

MEASURE Q:

Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act

Discussion Overview

- **What is Measure Q?**
- **Citizen Oversight & Advisory Board (COAB)**
- **Funding Distribution**
- **Vision Plan**

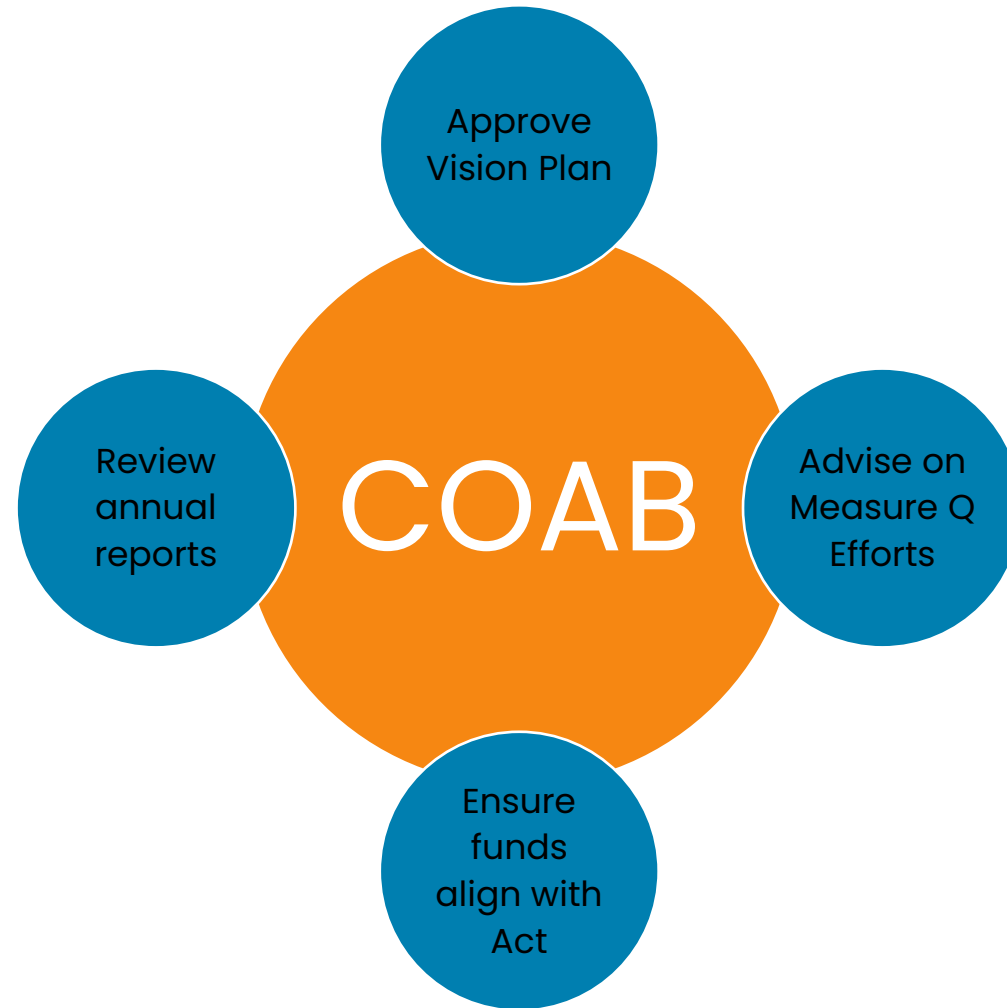


What is Measure Q?

