek’s restoration — helping build the coalition behind 18 completed fish passage projects, including the last barrier removed through CalTrout’s Sunol Valley Fish Passage Project.

Left: Field crew working to recover Lahontan Cutthroat Trout; credit: Pusher, Inc.



FISH SPOTLIGHT



Lahontan Cutthroat Trout

One of California’s iconic native inland trout species now occupies less than 5% of its historic stream habitat and just a fraction of its historic lake habitat, surviving today in only a handful of native populations along the Sierra’s eastern slope. In the Walker Basin, CalTrout’s Sierra team is removing non-native brook trout from Silver Creek and Slinkard Creek and expanding habitat at By-Day Creek to bring this native trout back from the brink. Next, our team will expand these efforts to the Upper Truckee River in the Tahoe basin.

POLICY PROTECTION

Hot Creek: Defending a Blue-Ribbon Fishery

Hot Creek, a spring-fed, geothermally warmed trout fishery near Mammoth Lakes, is threatened by a proposed gold exploration project just a third of a mile from its headwaters. CalTrout is pushing for Outstanding National Resource Water (ONRW) status — the strongest protection available under the Clean Water Act — working alongside partners to keep one of the Eastern Sierra’s most storied wild trout fisheries out of a mine’s path.

REGION BIODIVERSITY STATS

1/3

of California’s water supplied by Sierra snowpack

1B

birds estimated to migrate through the Sacramento Valley area annually

95%

of the Central Valley’s historic floodplain cut off from Chinook salmon by levees

70%+

of Sierra Nevada meadows degraded statewide



PROJECT STATS

8

active projects

2

obsolete dams set to be removed

65+

coalition partners across two regional coalitions

500

adult Southern Steelhead estimated remaining in the wild

Southern California

One of the country's most urbanized landscapes, and still home to remarkable biodiversity.

Southern California is one of only five Mediterranean-climate regions on Earth, a rare type of habitat that covers barely 2% of the planet's land. Its chaparral and coastal sage scrub support nearly 300 bird species, more than 70 mammal species, and some 200 butterfly species, fed by watersheds from the Santa Clara and Santa Ana rivers to smaller coastal streams like Malibu and San Mateo creeks. It's also one of the most densely populated corners of the country — and that tension, extraordinary biodiversity alongside urban development, poses unique challenges and opportunities for landscape scale projects.

Southern California Steelhead still migrate between these mountain headwaters and the open ocean, against all odds. Once numbering in the tens of thousands, fewer than 500 adults now return across the region, and more than 90% of their spawning and rearing habitat is blocked by barriers. Listed as federally endangered since 1997, and state-endangered since 2024 after a successful petition led by CalTrout, the species now depends on hard-won victories that reopen its habitat a few miles at a time.



10 MALIBU CREEK ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT

CalTrout is leading public engagement for the restoration of the Malibu Creek watershed. Our team tables at dozens of community events across the region and hosts tours of the site. We've also launched a community science photo program that lets anyone help document the transformation coming to this highly urban watershed. Restoring Malibu Creek will help protect nearby coastal communities by replenishing beach sand and buffering against sea level rise and other climate impacts.

15 miles of habitat to reopen for endangered Southern Steelhead; 780,000 cubic yards of sediment trapped behind Rindge Dam to be removed and used to replenish Southern California beaches; 1 million Los Angeles residents will be able to engage with the project through events, festivals, and school programs



11 TRABUCO CREEK WATERSHED, I-5 & METROLINK FISH PASSAGE PROJECT

Just five miles from the ocean, two barriers — the I-5 highway bridge array and the Metrolink railroad bridge have long blocked Southern Steelhead from reaching the Santa Ana Mountains in Trabuco Creek. CalTrout's restoration project remediates both total barriers with 400-600 feet of nature-like fishways, reopening 15 miles of spawning and rearing habitat. To be implemented in partnership with NOAA, CDFW, City of San Juan Capistrano, and Orange County Flood Control District and the Acjachemen Nation, construction is poised to begin in 2027.

