

ROSE FOUNDATION GRANT NARRATIVE

Restoration: Fostering Collaboration for Lower Eel River Habitat Improvement

While much of the Eel River watershed is in recovery, with streambed conditions improving for salmon and steelhead spawning and pool depths increasing for juvenile rearing in many tributary streams, the lower Eel and Van Duzen rivers are trending toward filling in. This is causing a near crisis each year as there are too few pools to hold adult salmon safely and passage between pools risks mortality due to stranding. ERRP has been reporting on conditions annually and bringing issues to light that are not necessarily being seen by others. Lower Eel Fall Chinook coordinator Eric Stockwell is an outdoor guide and spends a great deal of time on the lower river during salmon migration in late summer through early winter. Eric reported on the Eel's loss of surface flow for the first time ever at Fortuna in the late summer of 2014. While counting fish and observing the run in the fall of 2015, Eric discovered that 10% or more of holding Chinook were lethargic and appeared to be blind. He then assisted CDFW with capture of diseased fish that were shipped to UC Davis for pathology tests. In 2017, shallow riffles and almost no holding pools put the lower Eel on the razor's edge for a fish kill. Through it all, Eric connects with the public, the press, agency staff and elected officials to help advocate for action that will protect the fish and ultimately benefit local communities. ERRP recently co-sponsored a lower Eel River restoration workshop at the Wiyot Tribal Headquarters (12/20/17) and some of the Work Plan items below are shaped by the findings and recommendations coming out of that meeting.

Salmon restoration, monitoring and reporting tasks:

- 1) Continue to document salmon migration and habitat conditions through photos, video and narratives which shed light on issues of concern.
- 2) Collect data on depth and volume of pools from Rio Dell to tide water at Fernbridge for use in presentations and recommendations for action.
- 3) Distribute press releases/give interviews to local press regarding lower Eel River conditions and findings prior to and during the 2017/2018 salmon run.
- 4) Present to local service clubs, Chambers and other community groups showing interest and ability to act on behalf of Eel fish and habitat.
- 5) Engage local private industry in discussions regarding their role and ability to act on behalf of Eel fish and habitat.
- 6) Present at Eel River Forum meetings and work to convene additional meetings with agencies, tribes and other Eel stakeholders to engage in restoration dialogue with an aim to form a collaborative working plan for restoring critical salmon habitat on the lower Eel.

2). Recreation and Education: Expansion of the River Walk Trail for a Salmon Parkway

In Humboldt County there is a successful recreational movement to expand trails and connect people with the natural world. The Humboldt Trails Trust, the Redwood Community Action Agency, and the cities of Fortuna, Eureka, and Arcata have all embraced the American River Parkway concept developed out of Sacramento bringing opportunities for recreation and improving human health. Currently the City of Fortuna is engaged in expanding their existing trail along the Eel River. This Rose Foundation grant will examine future ways to extend this trail from Fortuna to Loleta connecting the community to a Salmon Parkway along the Eel River.

- a. Develop a creative dialogue with the City Manager and City Engineer
- b. Engage Humboldt Trails Trust, and Redwood Community Action Agency
- c. Develop plans for future salmon migration viewing locations for community members, classrooms, and tourists
- d. Establish a salmon brochure for educational purposes placed in the existing kiosk by the River Lodge
- e. Examine future grant funding opportunities using the American River Parkway concept. Their Foundation's motto is "Marvel. Explore. Discover" and is a highly successful recreational and educational program along 23 miles of the Sacramento River. For more info check the Website at www.arpf.org
- f. Final report on the progress of future expansion of the Fortuna Salmon Parkway

3). Education: The Young Scientists: Connecting the Next Generation

Sal Steinberg is a retired school teacher and principal at the Scotia and Loleta Elementary Schools. He has been the leader of the Friends of the Van Duzen (FOVD) since 1995, a grassroots group closely allied with ERRP. Since his retirement, Sal has been an amazing force in outdoor education. Starting out with small grants from the McLean Foundation, he created the Young Scientists program working with schools mostly from the lower Van Duzen River at first, but also encompassing Fortuna, Scotia and Redway in southern Humboldt. He has received three U.S. Forest Service More Kids in the Woods grants (2013, 2016, 2017) and has taken hundreds of students to the river to witness salmon spawning, conduct water quality tests, study macro invertebrates, write poetry, sketch nature drawings, and produce movies. Sal is the principal driving wheel for the educational portions of this grant and the overall grant manager.

- a. School to Career: Select students from the local high school and College of the Redwoods to work alongside natural resource professionals.
- b. Direct Field Experience: Select students from the local high school, College of the Redwoods, and Humboldt State University to participate in the yearly salmon and habitat monitoring activities.
- c. Select local middle grade classes from the lower Eel/Van Duzen River schools for salmon education in the classroom and in the field.
- d. Arrange salmon tours of the Lower Eel River for classrooms weather permitting
- e. Arrange salmon tours of the Scotia Fisheries Exhibit for designated classrooms
- f. Submit pictures and power points documenting education project success