



# Sonoma Water

**Clean. Reliable. Essential. Every Day.**

## Russian River Estuary Management Project

Public Policy Facilitating Committee

January 21, 2026

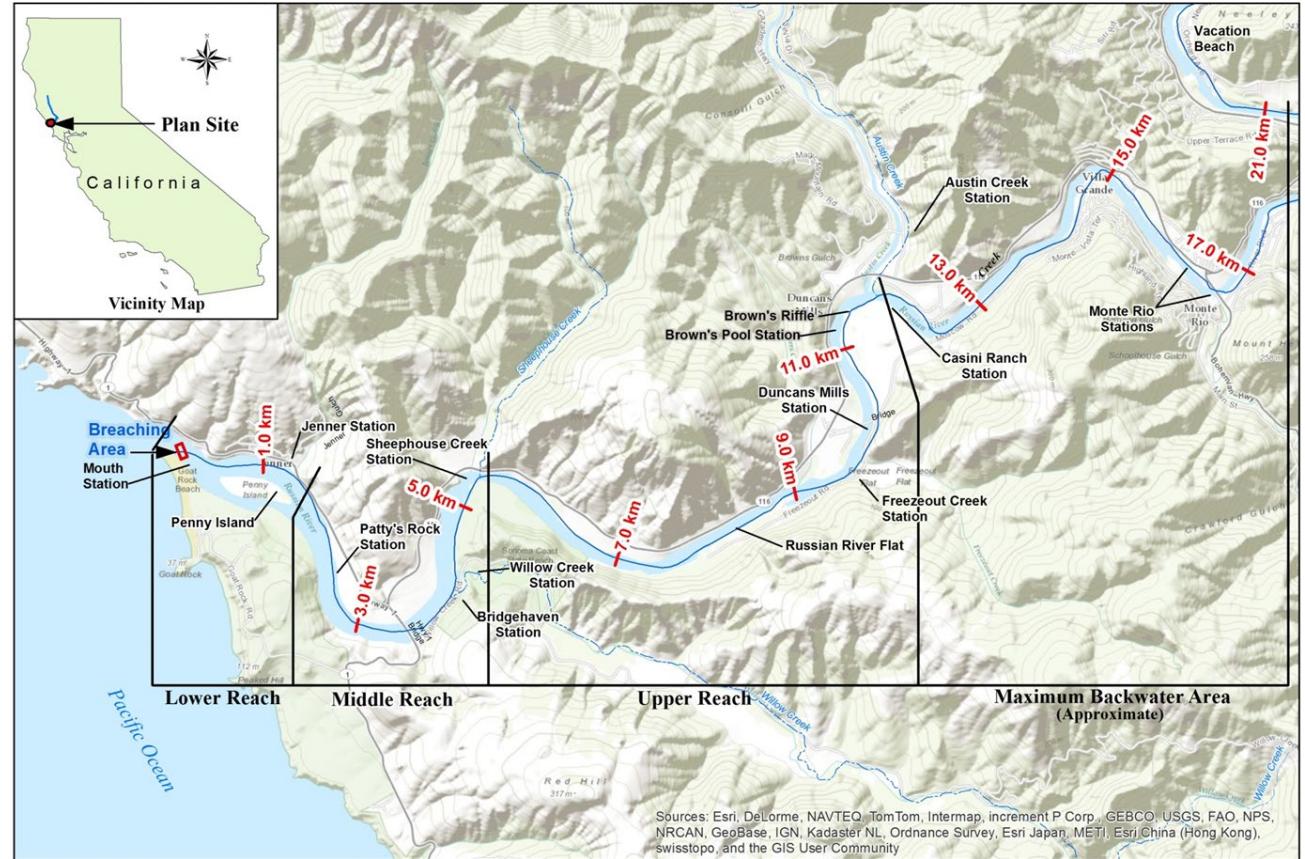
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# Project Summary

- An estuary is where the river meets the sea
- Tidal extent of the Russian River estuary is approximately 7 river miles from the ocean to Austin Creek
- When river mouth closes, resulting lagoon extends upstream approximately 13 river miles from ocean to near Vacation Beach
- Russian River Estuary Management Project has dual objectives when river mouth closes
  - Minimize flood risk to low-lying properties
  - Enhance habitat conditions for salmonids





# Beach Management Activities



Barrier beach



Artificial breach

# Flood Risk Management



# Why is the Estuary important for salmon and steelhead?

Estuary



Growth



# Revised Russian River Estuary Adaptive Management Plan

- Continued flood risk management following river mouth closure
- Emphasizing improved water quality-based habitat optimization and habitat enhancement
- Rapidly changing conditions: river flows, rain, waves, beach height and width, salmonid species and life stage present



