Protecting the Environment is Fundamental to Our Mission

The mission of the Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) is defined in state law and includes environmental responsibilities, unique among California’s water agencies, to enhance, protect, and restore streams, riparian corridors, and natural resources in connection with our water supply and flood protection efforts. Since our mission was expanded by the Legislature in 2001, Valley Water has fully embraced its broad responsibilities for environmental stewardship, employing teams of biologists who focus their work on habitat restoration and enhancement, water quality, and environmental protection.

Extensive Investments to Improve Fisheries

The elected Valley Water Board of Directors has demonstrated strong support for environmental protection through substantial investments in stream stewardship, recycled water, groundwater recharge, and water conservation programs. The agency advocates for the environment within the water agency community and more broadly at the state and federal levels. Using cutting edge technologies to monitor fish, wildlife, precipitation, streamflow, and other environmental factors, Valley Water responds adaptively to enhance aquatic and riparian habitat for fish and other species. Over nearly two decades, Valley Water has invested extensively in efforts to conserve, protect, and enhance our natural resources. Some notable efforts include the following.

- Committed $126 million for fisheries in Stevens Creek, Coyote Creek, and the Guadalupe River through the Fish and Aquatic Habitat Collaborative Effort.
- Maintains extensive stream gauge network with over 100 gauges, including 15 new gauges to expand understanding of ecology and stream flows.
- Removed over 20 barriers to fish migration in streams throughout Santa Clara County.
- Funds a regional stormwater program to protect creeks from pollution.
- Modified groundwater recharge operations to enhance fish migration and habitat.
- Manages reservoir releases in consultation with regulators to best support fisheries.
What is FAHCE?

The Fish and Aquatic Habitat Collaborative Effort (FAHCE) is Valley Water’s ongoing program established in 1997 to improve passage for fish migration and to enhance habitat for fish in Coyote Creek, Stevens Creek, and the Guadalupe River. Today, the program implements a 2003 Settlement Agreement born from a water right complaint filed with the State Water Resources Control Board.

The Settlement Agreement provides a roadmap for resolving water right complaints and for improving habitat conditions for fish in the three watersheds. This broad, long-term Settlement Agreement affects over 100 miles of creeks and eight reservoirs, including revised reservoir operations, numerous technical studies, and fish passage and habitat improvements.

Valley Water Advances FAHCE Implementation

- Combined Environmental Review of FAHCE measures on Coyote Creek with the Anderson Dam Seismic Retrofit Project. Evaluating both impacts and enhancements on Coyote Creek expedites public safety, environmental improvements, and water supply resilience all as one system.
- Removed 10 out of 18 priority fish migration barriers specified in the Settlement Agreement.
- Developed innovative computer model to evaluate fish habitat improvements. Valley Water developed a new flow model in consultation with FAHCE parties, including environmental advocates and regulators. Each flow scenario produces millions of data points for fish habitat analysis and is being used to determine what habitat improvements will yield the best outcomes for fish.
- Provides flows to benefit fish in coordination with state and federal resource agencies. Valley Water has modified reservoir and groundwater recharge operations to provide flows for seasonal fish migration and to support habitat during drought.
- Allocated $1 million of Valley Water funds to fix the City of San José’s Singleton Road crossing which is a major barrier to fish migration.
- Initiated a feasibility study on the Santa Clara County-owned Ogier Pond Complex to remove barriers to fish migration.

Fish and Aquatic Habitat Collaborative Effort

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