

DESCRIPTION

The Walker Creek watershed covers 73 square miles in West Marin County, an area of rolling hills to steep gullies. The majority of the watershed is private property, and the major land uses are livestock ranching and dairies. The creek is a protected habitat for coho salmon (the native run is generally extirpated, but California Department of Fish and Wildlife reintroduced coho on an experimental basis), steelhead trout, and California freshwater shrimp. Major tributaries are Chileno Creek and Keys Creek.

This Critical Coastal Area (CCA) watershed is highly impacted by sedimentation from eroding banks due to the native geology and past and current grazing practices. The watershed has also been subjected to high levels of mercury from the mining operations of the Gambonini Mine from 1964 to 1970, and the subsequent legacy contamination found in sediments in the upper tributaries (Chileno and Salmon Creeks) and mainstem Walker Creek, as well as in sediments transported to Tomales Bay. Transport of mercury to Tomales Bay has led to health advisories for fish consumption. Walker Creek is listed for sediments, nutrients, and mercury. It is also considered impaired for pathogens due to high levels of fecal coliform.

Waterbodies in this CCA that are listed as impaired on the current (2016) Clean Water Act 303(d) list in this CCA are **Walker Creek** (impaired by mercury, nutrients, sedimentation/siltation, and pathogens); and **Tomales Bay** (impaired by mercury, nutrients, sedimentation/siltation, and pathogens). Potential sources of these pollutants, organized by **Source Categories**, are listed as **Resource Extraction** (mine tailings); and **Source Unknown**.

CRITERIA FOR CCA IDENTIFICATION

The Walker Creek [Critical Coastal Area](#) (CCA) was identified in 2002 based on the criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2002 Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list (Walker Creek) flows into a federal Marine Managed Area (Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary).

This CCA also met the 2014 CCA identification criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2010 303(d) list (Walker Creek and Tomales Bay) flows into a state-identified Principal Bay or Estuary (Tomales Bay). See California Department of Fish and Wildlife's "[California's Living Marine Resources: A Status Report](#)" (2001) and associated [map of the Principal Bays and Estuaries of California](#).



Walker Creek

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

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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