### Chinook and Coho Salmon Smolt Emigration (see Tables 5-1 through 5-3)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
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### Juvenile Steelhead Rearing in the Estuary (see Tables 5-1 through 5-3)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
YOY and 1+ entry						Juvenile Rearing					

### Chinook, Coho, and Steelhead Adult Immigration (Estuary Entry) (see Tables 5-1 through 5-3)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
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### Beach Management for Minimizing Flood Risk in the Estuary

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Higher flood risk				Lower flood risk				Higher flood risk			

### Planning Schedule for Adaptive Management Plan

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
↑											
Previous season's assessment											
↑											
Draft management plan due (April 1)											

SOURCE: ESA



**Figure 3-3a**  
Considerations for beach management

# Russian River Estuary Habitat Enhancements

- Minimize effects of bar breaching activities by implementing habitat enhancement measures
- Two types of proposed habitat enhancements
  1. Wetland and/or littoral floodplain habitat: 3 to 5 acres (not to exceed 6)
  2. LWD structures or boulder clusters: 2 to 4 locations within mainstem
- Feasibility studies will leverage prior monitoring data, and tools and studies developed for the Estuary
- Feasible projects will include short-term improvements and long-term resilience to sea level rise

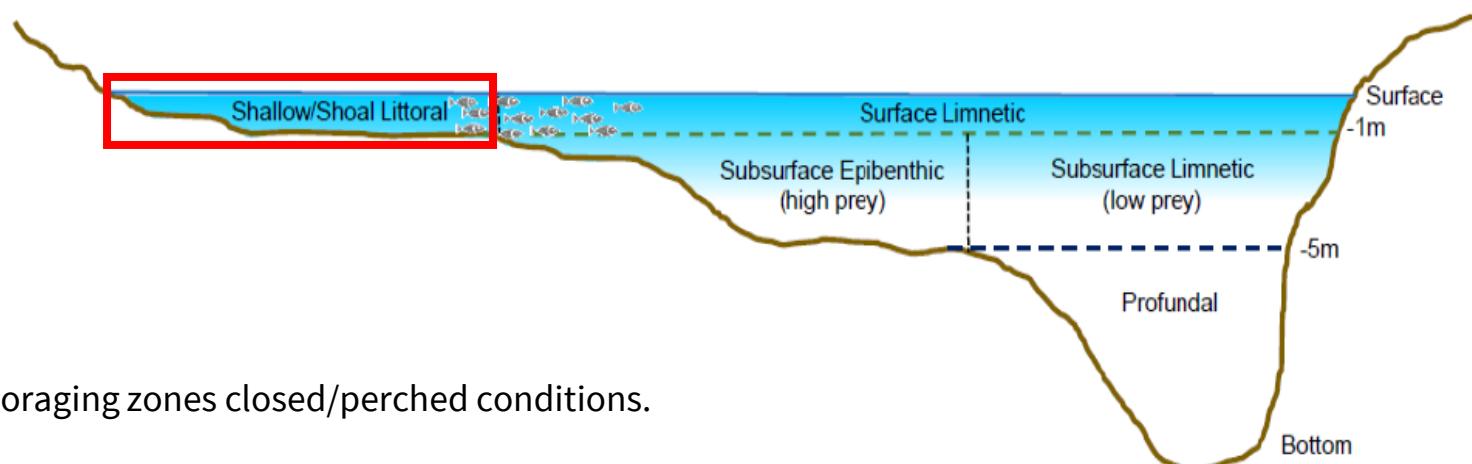
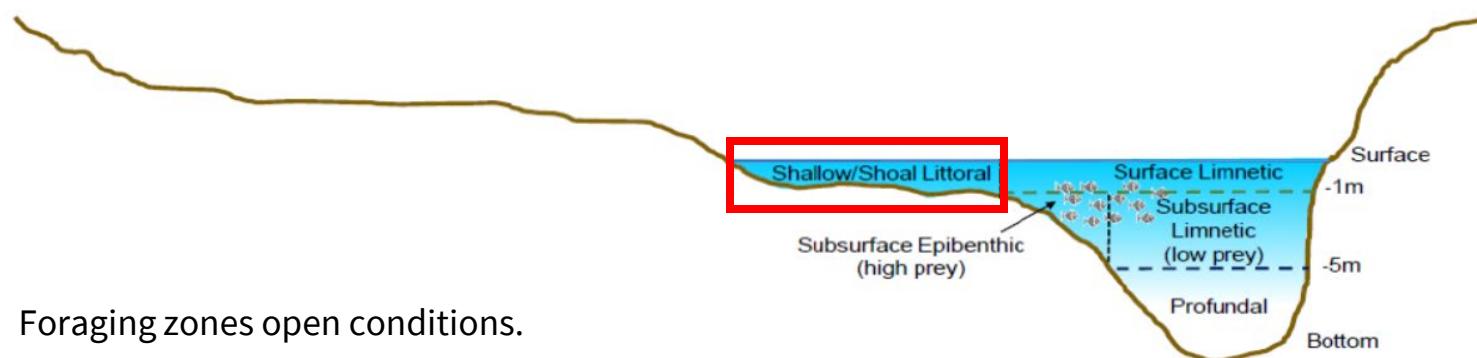


