

# The Monterey County Resource Management Agency: Stewards of the Natural Environment (2010)

## **Summary**

The Monterey County Resource Management Agency (RMA) was created in 2005 to enhance the County's delivery of land use related services and to be an effective steward of the County's natural resources. The RMA is made up of an administrative section and the following departments: Building Services, Public Works, Planning, and the Redevelopment and Housing Office. The organization has many functions that serve the public as well as internal customers within the County and the RMA. This paper will describe the services provided by the RMA that demonstrate what measures are taken by the departments to be effective stewards of the county's natural resources.

## **Background**

Land use is inherently an activity that uses resources. The majority of land use activities in Monterey County serves three basic functions—the production of food and fiber, housing of people and the services that they need, and open space/recreation uses. These are not surprising in that the two largest drivers of the county economy are agriculture and tourism. Housing is needed to support the worker force for those two economic sectors.

The production of food and fiber uses resources in many ways. Water is needed to grow crops for production and sale. Water systems were put in place many years ago to store and deliver water. The construction of these facilities, whether it be a dam, the Clark Colony water system, or conveyance facilities for water distribution, require resources such as concrete, earth, and metal or plastic pipelines. A large amount of electricity is needed to pump water to crops and animals. Rock, concrete and asphalt are needed to construct roads and water infrastructure. Wood and metal are needed to construct the facilities where the product is processed or stored. The raw and finished product needs to be transported to processing plants and to market. Energy (primarily fuel and electricity) is needed for working the land, transportation of workers and product, pumping of water, and the production and use of fertilizer.

Tourism requires a different set of resources, some that are passive but require maintenance, and other that are utilized. Visitors to Monterey County are primarily here to enjoy open space and recreational activities. The county has many local, state and national parks as well as private recreational activities. These activities utilize the scenic resources of the county, use energy for transportation of workers and tourists, require infrastructure to allow the tourists to travel to destinations and construction for lodging and visitor accommodations. Rock, concrete, asphalt, wood, and metal are needed for construction of infrastructure and facilities. Water is used to provide sanitation, landscaping, to provide landscaping or facilities used by the tourists, and for drinking.

The RMA also provides services to itself and its customers, including the public, that utilize resources. Energy is used in the buildings used by RMA staff and in the buildings

that are serviced by the RMA. Energy is also used in driving between customers and the office and by customers that come to do business at the RMA.

All of these activities require the use of resources. The RMA, through careful management, can protect existing resources, attempt to guide the wise utilization of other resources, and facilitate the rehabilitation of resources that are used by the public and by the government.

### **RMA Stewardship**

The departments of the RMA serve as stewards of the natural environment through many different actions, processes and activities. This section will describe each department's role as stewards of the natural environment.

#### ***Resource Management Agency (all departments)***

All the departments within the agency participate in the following activities to reduce their impact on natural resources:

##### **Reductions in paper use**

The departments seek to ensure that documents that must be copied are two-sided. Where possible, the departments pursue electronic storage to reduce the amount of paper used.

##### **Electronic document storage and distribution**

The departments utilize electronic storage and distribution, where possible, to reduce the amount of paper that needs to be moved and stored. This provides significant reductions in the need for storage buildings, reducing construction, heating and cooling costs. In addition, less storage means less transport of the materials, reducing gasoline and staff costs, less maintenance of vehicles. The Agency is about to commence a large-scale scanning effort to begin realizing benefits from such a program. The Building Services Department will be acquiring scanners and will begin to scan new and archived documents, initially for the Building Services and Planning Departments. In addition, the new Accela Automation software system will allow more people access to more information as the scanned information is linked to parcels and permits. This will allow the public to also benefit from this scanning effort as this system is web-based, allowing users to access information from their home or office. This reduces vehicle trips to County offices and reduces the demand for parking.

