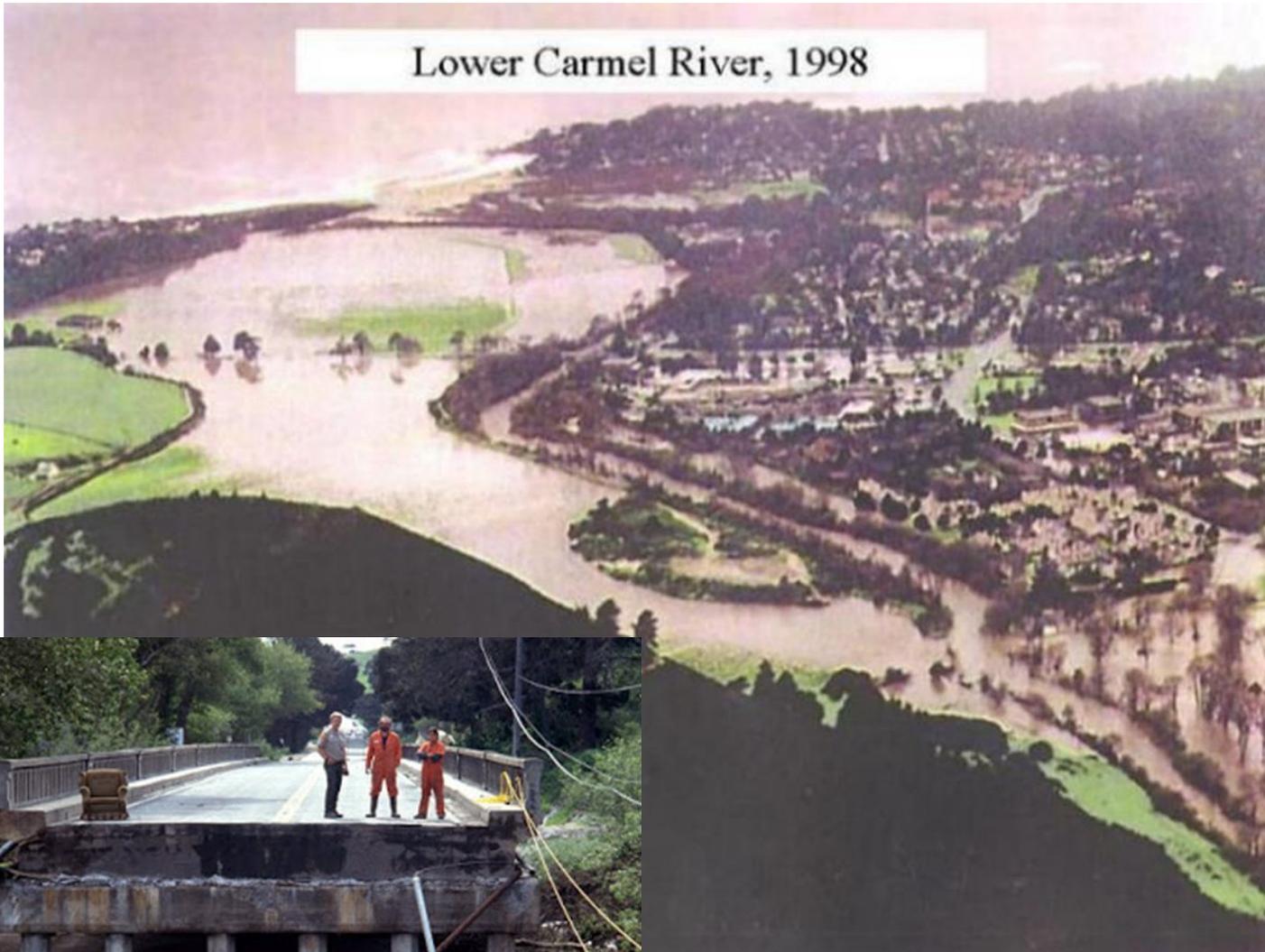


The Carmel River FREE project will restore habitat and significantly reduce flood risks along the lower Carmel River and Carmel River Lagoon at the mouth of Carmel Valley. Using a nature-based approach to flood control, also called “green infrastructure,” Carmel River FREE provides an environmentally-preferable solution to reconstructing levees and flood walls along sensitive portions of the Carmel River. Floodplain habitats are some of the most impacted habitats in California. Restored floodplains act as sponges for water, and will improve groundwater recharge and water quality.

