

SESSION E: COASTAL STREAMS-ECOLOGY AND RECOVERY

European settlement and occupation of California began on the coastal plains, and the earliest impacts of that invasion were concentrated in the riparian zones of the coastal streams. Subsequent urban and residential growth depended on the availability of increasingly far-flung sources of water. Many coastal streams were obliterated, undergrounded, or sucked dry. The balance between the capturing and stabilizing of sediment by vegetation, and the eroding power of freshets has been weighted in favor of erosion. Plant communities formerly well adapted to the hydrologic regime are no longer able to survive, introduced invaders are becoming established, and the animal communities are changing in response. The riparian systems of many coastal streams are unraveling.

This session observes the nature of those changes and considers what must be done to mend the balance and heal the streams.

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