##### **Purchase of Environmentally Preferable Products**

The Agency has adopted a policy to purchase products that have less environmental impact. Some of these ideas are discussed in the sections relating to the departments, below. In addition, purchase of recycled office products and computer systems that utilize less energy are being pursued.

### Aerial Imagery

Aerial imagery is now available to staff and often times reduces the need for onsite inspection and allows for electronic presentations, which avoid or reduce the need for paper products.

### Electronic Routing

The new Accela Automation system will allow the electronic distribution of plans and information between departments. Future capabilities to be studied are the ability to allow electronic submittal of more permit applications and the ability of the County's decision-making land use bodies to view all documents electronically rather than the current system of paper copy distribution.

### Reduce Energy Use

In addition to the many activities listed within each department, below, the RMA IT section is classifying and consolidating data to reduce servers and save energy.

### Geographic Information Systems

Providing GIS data over the Intranet to county staff reduces map printouts, allows a lot of work to be done from staff computers rather than from the field or by searching for information in on-site and off-site locations, and provides instantaneous electronic information to be stored electronically, reducing the need for printing and storage of paper. Future implementation being considered is public access to the information so that individuals will not need to drive to the office and receive printed materials, reducing vehicle miles traveled, greenhouse gas emissions, a reduced need for parking, and the elimination of printing paper copies for those that come seeking the information.

## ***Building Services Department***

The Building Services Department has a major function of overseeing construction activities of private individuals in the county. Other services include inspection of county structures, code enforcement activities, and the preparation of regulations and practices that ensure the public health, safety and welfare. The department also provides staff support to a Board Subcommittee on Energy and Environment.

### Erosion Control.

The Building Services Department provides active protection of natural resources primarily through inspection and plan check processes. When an individual desires to construct a structure or grade earth within the unincorporated area, they must obtain a permit from the department. The plan check process involves review of the plans to ensure that adequate erosion control or earth stabilization techniques are proposed to be conducted as part of the construction. The inspection component of building permits provides a vital field check to ensure that construction occurs according to the approved plans and that adequate erosion control is provided. This is an important component of many different activities that ensure that water quality, and therefore habitat, is protected from degradation by construction activities.

### Energy Efficiency.

Recent Building Codes require that structures be energy efficient. The department ensures that this is implemented through the plan check and inspection process. Energy Calculations are required for each new habitable structure proposed. These calculations, and their related construction techniques, are verified during the plan check process. In addition, new energy efficient lighting requirements are verified by the department during the plan check process. Inspectors then verify that all these approved construction techniques and materials are correctly installed during construction.

The Building Services Department, with the cooperation of the Board of Supervisors, has recently adopted a subsidy for the construction of ‘alternative energy’ facilities. The permit fee is reduced by \$750 for the construction of facilities, such as photovoltaic, solar hot water, wind power, or geothermal systems. This subsidy provides an incentive, along with other incentives provided by local, state and federal government programs, for individuals and businesses to provide these types of facilities. In addition to the permit fee subsidy, the department is working on a program that provides up-front financing to construct alternative energy systems. The County is working with the cities of Monterey County to implement a countywide program. Property owners will pay back the loan through an assessment on their property taxes. The department is working on a pilot program and expects to provide a full program in calendar year 2010. In addition to the examples listed above in this paragraph, other projects that conserve energy, such as water conservation, reroofing, window replacement and other activities are eligible for this financing program. The County will also be applying for a grant to provide initial funding for the program.

A new Green Building Ordinance is being developed by the County for use in the unincorporated area. It is expected that the County will partner with cities to adopt this ordinance so that each jurisdiction will not have significantly different programs. This ordinance is expected to be an incentive based program that encourages the builder to use recycled products, more energy efficient products, or products that have less effect on the environment, either in the manufacturing process or during the life of the structure. Examples include passive solar design, cool roof technology, low volatile organic compound products, the use of recycled material, and other techniques that provide for more sustainable practices in the manufacture or use of the materials. The ordinance will also deal with indoor air quality concerns.