15 miles of spawning and rearing habitat to reopen for endangered Southern Steelhead; 400-600 feet of nature-like fishways to be constructed; 80+ check dams previously removed by the U.S. Forest Service in the headwaters, part of the broader effort to open passage in this watershed



12 SANTA MARGARITA RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT & FISH PASSAGE PROJECT

The Santa Margarita is one of the last free-flowing, undammed rivers left in Southern California, running largely undisturbed through Camp Pendleton — but a single aging concrete culvert at a Fallbrook road crossing stands as the last barrier on its entire mainstem. The replacement, a 473-foot steel bridge, will open all 29 miles of the river to migrating steelhead for the first time in decades. The project is poised for construction in 2027.

12 miles of river to reopen for endangered Southern Steelhead; 29 miles of total river available to Southern Steelhead upon completion

Left: Malibu Lagoon; credit: Pusher, Inc. Top right: Malibu Creek; credit: Pusher, Inc. Middle right: Trabuco Creek barriers; credit: Michael Wier. Bottom right: Santa Margarita River; credit: Michael Wier



POLICY DEFENSE

Southern Steelhead CESA Listing Defense
In 2024, after a CalTrout-led, three-year petition process and a peer-reviewed status review citing more than 250 sources, California listed Southern Steelhead as endangered under the state Endangered Species Act. A regional water district sued to overturn the listing — twice. In 2026, we continued to defend this listing, advocating in court as a Los Angeles Superior Court judge rejected the challenge and upheld the listing.

REGION BIODIVERSITY STATS

350

miles of coastline

11

watersheds prioritized for steelhead recovery

23M

human residents interspersed with biodiversity hotspots

Left: Southern steelhead; credit: Mark Capelli. Above: Tabling for Southern steelhead; courtesy of Elizabeth Burns

Voices from Southern California

RUSSELL MARLOW, CALTROUT REGIONAL MANAGER



“You spend your whole career trying to bring a fish back, and the fact that I still haven’t seen a wild Southern Steelhead says everything about how much work is left to do. But we’re making progress, and we’re in it for the long haul for these fish.”

Russell leads much of CalTrout’s barrier-removal work across the Malibu Creek, Santa Clara, and Ventura River watersheds. His work centers on reopening rivers and streams for Southern Steelhead access — a fish so rare that, in his years on the job, he still hasn’t seen one in the wild.

TESS NOONE, UCSD GRADUATE RESEARCHER & CALTROUT PARTNER



“What has always driven me is an equal love for the ocean and the mountains, and while my professional background has largely been in marine environments, those two worlds have never felt separate. Working with CalTrout allows me to think about both at once because both rely on the other to thrive, and that balance is something that matters deeply to me.”

Tess’s first love was the ocean, but she’s fallen more and more in love with rivers each day partnering with CalTrout. As a recent graduate of UCSD’s Scripps Institute of Oceanography, she worked with CalTrout on her capstone project, mapping the regulatory landscape in a product that combined restoration, policy, and communications into one interactive StoryMap.

ELIZABETH BURNS, CALTROUT PROJECT MANAGER



“Every kid who learns the steelhead’s life cycle walks away rooting for a fish they’d never heard of an hour before. That’s how you build the next generation of people who care about these rivers.”

When Elizabeth is not coordinating restoration efforts across watersheds, you can find her behind outreach tables, using her steelhead lifecycle game to introduce young people to a fish most have never heard of: the Southern Steelhead. Community engagement is at the heart of her efforts, but science is equally important — she led CalTrout’s second annual SSC: Southern Steelhead Symposium in September, bringing together 130+ researchers, agency staff, and community partners to share knowledge and restoration progress for this endangered fish.





Science Program

California's freshwater ecosystems face growing pressures from climate change, prolonged drought, habitat loss, and increasing demands on water resources. At the same time, shifting national environmental priorities make it even more important to stay grounded in credible, independent science. CalTrout's commitment is clear: use the best available science to protect and restore California's freshwater ecosystems through our dedicated Science Program.

State of the Salmonids: The only statewide assessment of California's native salmon, steelhead, and trout.

CalTrout, in collaboration with UC Davis, has produced two once-a-decade State of the Salmonids (SOS) reports — comprehensive scientific assessments of all 32 native salmon, steelhead, and trout species in California.