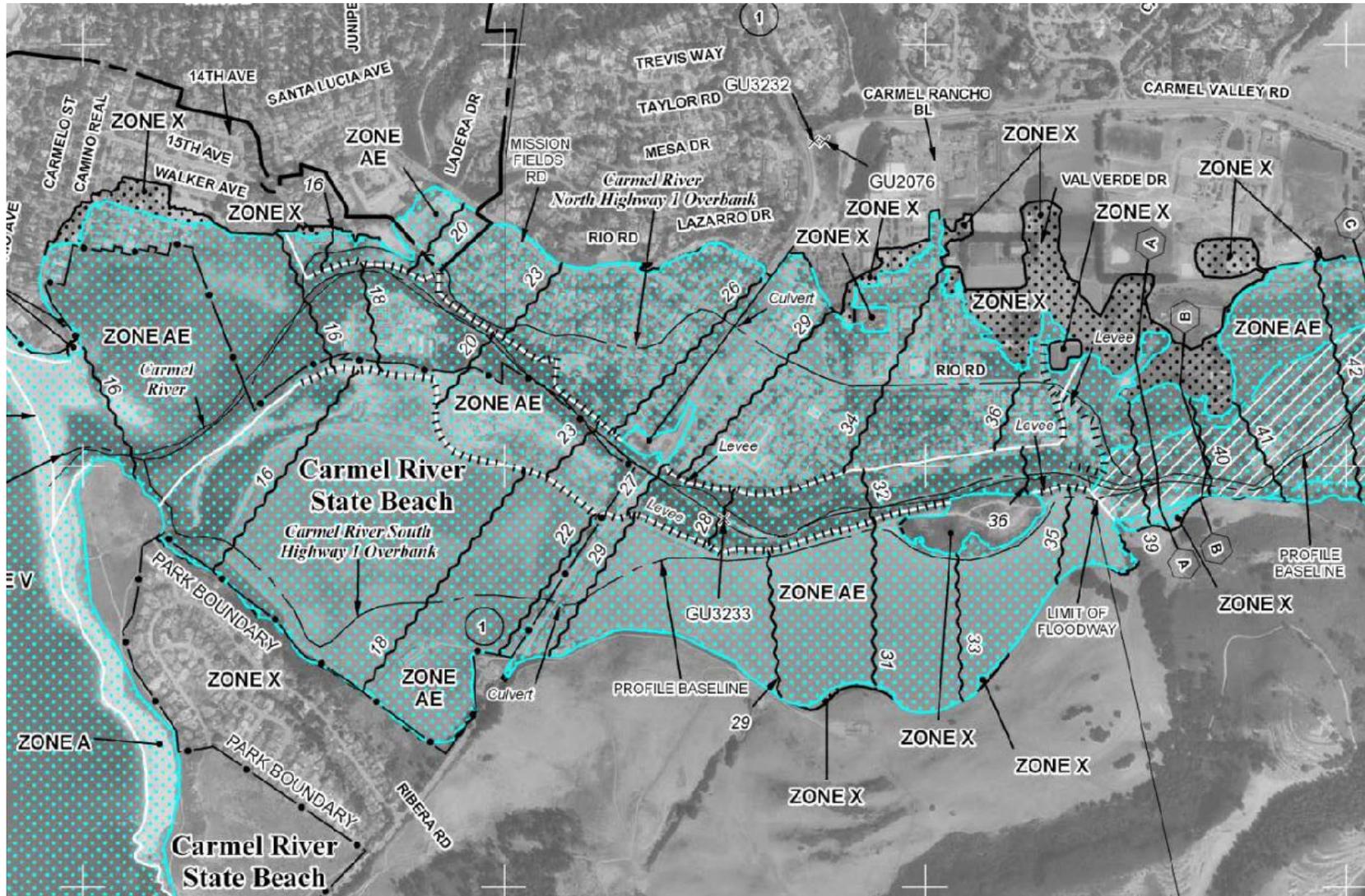




The 1995 and 1998 El Niño winter storms caused significant flood damage in Monterey County. The developed areas near the Carmel River experienced devastating floods that damaged both residential and commercial properties. Storms in '95 also destroyed the Highway 1 bridge over the Carmel River, cutting off