### Site Inspection

The Inspectors perform a number of functions during their site visits. They are checking that construction occurs according to the approved plans. They also look to ensure that sites are maintained with good housekeeping practices. This includes the management and proper disposal of construction debris, the establishment and maintenance of adequate erosion control to protect water quality and habitat, and the installation of landscaping prior to a final sign off on the building permit. If emergency situations are discovered during site visits, such as a recent landslide, they will require site remediation to ensure further damage is avoided.

### Stormwater Controls.

In addition to erosion control verification, the department is working on establishing a new stormwater protection program in conjunction with other departments and agencies. These regulations will be applicable in urbanized areas of the unincorporated area and will require Low Impact Development (LID) techniques. This ordinance will implement federal Clean Water Act requirements and are expected to be implemented countywide in the future. Techniques required by the ordinance will start within structures and on property and control stormwater from the building to the end point of the drainage system.

### Code Enforcement

The department has a staff dedicated to enforce regulations, which ensures compliance with the regulations established to provide protection and stewardship of the county's resources. By ensuring that proper permits are obtained, construction or use of the land that could cause environmental damage is thoroughly reviewed prior to construction or use. For activities done without a permit, restoration or obtaining proper permits are required and proper environmental protections are required.

### Customer Information

The department provides brochures and assistance to the public on any question related to activities under the purview of the department. In addition, the department provides information through public workshops, television programs, and website information. Staff provide public counter assistance in two locations, with service in the Salinas and Marina (Fort Ord) offices five days per week.

## ***Redevelopment and Housing Office***

The Redevelopment and Housing Office (RHO) facilitates projects in the County's redevelopment (RDA) project areas and manages the County's affordable housing programs. The RDA project areas consist of Castroville, Pajaro, Boronda, and the County's portion of Fort Ord. Redevelopment activities are directed at eliminating blighted conditions in neighborhoods, business and industrial districts. The staff works closely with community members to achieve improvements such as infrastructure enhancements, downtown revitalization, and retail/industrial development.

The RHO Housing Group consists of a team of housing specialists that manage the housing programs, manage grants, and facilitate the construction of affordable housing projects. These efforts are funded by a combination of county, state, and program dollars.

### Construction Projects

The RHO assists in the construction of redevelopment and affordable housing projects. Projects are encouraged to incorporate "green" practices as part of the site location, design and/or construction. This occurs in working with the developers of affordable

housing, but also in partnering with the implementation of Redevelopment Agency projects.

### Community Planning

The RHO seeks to plan improvements to targeted communities incorporating “Smart Growth” components. The RHO staff works with developers and planners to establish policies, physical plans and regulations for Community Areas (e.g., Castroville, Boronda and East Garrison) that provide compact development to decrease the footprint and reduce impacts, provide for conjunctive uses (e.g., flood control and park facilities), encourage the use of LID techniques in site improvements, and encourage walkability in Community Areas. In addition, the RHO efforts strive to ensure that adequate agricultural buffers are established in projects and that projects include low-water using design and fixtures. A part of the Community Planning processes identification of needed infrastructure that reduces impacts on the environment is a priority. An example includes providing improvements that reduces traffic levels to less congested levels, which reduces greenhouse gasses and that promotes walkability to allow people to walk and not drive.

The Housing Element Update, recently drafted by the RHO, contains policies that encourage “green” practices in providing housing and in site planning. The draft Housing Element Update includes two new Implementation Programs related to energy conservation and Global Warming Solutions (H-1.f) and Green Building Initiatives (H-1.g) which includes applying certain evaluation criteria related to affordable housing project funding giving preferences to projects that incorporate green practices. In addition, a Housing Policy and Allocation Manual Update, recently approved by the Board of Supervisors, includes a brief discussion on providing preferences in evaluating funding requests for projects that incorporate “Green Initiatives and Practices”.