These reports are the only analyses of their kind. Their message is clear: without action, California risks losing its wild fish. CalTrout's on-the-ground work is staving off their extinction, and science helps us understand where to enact this work. In 2027, CalTrout, in collaboration with UC Davis and UC Berkeley, will release the third edition, SOS III, building on assessments from 2008 and 2017 to track trends over time — using a proven, peer-informed methodology trusted by agencies and academic institutions.

Science-backed restoration is crucial — yet the science is often underfunded.

Private donations help us lay the groundwork for data collection in watersheds where knowledge gaps exist. They help us leverage larger public investments. And they help keep CalTrout's science independent of the political winds. Supporting CalTrout's Science Program and SOS III means you are supporting our first line of defense against climate change and any further loss of biodiversity.



CURTIS KNIGHT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CALTROUT



“The State of the Salmonids has become the gold standard for understanding the condition of California's native

salmon, steelhead, and trout. At a moment when our rivers are changing faster than ever, SOS III will give decision makers, communities, and partners the clear-eyed science they need to focus resources where they can still make the biggest difference.”

DARREN MIERAU, SCIENCE DIRECTOR, CALTROUT



“SOS III is about turning data into direction. By compiling the most current science and applying a transparent, repeatable

methodology, we can track long-term trends, identify where species are most vulnerable, and highlight where our conservation work can turn the trajectory toward species recovery.”

Top Left: Juvenile salmon is tagged on South Fork Eel River; credit: Pusher, Inc. Bottom left: Scientist Rob Lusardi examines a sample; credit: Pusher, Inc. Above: Fish Food team collects samples in the Sacramento Valley; credit: Rob McAllister

2

once-a-decade SOS reports published

50+

Peer-reviewed scientific publications

20+

Coalition partners on the Klamath River Salmon & Steelhead Monitoring Program

32

Distinct native salmon, steelhead, and trout populations call California home and are assessed through SOS

11

Species exist nowhere else on Earth

45%

of California salmonids likely to be extinct in next 50 years if current trends persist (as of 2017)

60 projects across California. Every one of them rooted in data, not guesswork.



Public lands advocate Tom Lippen and son fly fishing in the Eastern Sierra; credit: Pusher, Inc. Right: "Where's The Creek" by Shannon Thompson, submission to CalTrout's 2026 Photo Contest

Policy & Legal

Conservation is not possible without policy.

On-the-ground restoration and scientific research are often seen as the hands-on work of conservation. But they only happen, and only last, when the right laws, funding, and protections are in place.

For more than 50 years, CalTrout has been at the forefront of advocacy in California to safeguard wild fish and ensure clean water for all Californians. We expanded our policy efforts to the nation's capital in Washington, D.C., where we are building strong relationships with legislators and state and federal agencies to safeguard rivers, habitats, and public access.

LEGISLATION: CO-SPONSORED BILLS

CalTrout co-sponsored SB 1393, extending the Steelhead Report and Restoration Card program through 2032 so angler-reported data can keep driving science-based fisheries management. The bill was signed into law by Governor Newsom, marking a major win for steelhead. We also backed AB 2260, which would have fast-tracked water rights for habitat restoration projects, letting

landowners store winter water for dry-season use while leaving more in-stream flow for salmon and steelhead; it passed the Assembly 78-0 but stalled in Senate Appropriations over cost. That's the case we keep making: delaying smarter water management doesn't save money; it just defers the cost to the next drought and CalTrout will keep pushing this bill next session.

LEGAL MECHANISMS: OUTSTANDING NATIONAL RESOURCE WATERS

We're pushing for Outstanding National Resource Waters designation — a rarely-used Clean Water Act tool that permanently bars degradation while still allowing existing land use and restoration work — for the Eel River's Cedar and Elder creeks and for Hot Creek in the Eastern Sierra. On the Eel River tributaries, the North Coast Regional Water Board has approved this as a first step, with a technical report due by late 2026. Hot Creek's case is urgent: KORE Mining is seeking to resume exploratory drilling that could lead to open-pit mining, threatening water quality, at-risk species, and the Owens River drinking water supply for Los Angeles.

