



Matilija Dam, Ventura River/Matilija Creek, California

Built in 1947, Matilija Dam is owned by Ventura County Watershed Protection District and is located 15.6 miles from the Pacific Ocean in the Ventura River watershed. While it was 198 feet tall when constructed, due to safety concerns the dam has been notched twice and now stands at 168 feet. The reservoir is nearly full of sediment, with less than 500 acre feet of water storage space remaining and projected to be completely full of sediment by 2020. Sediment build-up has stripped the reservoir of its original function of water storage for agricultural. Since construction, Matilija Dam has posed a complete barrier to anadromous steelhead migration on the Ventura River blocking steelhead passage to over 50 percent of the primary spawning and rearing habitat of the Ventura River system. The dam also prevents downstream transport of nearly eight million cubic yards of sediment necessary to maintain the estuary and beaches at Surfer’s Point.

Over the past several years, with federal, state, and local funding, a series of feasibility studies, technical analyses, and other work to produce a consensus-based plan for removal of the dam—the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Program. This work culminated earlier this year with completion of a Final Dam Removal Concepts Evaluation Report that provided various structural dam removal alternatives for dealing with the sediment behind the dam. This past spring, a multi-stakeholder Matilija Dam “Design Oversight Group” selected a dam removal concept as a preferred alternative, and is now seeking funding to take the project to its next critical design phase that will directly lead to removal of the dam.

Benefits of Removing Matilija Dam

- Reestablish freshwater and sediment flows to help replenish the sandy beach at Surfer’s Point
- Improve steelhead access to upper Matilija Creek and create 31.8 miles of prime steelhead spawning habitat
- 154 acres of restored vegetation and 116.28 river miles enhanced.
- Diminish safety and liability concerns for the District and the County as the condition of the dam is dilapidated and continues to deteriorate.

This effort is supported and guided by the Matilija Coalition, a broad coalition of community groups including:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Trout • Surfrider Foundation • Patagonia • State Coastal Conservancy • California Department of Fish and Wildlife | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Natural Resources Agency, State Water Resources Control Board • US Fish and Wildlife Service • NOAA Fisheries • Bureau of Reclamation |
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- Army Corps of Engineers
- Ventura County
- City of Ventura
- Casitas Municipal Water District
- The Chumash Tribe

Open Rivers Fund Projects

Resources Legacy Fund was selected by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to oversee the distribution of the Open Rivers Fund. RLF will provide \$100,000 to support the development of a funding plan and implementation work plan for the project, as well as project management coordination. RLF will also provide \$50,000 to support the Matilija Coalition's efforts to raise funding to complete project design, secure permits, and implementation; engagement of stakeholders; building public awareness; and coordinating and prioritizing restoration and access projects to maximize restoration impact throughout the watershed. Lastly, RLF will provide \$25,000 to support California Trout in its efforts to coordinate identification of potential project funding sources, grant writing, and grant implementation.