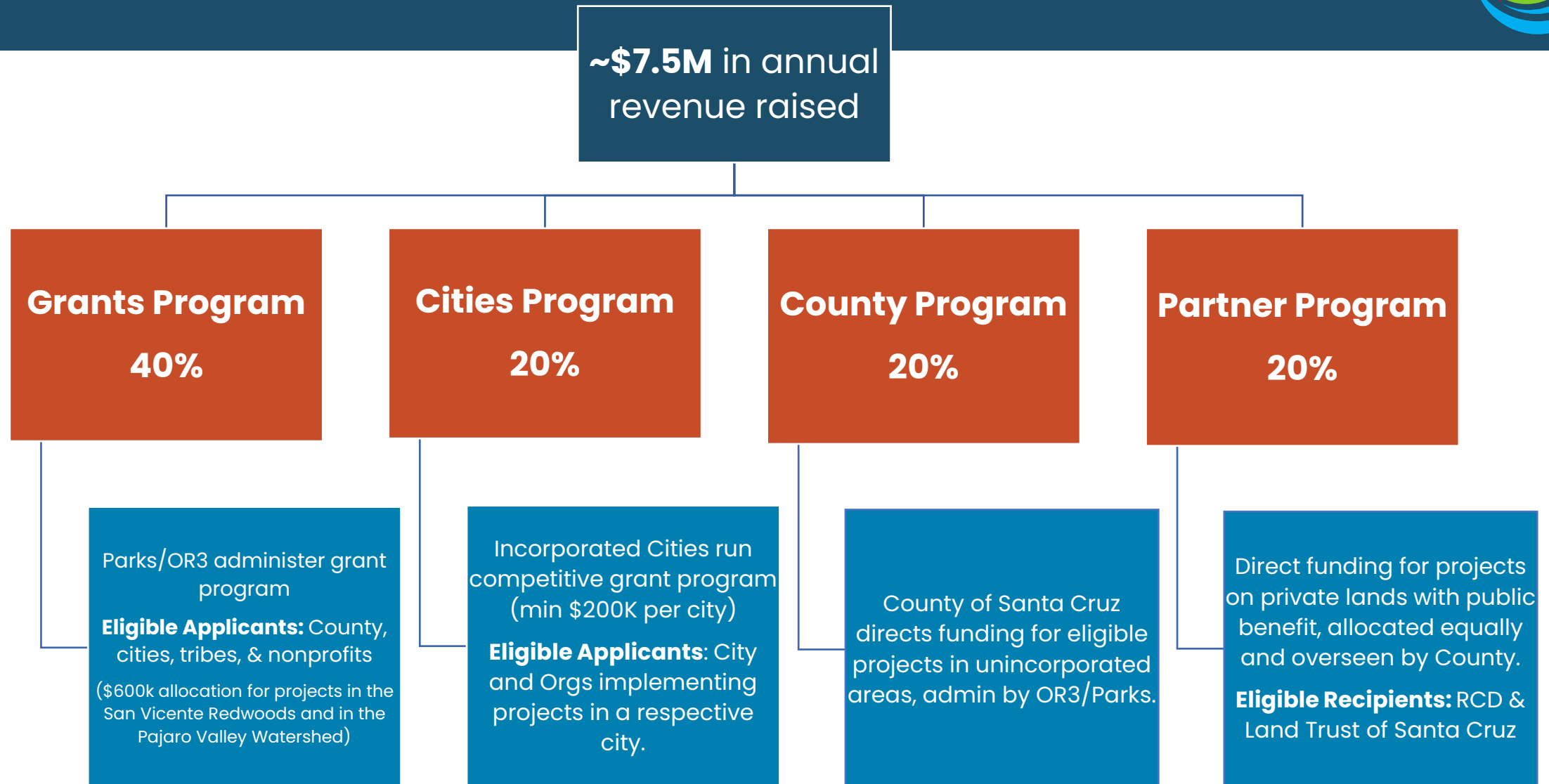


- Passed by voters in **Nov 2024**
- Special parcel tax for **environmental protection**
- Generates **~\$7.5M/year** for climate resilience + parks
- Focus: **Water, forest management, habitat, access, and equity**
- Guided by **5-Year Vision Plan**

Citizens Oversight Advisory Board Responsibilities



Funding Distribution Overview



Eligible Projects



To the extent feasible, priority shall be given to Eligible Projects that do at least one of the following:

MATCHING FUNDS:

Projects that can use Measure Q dollars as a local match to attract state, federal, or private grants.

