

Eutrophication in the Pajaro River

Eutrophication is defined as high primary production (plant and algae growth). Human activities can increase this primary production with the addition of nutrients, reduction in stream canopy, or hydromodification. When this occurs it is termed 'cultural eutrophication'. We tested several sites for signs of eutrophication and report the results here.

In streams or waterways that are affected by eutrophication, they often have elevated dissolved oxygen concentrations in the day and very low (suboxic) concentrations during the night; high oxygen demand in the water column or sediment; high algae or emergent plant biomass. Algae biomass may be toxic to wildlife or oxygen levels can be so depressed as to kill fish.

We studied a number of locations to measure day and night time dissolved oxygen concentrations to assess the trophic status of that portion of the reach. In the next few weeks, I will write up a summary of our findings and post it on this page.