### Reuse of Existing Facilities

The RHO has undertaken several projects that incorporate the reuse of existing structures instead of building new structures. In the case of East Garrison, the RHO worked with the developer to protect and enhance the historic structures located in the project by requiring that they be reused for cultural and community facilities. In Castroville, the RHO worked with the community to rehabilitate the Japanese School building for use as a community center.

### Energy Efficiency.

The RHO assists in the retrofit and rehabilitation of existing housing units to provide energy efficient appliances and/or construction. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) provides opportunities to rehabilitate units with energy efficient features, such as Energy Star appliances, prior to reselling the houses to income-restricted buyers. The RHO is looking for opportunities to use synthetic turf, if grant funding can be found, in park projects to reduce water use and to protect water quality.

### Affordable Housing

The RHO works to preserve the County's stock of affordable housing, allowing people the opportunity to live in uncrowded, safe conditions, avoid abandoned or unsafe structures, and avoid living illegal units or on the streets.

### Stormwater Controls.

The RHO has been working in conjunction with other departments and agencies to upgrade storm drainage systems in the County's redevelopment areas. A new storm drain system has been installed in Pajaro to alleviate localized flooding. A phased implementation of a community wide storm drain and road improvement program has been on-going in Boronda for several years. Storm drain improvements are part of the community planning efforts in Castroville and individual development projects have been required to install upgraded improvements and improve the interface between the urban areas and the existing slough system. All of these efforts also include water quality components

### Redevelopment Area Businesses

The RHO works with individual businesses and with associations to achieve revitalization of blighted areas. In addition, the RHO works with new businesses and has included policies in Community and Redevelopment Plans to encourage businesses with low environmental impacts to locate in the industrial areas of Castroville, Boronda, Fort Ord and Pajaro.

### Customer Information

The RHO provides brochures and assistance to the public on any question related to activities under the purview of the RHO. In addition, the RHO provides information through public workshops, television programs, and website information.

## ***Public Works Department***

The Department of Public Works is responsible for management, operation, and maintenance of public roads and bridges, County buildings and facilities, fleet, storm drains within the public right of way, sanitation district collection, treatment, and disposal facilities, County Service Area urban services, and closed County landfills, all within the unincorporated area of the County.

In addition, the Department is responsible for planning, financing, and implementing a Capital Improvement Program consisting of road and bridge projects, County buildings and facilities, and miscellaneous service area improvements.

Public Works issues permits for encroachments within the County road right of way, sewer connection permits within special districts, and various transportation permits for the road system.

The following section is organized by function within the department.

### Fleet.

The Fleet division maintains approximately 2000 motorized vehicles and 2000 pieces of attached equipment. They provide service to the other county departments by purchasing and maintaining the County fleet. The Fleet division is attempting to reduce the “carbon footprint” of the county by purchasing more fuel efficient vehicles (including many hybrids or other alternative fuel vehicles), retrofitting older diesel engines on equipment with diesel particulate filters, and recycling oil and components where practical. Operational changes are being encouraged among equipment operators to reduce idling times while the equipment is waiting use. The division is seeking grants to provide more resources to purchase cleaner vehicles and retrofit older vehicles so that they run cleaner.

### Maintenance (Road)

The Department maintains approximately 81 miles of dirt roads in addition to the 1135 mile paved road system. The crews have been working with FISHNET4C to identify best management practices for maintenance of their entire system, but with particular emphasis on the dirt road system. By stabilizing the dirt surfaces and how runoff is captured and conveyed, water quality and habitat are protected. The road crew also ensures that grading impacts and drainage are adequately controlled along the road system, ensuring the protection of waterways, drainage systems, and sensitive habitat.

### Litter Control

The Department runs the roadside litter control program. The program involves a crew of three and typically collects approximately 196 tons of trash per year and over 2000 bulky items. This program uses inmate labor to expand on the amount of litter that can be collected with a small investment. If this litter were not collected, it would contaminate the environment and degrade the visual resources of the county.