MULTI-BENEFIT:

Projects that address multiple goals at once—like fire safety, clean water, and access to nature.

DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES:

Projects that benefit communities facing greater environmental burdens or fewer public resources.

VISION PLAN: Developed by OR3 and County Parks, with input from the Citizens Oversight Advisory Board (COAB). The COAB approves the plan and suggest project priorities through annual reports.

SPECIFIC PRIORITIES FOR EACH PROGRAM

GRANTS PROGRAM

Projects that address climate change, extreme weather, water pollution, saltwater intrusion, or natural disasters receive added priority.

CITIES, COUNTY & PARTNER PROGRAM

In addition to eligible priorities, each of these programs has added focus areas such as, access to parks, clean water, or community services.



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
MEASURE Q

FINAL 10.15.2025,
approved by COAB on 10.08.2025

VISION PLAN

2025 – 2030



East Cliff Parkway
Credit: Devi Pride

October 15, 2025

MEASURE Q FUNDING OVERVIEW

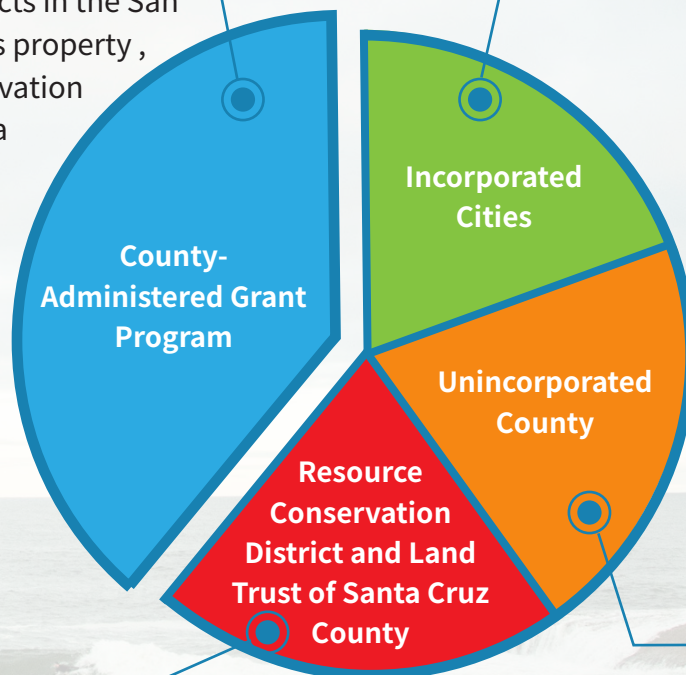
Measure Q funding is distributed across four allocations, guided by this Vision Plan:

40%

Grants for projects that address water, wildfire, biodiversity, agricultural and working lands, coastal resilience, and equitable access. Within this program, \$600,000 annually is set aside for projects serving the Pajaro Valley watershed and \$600,000 annually for projects in the San Vicente Redwoods property, the largest conservation easement in Santa Cruz County.

20%

Direct allocations to **Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Capitola, and Scotts Valley** (minimum \$200,000 annually per city), to advance projects within city limits.



20%

Dedicated to advancing land stewardship, wildfire resilience, habitat protection, and water quality improvements.

20%

Funds for projects in **rural and suburban communities** managed directly by the County.

While each allocation is managed independently, aligned with County code language, the Vision Plan proposes a shared framework in order to manage towards County-wide investments that are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

The six themes are:



WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT



**WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION AND
FOREST HEALTH**



**WILDLIFE AND HABITAT
PROTECTION**



**PARKS, RECREATION, PUBLIC
ACCESS AND EQUITY**



**AGRICULTURAL AND WORKING
LANDS PROTECTION**



**COASTAL PROTECTION AND
ADAPTATION**

Five-year Priorities (2025–2030)

In its first five years, the Measure Q grant program will emphasize early action and visible results through three thematic priorities:



Water Resources Management

Protect drinking water, restore floodplains and wetlands, improve stormwater systems, and enhance groundwater recharge, with Pinto Lake highlighted as a critical water quality priority.