Carmel Highlands and Big Sur for months. Flood-related losses in 1998 were estimated at \$38 million countywide. The Carmel River FREE Project provides resiliency to increased intensity and frequency of storms and sea-level rise that could occur with climate change.



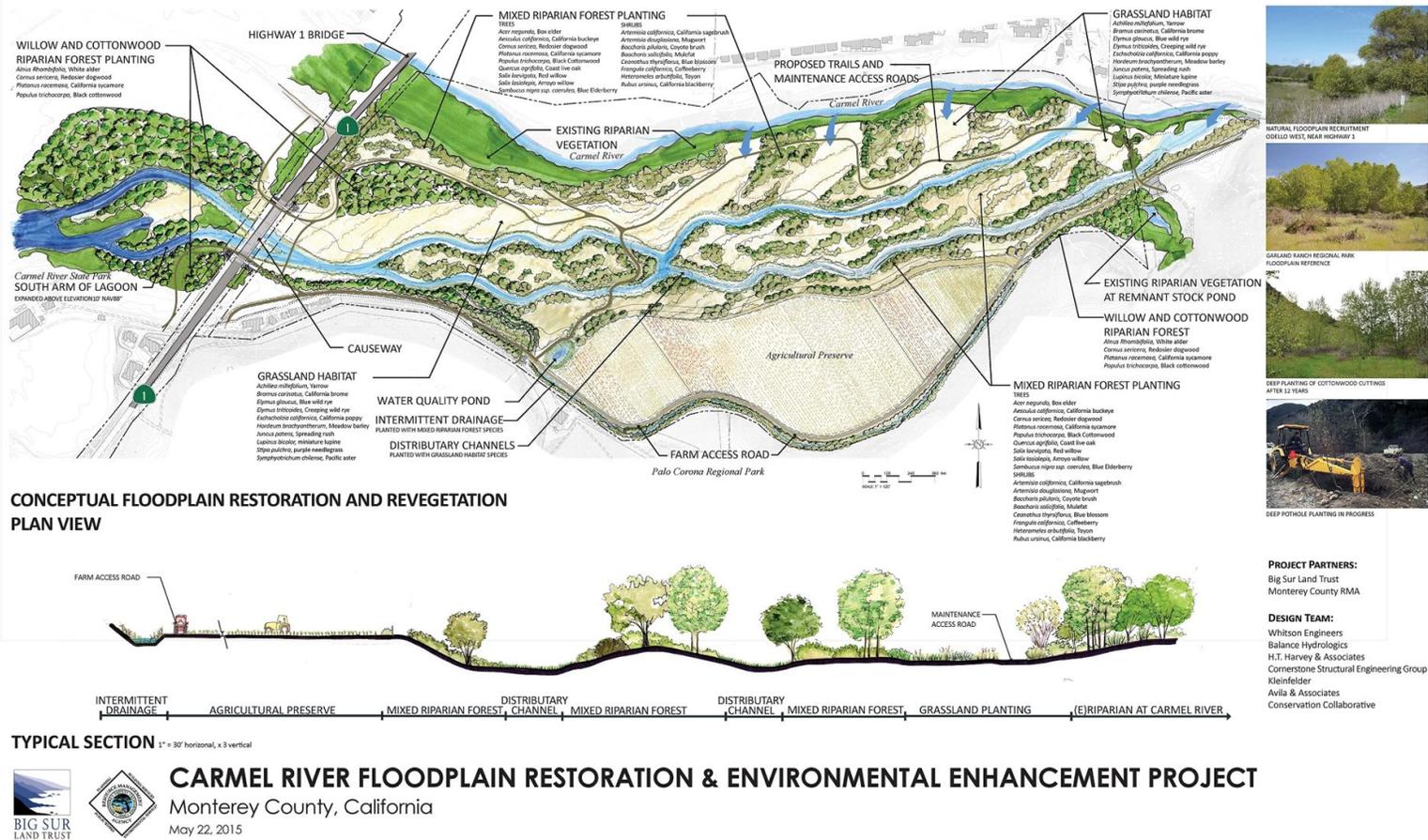
Carmel River Bridge after 1995 flood event