### Construction

The Department’s construction team ensures that all projects are thoroughly studied in an environmental document as part of the project design phase. All feasible mitigation measures are included in the project design and a mitigation monitoring program is implemented to ensure that resources are protected. Resource monitors are included in the work contracts and the project contractor is instructed on the proper implementation of the included mitigation measures. Revegetation plans are included in the project and the revegetation activities are monitored for several years after installation to ensure success criteria are met.

### Architecture

The department’s architectural team ensures that all projects are designed with energy conservation best practices. Energy audits are being conducted on all County facilities to identify where and when to spend limited dollars on retrofits or reconstruction. Grants are being sought to provide resources for solar photovoltaic electricity generation. New construction is designed with some of the attributes of Leader in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, such as the use of fly ash concrete, energy efficient window selection, motion sensors, and other key features.

### Watershed Protection

After the Basin Complex Fires in 2008, the Department participated in a Watershed Protection Group. The group implemented five projects to control runoff to the streams, protecting water quality and vital coastal fishery habitat.

### Community Development

The development review group of the Department works to identify potential resulting congestion and mitigation measures to ensure that development will not exacerbate any congested roadways. By mitigating for increases in traffic, congestion is not worsened on the regional and county road networks. In conjunction with the Transportation Planning section's work on developing a countywide impact fee and by identifying other sources of funds to improve congested segments and intersections, over time, the county network will improve to the standard adopted by the County through the General Plan. Reductions in congestion have significant benefits on air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### Transportation Planning

As stated above, this group is working on establishing a countywide traffic fee program. This program, in coordination with the Transportation Agency of Monterey County's fee program and fee programs to be adopted in each city in the county, will provide funds to improve road segments and intersections to alleviate anticipated congestion resulting from growth impacts. With 75% to 80% of the future growth expected to be within the County's cities, it is critical that the County is successful in having cities adopt impact fees and contribute to improving the County's road system. In addition to roadway improvements and maintenance, this division also seeks grants to provide bike paths to reduce vehicle miles travelled and provide alternative modes of transportation. Three bike path projects are currently in process.

### Water and Sewer Projects

The Department has operated sewer systems in the past and has been finding suitable qualified operators to take over the operations. At this point, the Department is only operating one sewer system, Moss Landing. The most recent system turn over was the Pajaro system, which is now operated by Pajaro-Sunny Mesa Community Services District. The Department is assisting in the preparation of the Moss Landing Community Plan and is seeking to enhance the sewer capability in Moss Landing. Wastewater from Moss Landing is pumped to a regional facility near Marina, where the wastewater is treated and used in the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project, which is designed to assist in stopping seawater intrusion along a section of the coast and provides irrigation water to approximately 12,000 acres of farmland.

The Department received a grant of approximately five million dollars to deliver clean potable water to the San Jerardo Water System, which was put in receivership by the court system. The water source was contaminated with solvents and needed to be replaced. Due to the small size of the system, funding for a new well was difficult to obtain privately. While the new well project is being constructed, clean water has been

delivered through the Public Works Department to the residents of San Jerardo. The new system is expected to be functioning in 2010.

#### Stormwater Controls.

The Department is working with other county departments to establish a new stormwater protection program. These regulations will be applicable in urbanized areas of the unincorporated area and will require Low Impact Development (LID) techniques. This ordinance will implement federal Clean Water Act requirements and are expected to be implemented countywide in the future. Techniques required by the ordinance will start within structures and on property and control stormwater from the building to the end point of the drainage system.

#### Customer Information

The department provides brochures and assistance to the public on any question related to activities under the purview of the department. In addition, the department provides information through public workshops, television programs, and website information.

### ***Planning Department***

The Planning Department has a major function of coordinating the permit activity of private individuals in the county and preparing and monitoring permits for those activities. Other services include coordinating county responses to activities by other agencies, planning for communities, recommending land use policy to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, code enforcement activities, the preparation of regulations and procedures that ensure the public health, safety and welfare, and providing information to the public on these activities. The department also provides staff support to approximately two dozen Commissions and Committees.