# Timeline

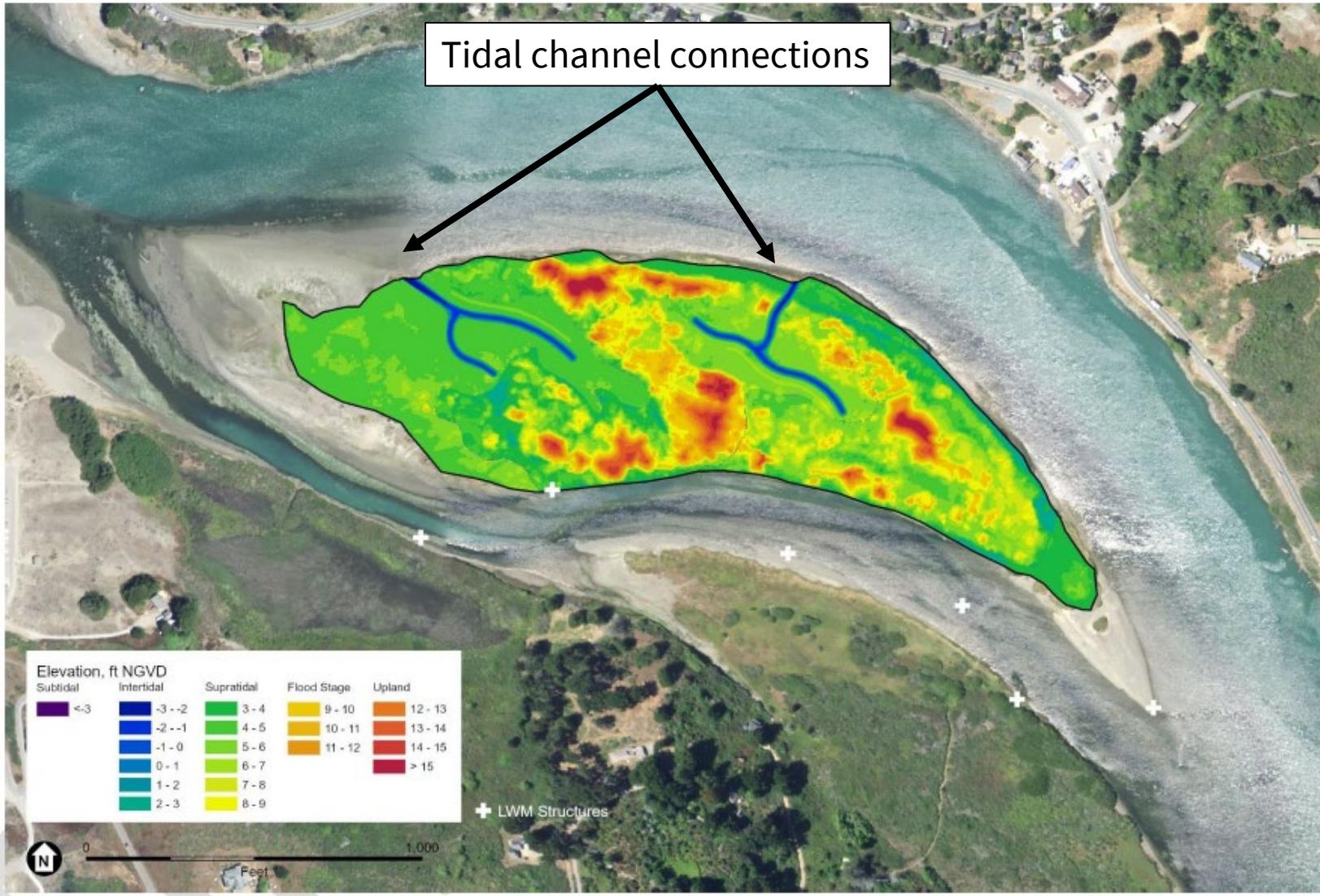
- Within 2 years: feasibility study
  - Data collection (biological, cultural, hydrologic): May 31, 2026
  - Site evaluation and prioritization: August 31, 2026
  - Conceptual design of preferred site: January 31, 2027
  - Draft/final feasibility report April 30, 2027
- Within 5 years (~2030): design and permitting; funding
- Within 8 years (~2033): construction complete
- ALTERNATIVELY: fund 3<sup>rd</sup> party actions within Estuary (Ex: Willow Creek Marsh)