Much of the mouth of Carmel Valley is within the 100-year floodplain where property owners are required to pay into the National Flood Insurance Program. According to a FEMA-based analysis, **the Carmel River FREE project will provide a 3 to 1 benefit to cost ratio for its flood control benefits**, and once completed, property owners could see decreases in their flood insurance premiums.

Carmel River FREE will improve habitat for both fish and wildlife in the immediate vicinity by restoring Carmel River's southern floodplain. BSLT's Carmel River FREE project will expand and enhance wildlife habitat by planting native riparian and wetland vegetation. It will also allow water to flow into the lagoon, creating healthier habitat for fish.

This new rich and beautiful 100-acre mosaic of restored habitat will include willows and cottonwoods, grasslands, and wetlands as well as a 23-acre agricultural preserve, protected from flooding.



PROJECT PARTNERS:
 Big Sur Land Trust
 Monterey County RMA

DESIGN TEAM:
 Whitson Engineers
 Balance Hydrologics
 H.T. Harvey & Associates
 Cornerstone Structural Engineering Group
 Kleinfelder
 Avila & Associates
 Conservation Collaborative

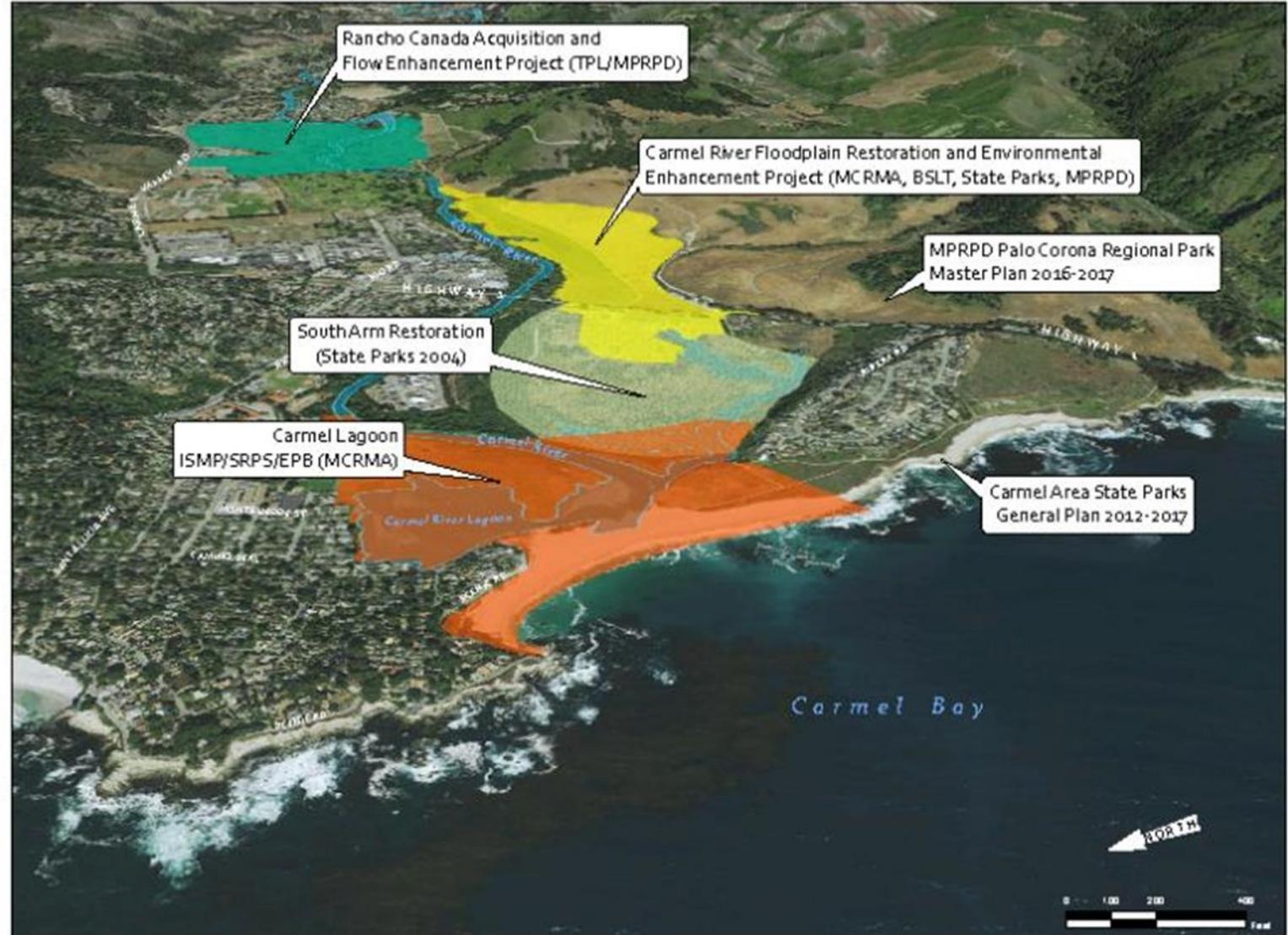


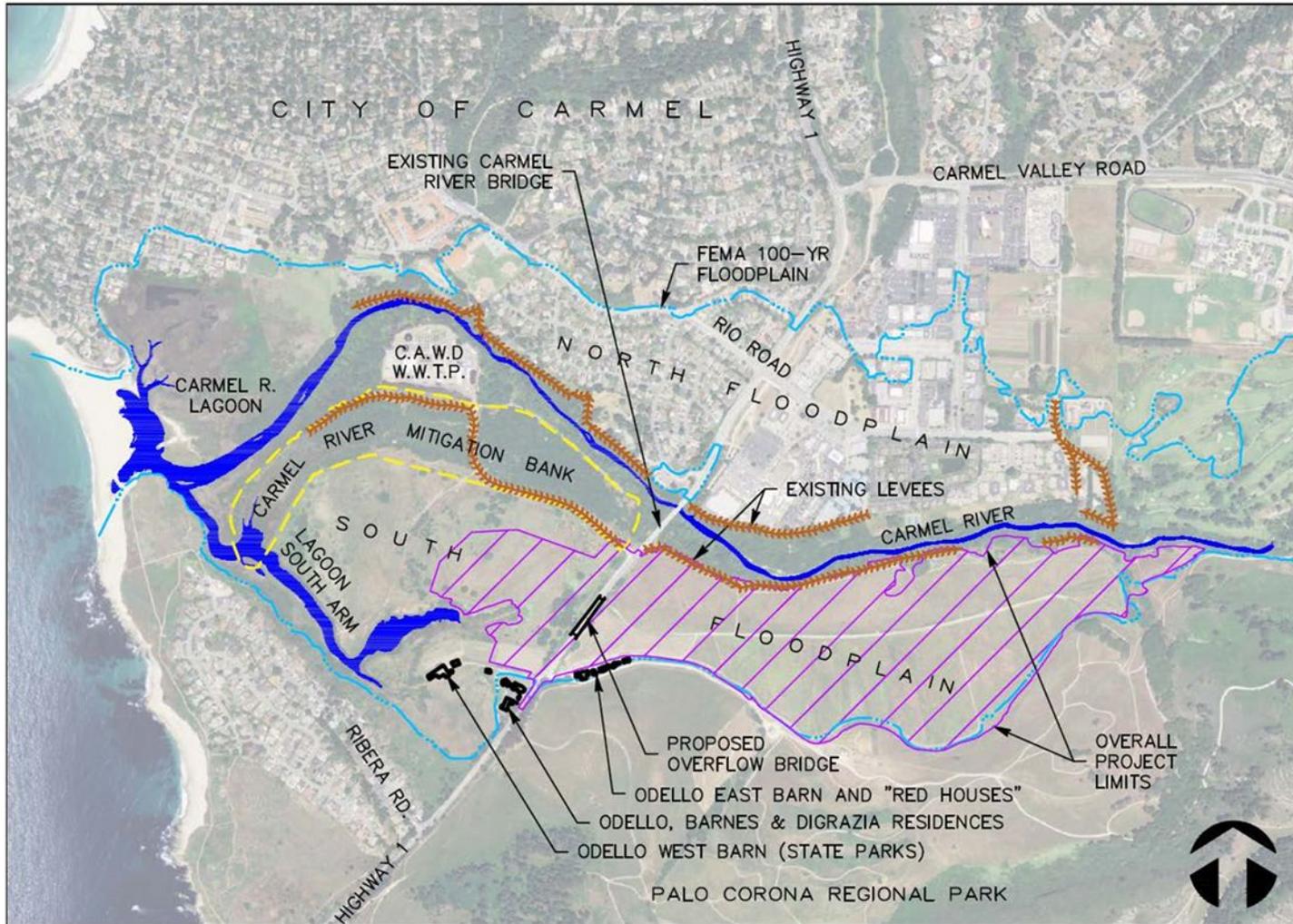
This [video simulation](#) illustrates the **enhancements** that will benefit fish like steelhead trout, birds and other wildlife. It also shows the new flood channels that will help keep floodwaters away from homes and businesses.

The Carmel River FREE project is one of the largest public-private partnerships to benefit coastal habitat and communities along the California Coast. BSLT is co-sponsoring the project with Monterey County. Other partners in the project include California State Parks, the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District and the California Department of Transportation.

Funders have included the California Coastal Conservancy, California Wildlife Conservation Board, California Department of Water Resources, Caltrans, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Lower Carmel Area Restoration & Open Space Projects





The total project cost is currently estimated at \$30 million. The key components of this major infrastructure/public works project include design, environmental permitting, floodplain grading including removal of portions of the south bank levee, construction of a new causeway bridge on Highway 1 south of the existing Carmel River Bridge, and long-term restoration.

The Carmel River FREE project will save Monterey County about \$14 million in flood control costs. Without Carmel River FREE, extensive levee improvements would be needed to reduce flood risks at the mouth of Carmel Valley to protect properties on the north side of the Carmel River.

At this time, approximately \$15 Million has been secured for the project costs. 60% design plans have been prepared. Draft environmental review documents will be issued in 2018, followed by public meetings. If all goes according to schedule, construction will take approximately 18 months once all permits have been obtained.

To care for this land for generations to come, Big Sur Land Trust has partnered with the Community Foundation and set up a stewardship fund. **The new Carmel River FREE Stewardship Fund has a fundraising goal of \$2 million to cover the estimated \$100,000 annual stewardship costs over the next 20+ years.**

