

Beaver Dam Analog (BDA) Workshop

Thursday, March 12th, 9:00am – 5:00pm | Morro Bay, California

About the Workshop

This day-long workshop will be an educational and interactive experience into process-based restoration (PBR) techniques, geared for agencies, local nonprofits and community members. The day will start with presentations on PBR and the history of Walters Creek. After touring and eating lunch in the field, there will be an opportunity for everyone to participate in hands-on building of beaver dam analogs and/or head cut erosion treatments.

Waders are recommended for those interested in working in the water. Please contact us if you would like to borrow a pair of waders for the event. Note that working in-stream is not required.

Heavy rain will cancel the hands-on portion of the day only. Four additional tours later in the year will be available for folks to sign up to ensure everyone will get to see the site.

About Process-based restoration

Process-based restoration (PBR) is a holistic approach to restoring degraded watersheds that aims to re-establish processes such as sediment transport, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, and fire resiliency. Process-based restoration is partnering with nature to recover degraded river and stream catchments by harnessing the system's fluvial and biological energy to do most of the restoration "work." Practitioners use low-risk approaches that minimize the use of fossil fuels. Treatments may include adding woody features such as post-assisted log structures (PALS) and beaver dam analogs (BDAs), and large wood augmentation.

History of the Project

Walters Creek in the Morro Bay watershed has been the site of extensive restoration efforts over the past two decades, including projects in 2004 and 2006. Despite these efforts, Walters Creek remains mostly disconnected from its historical floodplain, lacks instream complexity, and experiences intermittent flows.

To address these impairments, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program and partners implemented a PBR project in September 2025 to install low-tech structures instream. The project currently has 40 structures built, with implementation of 20 to 30 additional structures planned for spring 2026.

The Walters Creek PBR Project seeks to improve baseline conditions and address limiting factors by adding low-tech structures instream to enhance habitat complexity, reactivate portions of the current inset floodplain, improve sediment sorting and water quality, improve winter refuge opportunities, and increase landscape storage capacity to enhance flows in Walters and Chorro Creeks. These structures will help to improve riparian ecosystem function and expand the riparian corridor by increasing the duration and extent of surface water available to vegetation, potentially improving future beaver habitat feasibility.