# Littoral floodplain habitat



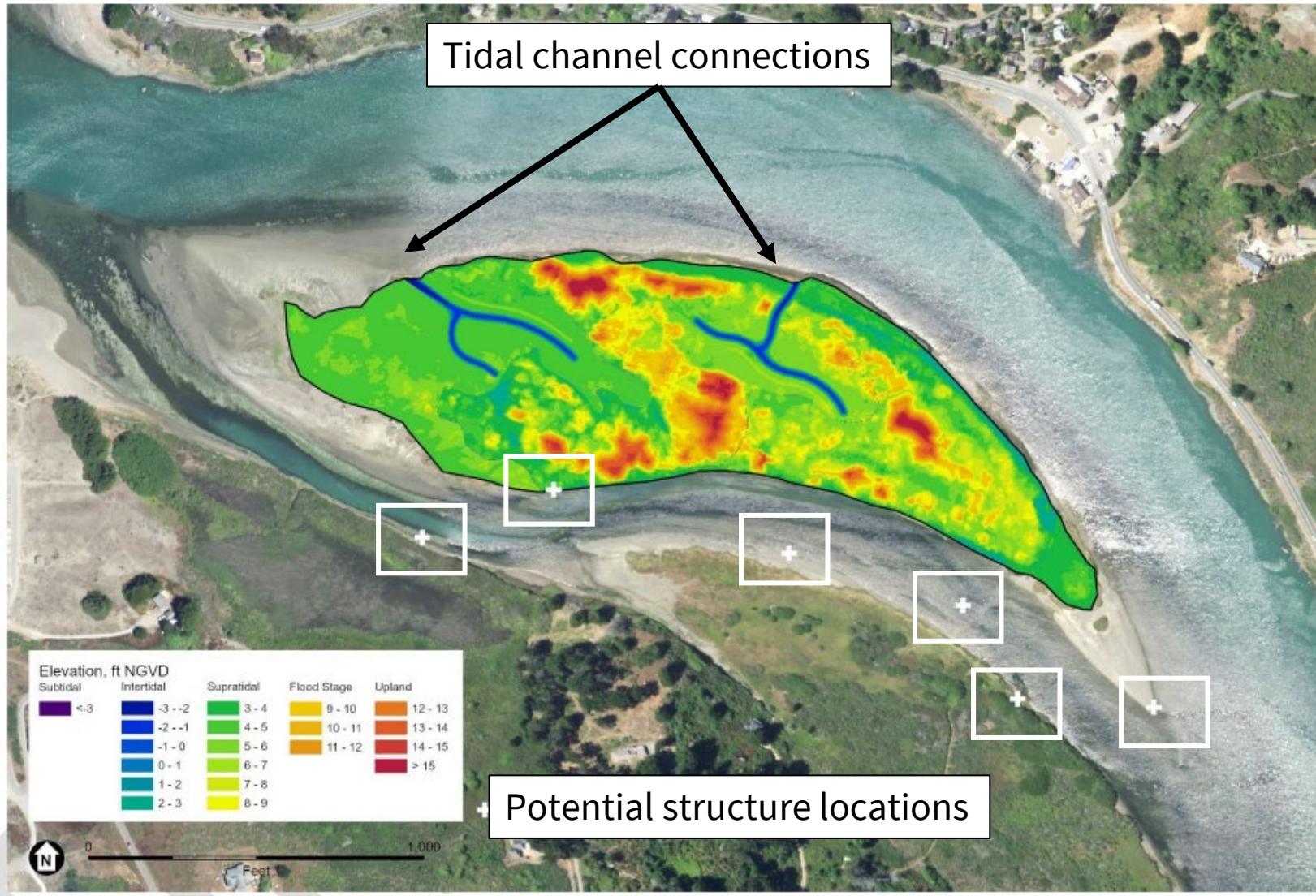
# Littoral floodplain habitat



# Large woody debris structures



# Large woody debris structures





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Water**

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[sonomawater.org](http://sonomawater.org)