

Mariposa County Phase IV Special Plan

Mariposa, California



The spectrum of conditions along Mariposa Creek range from robust riparian zones to cut banks and erosion.

Ecological guidance supports the transformation of an underutilized, degraded creek into a public amenity that enhances ecological resilience, recreation, and economic health.

SERVICES

Climate Adaptation & Resilience
Conservation Planning
Ecological Restoration

In 2019, Mariposa County developed a Master Plan for Mariposa Creek Parkway, a natural area in the town of Mariposa. The watershed has a natural history of periodic fire that has become more intensive and associated with flooding. Five phases organized the Master Plan and Biohabitats contributed to follow-up planning in Phases III and IV.

As a key member of a team led by SERA Architects, Biohabitats provided ecological expertise for the Phase IV Special Plan. Phase IV includes a mile-long reach of the Creek and 185 acres of floodplain and uplands. After assessing ecological conditions and fluvial geomorphology, Biohabitats identified opportunities for adaptive restoration, where ecosystem function can be elevated and connectivity restored while accommodating normal ecological disturbances and planned development. Biohabitats also helped guide site-specific visions for park features, such as pedestrian trails, a community garden in a multi-use housing development, and a playground. The Phase IV Plan was unanimously adopted by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors.

As ecological consultants on a team led by WRT, Biohabitats conducted an ecological assessment and conservation suitability analysis to guide the design of the 240-acre Phase III trail network in the uplands of a 1.2-mile reach of the Creek. This highlighted areas that should be more tolerant of trails and other areas such as oak savanna habitat that, due to its sensitivity, should have lower trail density and greater protection.

As an extension of the Phase III and IV projects, the Sierra Foothill Conservancy asked Biohabitats to collaborate with the Southern Sierra Miwok Nation to develop a culturally conscious fire management plan for the Mariposa uplands. Guided by the Southern Sierra Miwok Nation's deep knowledge and understanding, the forest management plan will provide guidelines for balancing landscape dynamics while honoring the longstanding relationships of the tribes with their home.