

Huffman announces \$4.4 million Smith River Alliance grant

December 17, 2023



Recently, U.S. Representative Jared Huffman (CA-02) announced that the Smith River Alliance was awarded \$4,467,184.73 from the National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF) to restore fish passage and build coastal resilience in Del Norte County. This funding is part of a \$144 million tranche of funding to support natural infrastructure projects in 31 coastal states and U.S. territories.

These grants will support the design and implementation of projects to enhance the resilience of coastal communities and improve habitat for fish and wildlife across the United States. The grants in this program will generate more than \$97 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of \$242 million.

“Coastal communities are bearing the brunt of climate change and suffering from impacts of extreme, destructive weather and more.

It's our responsibility to protect these places and the people and wildlife that depend on them, which is why I strongly advocated for this funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law," said Rep. Huffman. "This federal investment in local infrastructure will also benefit our iconic salmon populations, which are often blocked from productive spawning grounds by poorly designed culverts and crossings. With this funding, we can do better and improve road safety and drainage while we rebuild sustainable salmon populations."

"We are thrilled about securing funding for important county infrastructure projects which protect essential evacuation routes while also benefiting salmon and other species," said Grant Werschkull, Smith River Alliance Co-Executive Director.

"By upgrading undersized stream crossings, this project increases flood capacity for local streams, improves our community's resiliency during major storm events, and restores salmon access to 6.5 miles of upstream habitat."

"NOAA is proud to work with NFWF and partners to help communities be ready and resilient to climate change," said Rick Spinrad, Ph.D., NOAA administrator. "Funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will help bolster community resilience efforts and meet the demand we're seeing for projects that address coastal hazards and enhance ecosystems that are important for wildlife, communities and the coastal economy."

"This year's grant slate continues our significant investments in nature-based solutions that are critical to increasing the resilience of vulnerable communities and protecting and restoring essential habitats for fish and wildlife," said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. "The NCRF supports the development and implementation of sustainable designs, plans and practices that integrate natural features into successful coastal resilience outcomes and that promote adaptation and resilience to storms, floods and other coastal hazards."

The NCRF supports capacity building and larger-scale planning, design, and implementation projects to help improve community and coastal habitat resilience and reduce risks and devastating impacts of rising seas, coastal flooding, and more intense storms. Funding for this year's grants includes \$144 million for 109 projects provided through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Congressional appropriations, and private partnerships. These grants are in addition to the 27 projects totaling \$44.7 million announced in October funded through the Inflation Reduction Act.

Project Details

Elk Valley Road is a county road that is a major evacuation route into and out of Crescent City and crosses Elk Creek, and therefore culvert failure along Elk Valley Road during a large storm event would leave residents stranded. Smith River Alliance will enhance undersized culverts to appropriately sized stream crossings to restore 6.5 miles of fish passage at eight fish passage barriers to support the recovery of salmonids like the Coho salmon and improve infrastructure to protect evacuation routes and enhance resilience in a changing climate. The project will engage nine government entities to restore fish passage at eight high priority locations in coastal watersheds of Del Norte County.

