



### **Branciforte Creek Dam Removal**

**Brief Summary (Abstract):** Passage barriers for diadromous fish in Santa Cruz County remain one of the largest obstacles to successful recovery of both Steelhead and Coho. A majority of fish passage impediments are anthropogenic and include road-crossing culverts and relic dams. Constructed in 1931, the Branciforte Dam inhibits access to upstream spawning and rearing habitat during low to medium flows and acts as a partial barrier to migration during high flows. The stream bed directly up and downstream has been altered by the dam's presence through the accumulation of sediment. The sediment, extending 250 feet behind the dam, has completely covered the natural substrate mix important for diadromous fish spawning habitat. Removal of the dam will allow complete passage during all flows for juveniles and adult salmonids. The sediment will be transported downstream during future storm events, resulting in an immediate benefit to the project site and long-term benefits to overall substrate diversity downstream. A large woody debris structure has been included in the project designs to provide grade control while the stream channel adjusts post dam removal, to create habitat for juvenile fish species, and to replace the pool that currently exists immediately downstream of the dam and will likely be lost as Branciforte Creek readjusts. Sections of the dam structure that have been keyed into the bank will be left intact to retain bank stability. The size and impact of the Branciforte Dam on Branciforte Creek has discouraged other Branciforte landowners from addressing their in-stream structures. Once the Branciforte Dam is removed these conversations can once again be re-opened and the creek as a whole can be re-assessed for priority projects. Overall, completion of this project will restore fluvial processes and improve salmonid access.

**Project Location:** The dam is located at 4361 Branciforte Drive, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 in Branciforte Creek. The GPS coordinates are 37°02'16.51" N 121°59'07.48" W.

#### **Partners:**

- NOAA
- RCDSCC
- State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- State Coastal Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW)
- American Rivers
- California Fish Passage Forum



NATIONAL *fish, wildlife & plants*  
CLIMATE ADAPTATION STRATEGY

**Project Goals:** Remove the dam to allow for complete passage during all flows for juveniles and adult salmonids.

**Strategy Goals Implemented:** 3, 4

**Climate Impacts Addressed:** 3.2, 3.4

**Status of Project Implementation (Timeline, Milestones, Next Steps):** Removal of Branciforte Dam and the implementation of in-stream habitat improvements are components are complete.

**Project Outcomes:**

- Removal of the dam from the wetted channel
- Open passage to anadromous fish species through project site
- Natural transport of backed up sediment into the system
- Bank stability maintained to protect roads
- Installation of a large woody debris structure to provide habitat for aquatic species

**Funding Sources:** Total project budget: \$159,130

- American Rivers NOAA - \$100,000
- State Coastal Conservancy - \$46,102
- County of Santa Cruz - \$5,000
- California Fish Passage Forum - \$12,497

**Final report with photos, photo descriptions, and photo credits:**

<http://cafishpassageforum.org/media/brancifortecreek.pdf>