#### Community Planning

Monterey County consists of approximately 3322 square miles of land with a significant amount of land owned by the local, state or federal government. The majority of land is owned by individuals and corporations where there is an expected development potential by the property owner. The County Planning Department regulates land use on private property only within the unincorporated area.

Development is controlled through a set of adopted policy and regulatory documents:

- General Plan - adopted for the entire unincorporated area in 1982.
- Area Plans - supplemental policies to the basic goals and policies identified in the adopted General Plan were created for eight non-Coastal planning areas.
- Land Use Plans - four plans were certified by the Coastal Commission as part of the Local Coastal Program granting Monterey County permitting authority in the Coastal Zone.
- A series of ordinances specify the regulatory framework that implements the goals and policies of these adopted plans.

- Other plans for smaller areas have also been adopted over the intervening years such as Specific Plans (Rancho San Carlos/Santa Lucia, Las Palmas, East Garrison, Butterfly Village), Boronda Neighborhood Plan, etc.

These plans guide how resources will be utilized, how and where infrastructure is placed, where development patterns will occur, and to determine how needed infrastructure would be funded. In Monterey County, wise use and protection of natural resources is vital to the economy, with the two leading economic sectors being agriculture and tourism.

A major update of the General Plan, covering the non-Coastal Zone area, is currently being finalized with adoption expected in 2010. Policies have been included in the draft General Plan to address climate changes, air and water quality, water use and reuse, the protection of open space and agricultural lands, the preservation of biological and cultural resources, and waste reduction activities. The primary focus is to encourage growth to occur around population centers (cities and community areas) where adequate infrastructure is, or can be, available to maximize use of urban lands and protect our natural resources environment

A major current topic is taking measures to ensure that greenhouse gasses are adequately controlled in the future. Staff is working on an inventory of existing contributors of greenhouse gasses to establish the baseline from which a Climate Action Plan will be developed to address the County's share of a global problem.

The Planning Department is responsible for preparing and updating regulatory documents, called ordinances, which provide land use legislation for the County government. Ordinances must be consistent with the General Plan, and the majority of ordinances regulates the use of land and includes the protection of natural resources as a key component. A recent example of an ordinance that demonstrates the stewardship of natural resources, in this case visual resources, is a new ordinance banning billboards in the unincorporated area. Another example is that County staff is currently working on regulatory changes to reduce permit hurdles for wind power generation while protecting protected bird and bat species.

Subsequent to the General Plan work, work will begin to update the Coastal Zone Land Use Plans. All of these plans and their implementing ordinances further the vision established through the planning process of protecting the natural resources of the County. Together, these plans and ordinances work to provide guidance to developers, homeowners, the public, staff, and decision makers on how land use proposals are to be reviewed and decided, and identify important policies against which development projects are measured.

### Discretionary Permit Coordination and Processing

Because Monterey County has a great diversity of natural resources, many uses have the potential to adversely affect neighboring properties. Traditional zoning, generally known as Euclidean Zoning, establishes a discretionary permit process to establish new uses that could potentially be incompatible with the neighborhood or cause impacts to others.

The Planning Department provides active protection of natural resources primarily through review of development projects. When an individual desires to construct a structure or use land within the unincorporated area, a discretionary review process is often required to ensure that the proposed construction or use of the land is consistent with established policies and regulations, which were established to protect natural resources. The Department, in coordination with other County land use agencies, is moving to a more detailed review early in the process to encourage good site planning that protects resources before an applicant is too vested in their project. In addition, the land use departments meet regularly to review major/complex project issues that are better addressed with a roundtable discussion, called inter-agency review (IAR). The Department is working to limit processing while maximizing the protections we are charged with, including natural resources. A Permit Streamlining Taskforce was created with members of the development industry to assist with identifying ways to reduce the process without losing the integrity of the policies. The Planning Department has been instrumental in facilitating coordination of outside resource protection agency review by Department of Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Services, and Coastal Commission to ensure that all resource protection issues are addressed.

