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SLO County projects to get more than \$13 million in state funds. Here's where money will go

Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant on June 1, 2023.
LAURA DICKINSON The Tribune



By **Stephanie Zappelli**

Millions of dollars in state funding are headed to the Central Coast to support projects related to energy development, land preservation, storm repairs and more.

San Luis Obispo County will receive more than \$13 million of that funding, according to a news release from California State Sen. John Laird, D-Santa Cruz. About \$20 million total will be allocated to District 17, which is represented by Laird and includes Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo Counties, along with parts of Monterey and Santa Clara Counties.

The money is allocated in the California state budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, which Gov. Gavin Newsom approved on June 27.

“While California faces another difficult budget year, it is heartening to be able to secure funding for numerous important projects that will assist in securing and improving our quality of life,” Laird said in the release.

From work to expand the Salinas Dam to help for an organization that works with homeless people, here's a look at which SLO County projects are set to receive state funding.

The 135-foot-tall concrete Salinas Dam was completed in January 1942 by the U.S. Army. San Luis Obispo has rights to the water, and the county administers the park and dam. David Middlecamp dmiddlecamp@thetribunenews.com



WHICH SLO COUNTY PROJECTS WILL GET STATE FUNDING?

SLO County supervisors have lobbied for funding to expand the Salinas Dam at Santa Margarita Lake for years without success.

Now, the state will give the county \$500,000 “to help conduct feasibility analysis regarding ownership, retrofit, and possible expansion of the Salinas Dam to secure future water supplies,” the release said.

The dam, owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was built in 1941 to service Camp San Luis Obispo during World War II. It has a storage capacity of 23,843 acre-feet of water, according to the San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department.

In Atascadero, El Camino Homelessness Organization will receive \$150,000 to fund a dining structure large enough to serve dinner to 80 to 100 people per night, the news release said.

South County projects will also benefit from a large chunk of state funding. During a series of extreme storms in January, the Arroyo Grande Creek levee failed and flooded parts of Oceano.

As part of the recent round of funding, the state will give SLO County \$1.23 million to help fund repairs to the levee, according to Laird.

A broccoli field was flooded in Oceano as Arroyo Grande Creek overtopped the levee on Jan. 10, 2023. David Middlecamp dmiddlecamp@thetribunenews.com



OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY

On the coast, projects related to storm damage and offshore wind energy will collect state funding.

To enhance flood safety, the state gave Morro Bay \$300,000 to “repair 150 linear feet of failed corrugated metal pipe” in its storm drain, the news release said.

Additionally, the county was awarded \$750,000 for staffing to “support offshore wind development,” the release said.

In June, the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management issued leases to three companies expected to build massive floating wind farms 20 miles off the coast of SLO County in a 376-square-mile area of the Pacific Ocean known as the Morro Bay wind energy area.

Cal Poly’s Center for Coastal Marine Sciences will receive \$150,000 to assess biological, wildlife and ecosystem conditions in the Morro Bay wind energy area to help determine if offshore wind energy projects should be developed there, according to Laird.

The wind turbines planned off the San Luis Obispo County coast would be similar to Ocean Wind’s WindFloat Atlantic floating offshore wind energy project near Portugal. They are each about 688 feet tall, or about twice the height of the Statue of Liberty. *Courtesy of Ocean Winds*



DIABLO CANYON LAND PRESERVATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The state allocated a total of \$10 million to efforts to preserve land around Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant.

The California State Coastal Conservancy will use \$5 million of that to develop a conservation easement on 12,000 acres of land surrounding Diablo Canyon Power Plant, Laird said.

That funding will also be used to “map future coastal and interior public trail locations, conduct public and tribal outreach, and undertake tasks in anticipation of the transfer to State Parks the 2400-acre unit of Diablo Canyon Lands known as Wild Cherry Canyon,” the release said.

The other \$5 million will be used to plan regional economic development and clean energy projects for a 600-acre parcel at the power plant site, Laird said.

Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant on June 1, 2023.

Laura Dickinson *The Tribune*

WHAT ABOUT OTHER DISTRICT 17 COUNTIES?

Other counties in District 17 won state funding for various projects, too.

Santa Cruz County will receive \$500,000 in state funding for improvements to the Stockton Avenue Bridge, while the city of Santa Cruz will get \$1 million to develop recreation and tourism on West Cliff Drive, according to Laird.

The state allocated \$750,000 for “vulnerable farm workers, day workers and indigenous language speaking families who were heavily storm impacted” — 50 in northern Monterey County and 150 in Santa Cruz County, the release said.

Monterey County will also receive \$1 million for wildfire prevention and eucalyptus removal, along with \$230,000 to update a Federal Emergency Management Agency hydrologic model of the Carmel River, the release said.

The state gave \$1 million to Seaside High School to build a multicultural arts center, \$1 million for the city of Marina to build a senior center, and \$84,000 to the city of Monterey for lighting and bollard improvements to the Old Fisherman’s Wharf, Laird said.

Santa Clara County received \$1 million in state funding to improve railroad grade separations and \$350,000 to a pedestrian safety project, according to Laird.