PUBLIC LANDS PROTECTION

Today, nearly half of California's land and freshwater is protected as public land. At CalTrout, we're working to ensure that number only grows — because these landscapes are essential to the health of our rivers, our fish, and our communities. We are at the forefront of the fight to defend our public lands from sell-offs, development, and more threats with additional lobbying capacity at both the state and federal level.

Voices from our advocacy program

ANALISE RIVERO, DIRECTOR OF POLICY



“Policy work is about translating what we learn on the ground into action in Sacramento. That means advancing legislation, advocating for investments in restoration and conservation, and bringing the needs of California's native fish into broader conversations about water and natural-resource management. This year brought meaningful progress on all of those fronts.”

When Analise isn't at the Capitol making sure California decisionmakers have freshwater priorities top of mind, she's out in the field with our regional teams, learning what our projects need to succeed. As CalTrout's Director of Policy, she makes sure the voices of California's native fish are heard in Sacramento, from committee hearings to budget negotiations.

SETH BLACKAMORE, OUTDOORSMAN & PUBLIC LANDS ADVOCATE



“Recently, we've seen attacks on public lands and efforts to sell them off. I don't think any side voted for that. This is not necessarily a right versus left issue — this is an American issue. This is something that both sides can come together and unite on.”

Seth Blackamore lives in Bishop, CA, in the Eastern Sierra, and most of his life is spent on public lands. He sees the Eastern Sierra as a place where so many people from different walks of life and backgrounds can come together and enjoy these remarkable spaces. It's “the medicine of the outdoors”. The fight to protect our public lands is deeply personal for Seth.

REDGIE COLLINS, VP OF LEGAL AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS



“What I found encouraging is that all of the people we met with were truly excited to hear about our projects across California. Staffers and elected officials were so impressed and excited to learn more about our 60+ projects actively in progress. Whether it's working with fish on rice fields in the Sacramento Valley, building literal bridges in San Diego, or giving ranchers and farmers the opportunity to increase yield while seeing habitat improvements on their land, our diverse work across California consistently resonated with congressional offices.”

At the beginning of the year, Redgie traveled to DC, trading his conservation tuxedo (jeans and flannels) for formal attire. He met with the California delegation — the 54 congresspersons that represent California in DC — and federal agency partners to talk about the awesome work happening on the ground here in California. His goal for his week in our nation's capital? Explain to them just how important it is to fund conservation work in California.





Over fifty years of impact for California’s wild fish and rivers

STATEWIDE IMPACT

Years of impact for California’s fish, water, and people	55
Offices from Mount Shasta to San Diego	9
Full time staff	70+
Partners across the state	270+
Projects	60+
Regions	4
Acres of watershed served	7.6M
Miles to reopen by removing dams on CalTrout’s Top 5 Dams Out list	380+
Watersheds with CalTrout involvement	32

“Salmon, steelhead, and trout are indicators of watershed health, and their fate is inseparable from the future of California itself.”

DARREN MIERAU, SCIENCE DIRECTOR



Photo: “Following the Water” by Emily Titus, submission to CalTrout’s 2026 Photo Contest

Financials & Growth

At the end of 2026, CalTrout is stronger, healthier, and more streamlined than we've ever been. With just four regional footprints managing the breadth of our restoration work, we've been able to focus and scale with intention and impact. This past year, you stepped up your support of our organization, and your giving has allowed us to empower our regions, expand our footprint, and bolster our administrative work.

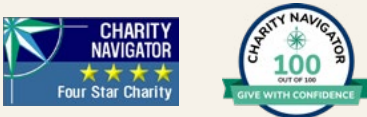
We leveraged your private dollars with public money in turn. In 2026, CalTrout is managing \$85 million in government grant awards, which will fund large-scale projects over the next several years. Thanks to you, our on-the-ground restoration work continues to make lasting change for fish, water, and people.

CalTrout is committed to sustainable growth and increasing impact. Our program services doubled twice in ten years. Programs more than doubled from \$4.8M in FY16 to \$12.0M in FY21. It doubled again in the next five years, from \$12.0M to \$26.0M in FY26.