Wildfire Risk Reduction and Forest Health

Reduce hazardous fuels, create defensible space, protect evacuation routes, and improve forest health at landscape scale.



Parks, Recreation, Access, and Equity

Maintain and expand safe and equitable access to parks, trails, and coastal areas,, with a focus on South County and historically underserved communities.

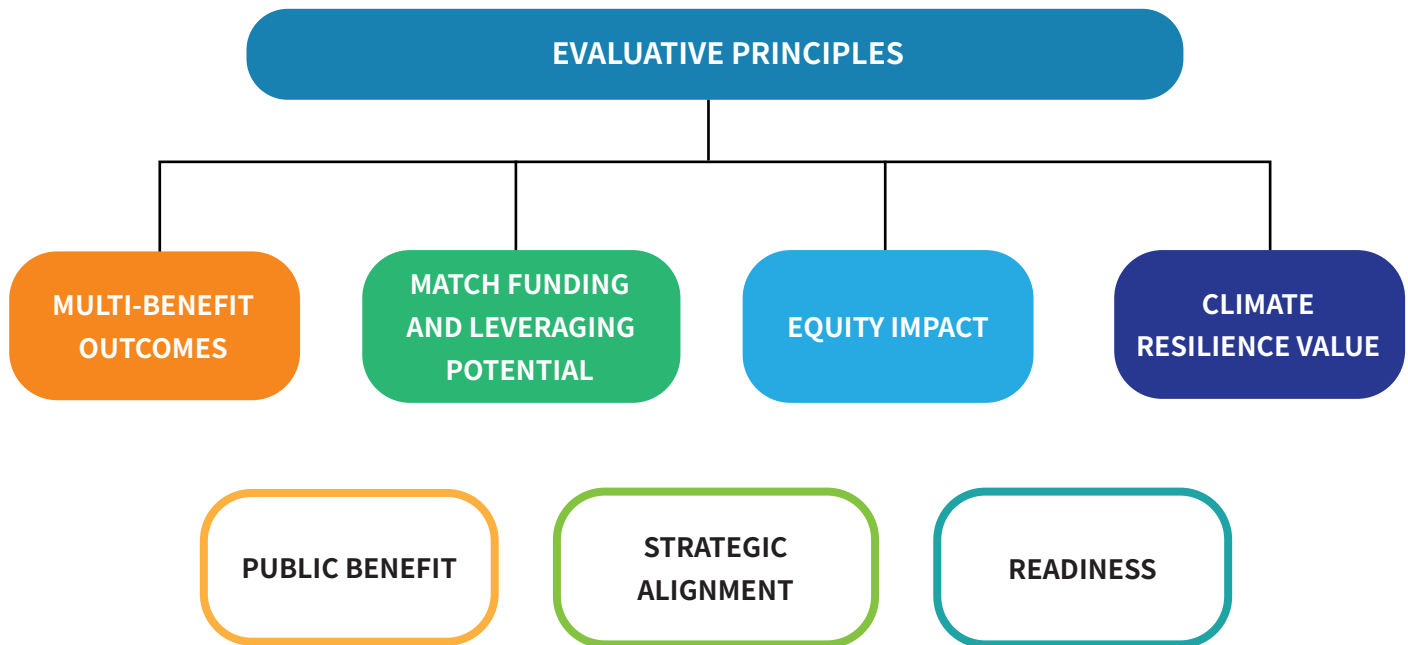


Wildlife and Habitat Protection

While not identified as a thematic priority, it is expected that grant selected projects will also benefit Wildlife and Habitat Protection.

