

Water Quality Report Card

Regional Water Board:	Central Coast, Region 3
Beneficial Uses Affected:	MUN, WARM, SPWN,
Implemented Through:	Conditional Waiver of WDRs
Effective Date:	July 12, 2016 (TMDL)
Attainment Date:	2026

Nutrients in Watsonville Slough – Pajaro River Watershed

STATUS	<input type="checkbox"/> Conditions Improving <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data Inconclusive <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement Needed <input type="checkbox"/> Targets Achieved/Water Body Delisted
Pollutant Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Point Source <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonpoint Source <input type="checkbox"/> Legacy
Pollutant Source:	Irrigated Crop Production Erosion/Siltation

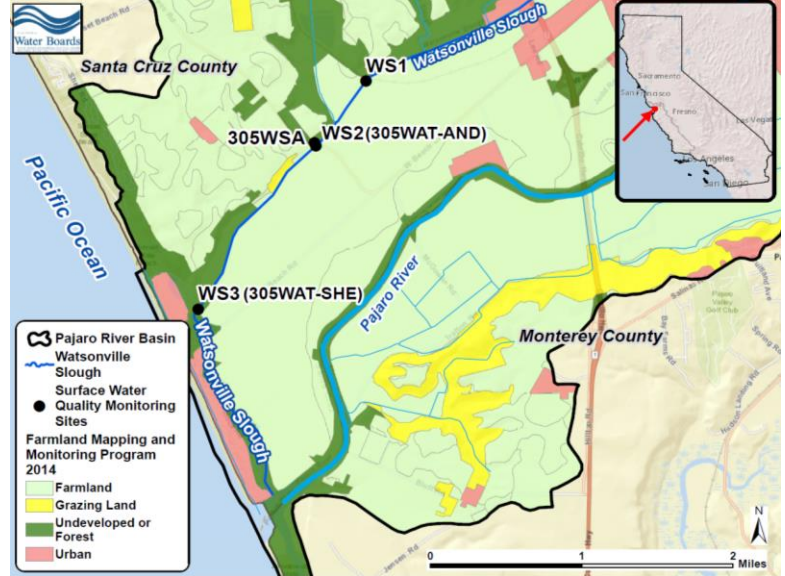
Water Quality Improvement Strategy

The Pajaro River watershed encompasses approximately 832,000 acres and lies within Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Santa Clara counties. The Watsonville Slough subwatershed comprises roughly 15,500 acres of the watershed. The dominant land use is agriculture (including irrigated cropland and nurseries). Several waterbodies in the Pajaro River watershed are impaired due to exceedances of water quality criteria for nitrate, un-ionized ammonia, and associated nutrient-related problems, and as a result, do not support beneficial uses. [The Pajaro River Basin Nutrients TMDL](#) was adopted in July 2016 to address the impairments. The TMDL establishes numeric targets and load allocations for a variety of nutrient inputs. Discharges from irrigated agriculture were identified as the primary controllable source of nutrient pollutants within this subwatershed. The [2017 Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands](#) (Agricultural Order) implements the TMDL. The TMDL implementation schedule calls for achieving TMDL numeric targets for nitrogen compounds by 2026. The pollutant addressed in this report card is total nitrogen since nitrate tends to measure only a small fraction of the total nitrogen in this system (likely because sloughs and wetlands are areas of high primary productivity, causing nitrate to be bound up in organic phases and biomass).

TMDL Waste Load Allocations – Receiving Water Concentrations

	Dry season (May 1-Oct. 31)	Wet season (Nov. 1-Apr. 30)
<i>Aquatic Habitat</i>	2.1 mg/L Total Nitrogen	8.0 mg/L Total Nitrogen
<i>Human Health</i>	Year-round 10 mg/L Nitrate as N	

Pajaro River Watershed – Watsonville Slough



Water Quality Outcomes

- There are a limited number of water quality samples since the TMDL became effective in 2016. However, additional surface water quality data is being collected in the Pajaro River watershed during the 2017 Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program (CCAMP) sampling rotation. Additional assessments will be necessary to determine future status and water quality conditions.
- Dry season (May 1 – Oct. 31) total nitrogen concentrations have not been assessed since the TMDL was adopted; however, the last sample from May 2015 exceeded the Aquatic Habitat numeric target of 2.1 mg/L.
- Wet season (Nov. 1 – Apr. 30) total nitrogen concentrations have been below the Aquatic Habitat numeric target of 8 mg/L.
- Nitrate concentrations show improvements in reaching the Human Health numeric target of 10 mg/L, though additional exceedances have occurred since the final TMDL data analysis.

Total Nitrogen Concentrations at Surface Water Quality Monitoring Site 305WSA