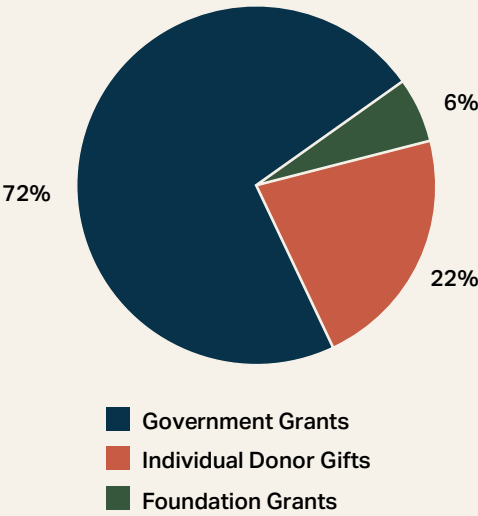
In 2026, we sustained our growth through strong performance across individual giving, private foundation support, and public grants for river and fisheries restoration. A diversified funding portfolio remains central to our resilience in an ever-shifting funding landscape.

With strong risk management policies, conservative fiscal practices, and expert legal counsel, we are well-prepared to navigate whatever challenges arise. Our reliability is further validated by outside evaluators: CalTrout received a perfect score of 100/100 from Charity Navigator, the world's largest nonprofit evaluator, maintaining our Four-Star Rating.

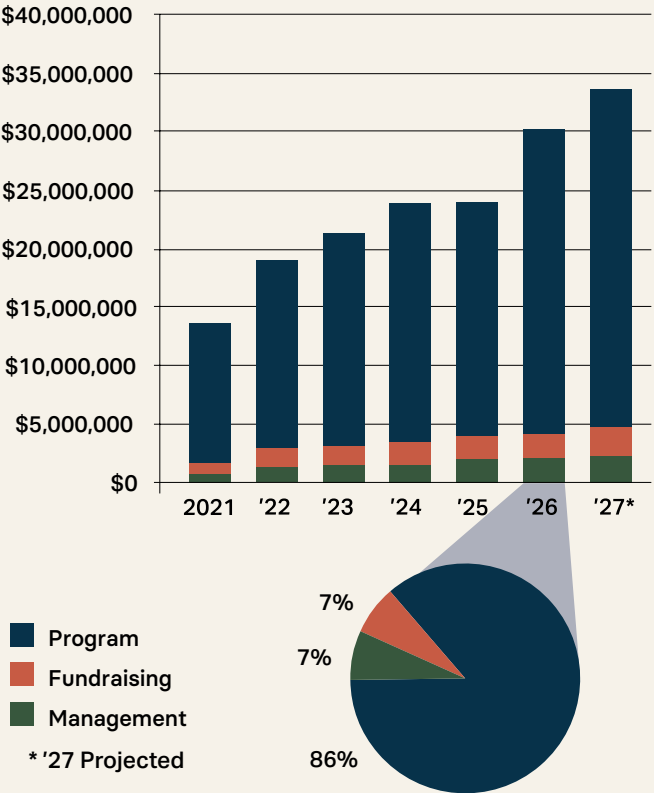
\$30.2M operating budget, 60 active projects, 134 contracts with vendors and on-the-ground partners



REVENUE FISCAL YEAR 2026



PROGRAM GROWTH 2021 - 2027



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CALIFORNIA TROUT



FISH · WATER · PEOPLE

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Leave a Legacy for California's Wild Fish & Rivers

The rivers that you love can outlast all of us, and your IRA can help protect them today. If you're 70 1/2 or older, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) lets you give directly from your IRA to CalTrout. The gift isn't counted as taxable income, and once you reach the required minimum distribution age, it can count toward your RMD. It's a simple way to make a meaningful gift from the funds you may not have thought to use, and to see it work in reconnected rivers and wild fish returning home.

You can also name CalTrout in your will or trust, or as a beneficiary of a retirement account or life insurance policy. However you choose to give, your legacy will flow on — protecting wild fish, free-flowing rivers, and the places that matter to you for generations to come.

Contact Sierra Wildeor at swildeor@caltrout.org or scan the QR code to make a QCD or plan a legacy gift. QCDs must be sent directly from your IRA custodian to California Trout (Tax ID 23-7097680). Please consult your tax advisor.



Photo: Northern California source water; credit: Pusher, Inc.