Principles for Evaluating Projects

All Measure Q grant projects will be evaluated using shared principles that ensure consistency; however, multi-benefit outcomes, fund leveraging potential, equity, and climate resilience are elevated in the Measure Q ballot language and to the extent feasible will inform funding decisions. Public benefit, strategic alignment and readiness will also be reviewed as secondary considerations to guide implementation and ensure transparency. This approach clarifies that the evaluative principles are not weighted equally: the top four reflect explicit Measure Q language where eligible projects should do at least one of those principles, while secondary considerations support accountability, alignment with existing plans and delivery of visible community benefit.



Core Project Prioritization Principles (highest weight in decision making)

MULTI-BENEFIT OUTCOMES

Projects that deliver multiple ecological, social, and economic benefits at once (for example, a wetland restoration that improves water quality, reduces flooding, creates wildlife habitat, and adds recreational access).

MATCH FUNDING AND LEVERAGING POTENTIAL

Projects that can attract or leverage State, federal, or private funding to stretch local dollars and expand impact.

EQUITY IMPACT

Directing resources toward historically underserved or disadvantaged communities, to reduce disparities in access, health, and climate risk. Match funding and leveraging are important considerations; however, Measure Q language elevates equity impact to ensure that projects in historically underserved or disadvantaged communities are strongly prioritized. This approach affirms that investments in these communities will move forward even where opportunities for external match may be limited.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE VALUE

Projects that reduce risks from wildfire, flooding, drought, extreme heat, and sea level rise. In applying this principle, Measure Q will prioritize projects that address the highest climate-related risks to communities, with attention to equity and need.

Secondary Project Prioritization Principles (important considerations applied equally)

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Projects must provide clear, visible value for the community, whether through improved safety, healthier ecosystems, or better recreation.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Projects should reinforce existing local, regional, and State plans, avoiding duplication and strengthening partnerships.

READINESS

Projects, programs, or high-need pilot projects that can be completed quickly will be prioritized for early action, while planning projects that cannot readily be funded by State or federal grants will also be supported to build a long-term project pipeline.

These principles will be applied consistently across all applications as important considerations, but they will not carry the same weight as the four core principles. In practice, they function as **secondary criteria** that help distinguish projects of similar merit and ensure attention to community benefit, alignment with existing plans, and readiness.

Implementation and Accountability

Success will be measured not only by the quality of projects but also by transparency, inclusivity, and long-term impact. To demonstrate impact and accountability, Measure Q will adopt a clear framework for measuring success.

