

DESCRIPTION

Chorro Creek is a tributary to Morro Bay, in San Luis Obispo County on the Central Coast. The Chorro Creek watershed drains approximately 27,670 acres.

Sixty percent of the Chorro Creek watershed is classified as rangeland, while twenty percent is brushland. Valley grassland, coastal scrub and oak savanna dominate the watershed, with mixed conifer forest and oak woodlands, and multiple-use farmland low-density residential and commercial uses dominating the upper elevations of the watershed. Steelhead trout habitat is degraded.

In this Critical Coastal Area (CCA) watershed, nitrates and phosphates in surface water contribute to growth of nuisance algae and decreased dissolved oxygen levels. Sources include septic systems, fertilizers, urban runoff, and animal waste. The Los Osos Community Service District's community wastewater project helps to address this issue.

Waterbodies in this CCA that are listed as impaired on the current (2016) Clean Water Act 303(d) list are **Chorro Creek** (impaired by sedimentation/siltation, fecal coliform bacteria, E. Coli bacteria, nutrients, toxicity, total dissolved solids, chloride, sodium, and benthic community effects); **San Bernardo Creek** (impaired by fecal coliform bacteria, and E. coli bacteria); **San Luisito Creek** (impaired by fecal coliform bacteria, and E. coli bacteria); **Pennington Creek** (impaired by fecal coliform bacteria, and E. coli bacteria); **Walters Creek** (impaired by fecal coliform bacteria, and E. coli bacteria); and **Chumash Creek** (impaired by dissolved oxygen, fecal coliform bacteria, and E. coli bacteria).

Potential sources of these pollutants, organized by **Source Categories**, are listed as **Agriculture** (agriculture, and grazing-related sources); **Habitat Modification** (erosion/siltation); **Hydromodification** (flow alteration/regulation/modification, and channel erosion); **Construction/Land Development** (land development, and highway/bridge/road construction); **Urban Runoff** (urban runoff/storm sewers); **Municipal Wastewater** (municipal point sources, and minor municipal point source – dry and/or wet weather discharge); **Miscellaneous** (domestic animals/livestock); **Natural Sources**; **Unspecified Nonpoint Source**; and **Source Unknown**.

CRITERIA FOR CCA IDENTIFICATION

The Chorro Creek [Critical Coastal Area](#) (CCA) was identified in 2002 using the criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2002 Clean Water Act 303(d) list (Chorro Creek) flows into a state Marine Managed Area (Morro Bay State Estuary).

This CCA also met the 2014 CCA identification criterion of a coastal watershed where a state-identified Principal Bay or Estuary (Morro Bay) is an impaired waterbody on the 2010 303(d) list. See California Department of Fish and Wildlife's "[California's Living Marine](#)



Chorro Creek Estuary
(Photo courtesy Bobby Jo Close, Central Coast Wetland Working Group).

For more photos, see the [California Coastal Records Project](#).

[Resources: A Status Report](#)" (2001) and associated [map of the Principal Bays and Estuaries of California](#).

In addition, this CCA also met the 2014 CCA identification criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2010 Clean Water Act 303(d) list (Morro Bay) is adjacent to a [California Marine Protected Area](#) (Morro Bay State Marine Reserve).

ADDRESSING POLLUTANTS

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to make a [list of impaired waters](#) that are not attaining water quality standards, and to develop a [Total Maximum Daily Load \(TMDL\)](#) or similar approach to account for all sources of the pollutants that caused the water to be listed as impaired. TMDLs include allocations to both point and nonpoint sources (NPS) of the listed pollutants. The current (2016) 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies includes pollutants, potential pollutant sources, and year a TMDL was approved or is expected.

To address NPS pollutants, see [California's Nonpoint Source Management Measures](#) for guidance on selecting appropriate Management Measures, which consist of a suite of plans, practices, technologies, operating methods, or other measures that may be used to control NPS pollution.

Information for this factsheet was originally compiled by members of California's Critical Coastal Areas Statewide Committee in 2006. The factsheet was revised and updated in 2019 by the California Coastal Commission's Water Quality Program staff.

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