### Development by Other Agencies

The Department coordinates the review of development activity by other agencies and jurisdictions that impact unincorporated lands. If the proposed development has the potential to affect Monterey County resources or infrastructure, county departments provide comments to the Planning Department staff, who prepare a single letter to the jurisdiction conveying one coordinated set of comments. The most significant areas we monitor are relative to impacts on agricultural lands and regional traffic. Staff is attempting to work closely with the Local Agency Formation Commission and cities within the County to ensure orderly, compact growth to preserve open space and agricultural lands.

### Stormwater Controls

The Department is working on establishing a new stormwater protection program in conjunction with other departments and agencies. These regulations will be applicable in urbanized areas of the unincorporated area and will require Low Impact Development (LID) techniques to reduce sediment runoff to water bodies and increase recharge of aquifers. This ordinance will implement techniques starting within structures and on property and control stormwater from the building to the end point of the drainage system.

### Land Conservation, Conservation Easements and Public Access

The Department works with willing landowners to ensure that conservation easements or open space contracts (i.e., Williamson Act contracts) are acquired for the protection of private property. In addition, some development projects propose, or are required to provide, conservation easements as a part of the development permit process. Staff helps applicants, often in consultation with state or federal resource agencies, to identify important resource areas for protection. In addition to setting aside these areas for protection of resources, staff also works to ensure that the public is provided access to important areas, such as the coast or parklands. A challenge where natural resource protection easements exist is to protect the resource while not creating other conflicts, such as a fire hazard. The Department is working with residents and fire agencies to develop guidelines that encourage protection of natural resources in a manner that also reduces fire risk.

### Viewshed Protection

Monterey County is unique in that it was one of the early leaders in viewshed protection, with the designation of the state's first scenic highway, Highway 1, followed by scenic designations for other state highways. The General Plan and Area Plans further identified areas that require protection from viewshed impacts. The Local Coastal Program went further for the Big Sur area, requiring new development in the vast majority of the planning area to not be visible from Highway 1 and other designated public areas. In addition to views from public areas, policies of the General Plan, Area Plan and Coastal Plan also provide regulations that seek to avoid ridgeline development and preserve steeper slopes in conservation easements. County agencies are working to better coordinate review of subdivisions to avoid creating lots with ridgeline development potential and reduce viewshed impacts. The Department is working to provide earlier and more extensive direction to an applicant to reduce potential conflicts later, making for a smoother development process.

### Code Enforcement

The Department has a staff dedicated to enforce regulations, which ensures compliance with the regulations established to provide protection and stewardship of the county's resources. By ensuring that proper permits are obtained, construction or use of the land that could cause environmental damage is thoroughly reviewed prior to construction or use. For activities done without a permit, restoration is the preferred direction. When an owner desires to obtain after-the-fact permits, proper environmental protections are studied and required. Staff has worked to provide a greater incentive to restoration by reducing the regulatory and monetary impacts, if voluntary compliance is achieved quickly, and there is no development gain in the process.

### Customer Information

The Department provides brochures and assistance to the public on any question related to activities under the purview of the department. In addition, the department provides information through public workshops, television programs, and website information. Staff provides public counter assistance in two locations, with service in the Salinas office five days per week and service in the Marina (Fort Ord) office two days per week.

### **Conclusion**

The RMA provides many services, to both internal and external customers, that demonstrate the commitment of the Agency to preserving, protecting, and enhancing the natural resources of the County. The Agency recommends the establishment of policies that protect the environment, writes ordinances that implement those policies, ensure that activities take place in accordance with those policies and regulations, and ensure that Agency actions constantly seek to demonstrate that we are stewards of our natural environment. The Agency not only requires these actions of others, but seeks to “walk the talk” by pursuing more environmentally sensitive infrastructure and operations through the actions described above.