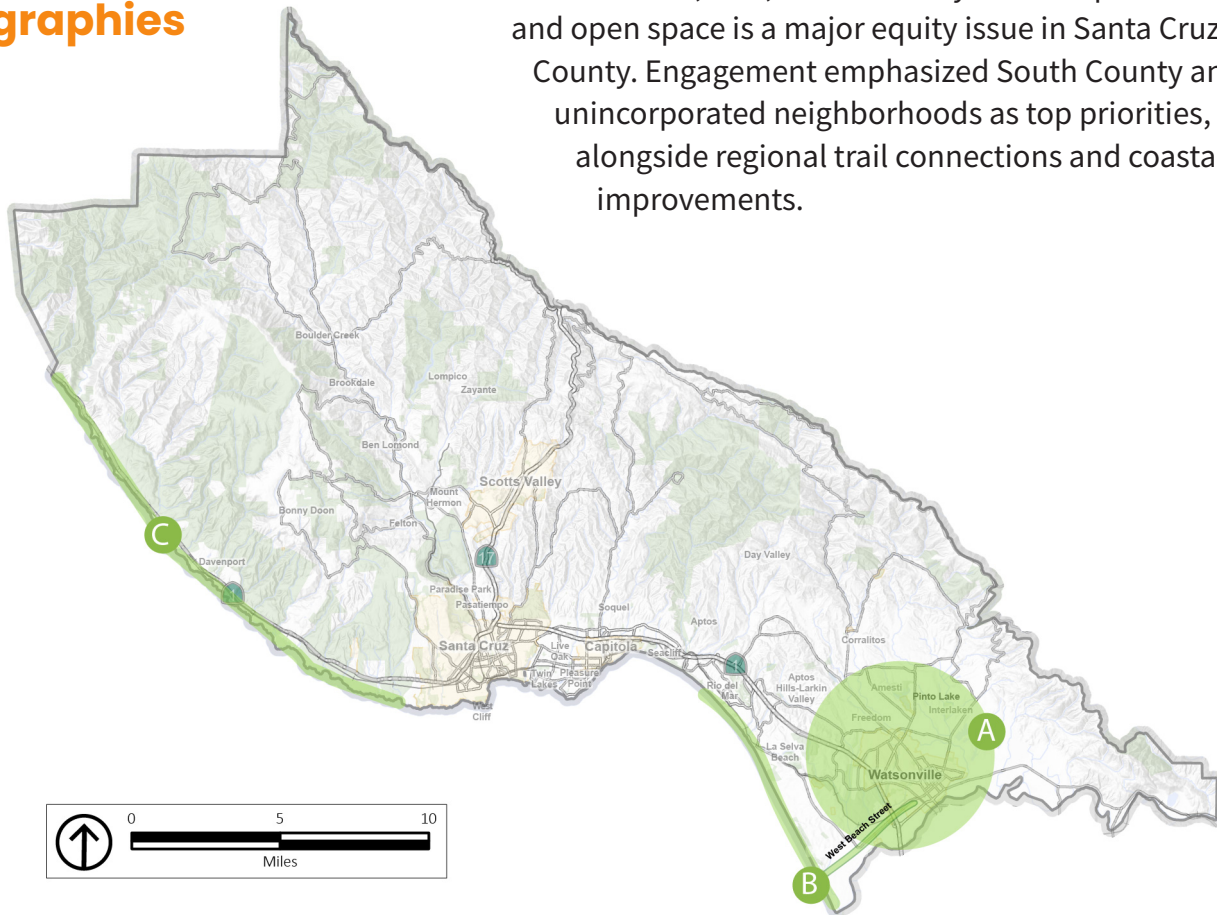
By focusing **early action on water, wildfire, and equitable parks and open space access**—Measure Q will deliver visible improvements, leverage additional funding, and build long-term resilience for the people and landscapes of Santa Cruz County.

The remainder of this Vision Plan lays out the pathway for implementation, starting with **background** on Santa Cruz County and the origins of Measure Q. It then introduces the **shared principles and five-year priorities** and how they will guide grant project selection, followed by a deeper discussion within the **six thematic focus areas** that reflect the county's most pressing needs and priority geographies. Appendices provide detailed summaries of community and stakeholder engagement, along with a literature review of the more than 20 plans and strategies that informed this Vision Plan.

Parks, Recreation, and Public Access and Equity

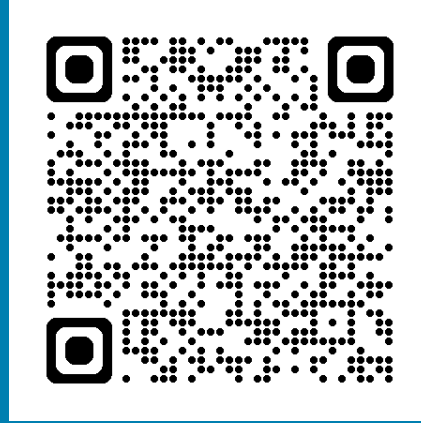
Priority Geographies

Access to clean, safe, and culturally relevant parks and open space is a major equity issue in Santa Cruz County. Engagement emphasized South County and unincorporated neighborhoods as top priorities, alongside regional trail connections and coastal access improvements.



Not listed in any particular order

- A** South County/Watsonville, including West Beach Road, Pinto Lake, and school-based sites (park development, trails, equitable access, urban greening)
- B** South County Beach Access (trail connections and slough access)
- C** North Coast (new access points, regional trails)
- Urban and Rural Trail Connectivity (integrated park/trail opportunities)
- Underserved neighborhoods countywide (pocket parks, schoolyards, urban greening)



<https://www.santacruzcountycalifornia.gov/MeasureQ.aspx>

