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The Newsletter of The Anderson Valley Land Trust
Spring 1997

WATERSHED RESTORATION: *BEGINNING A TIME OF HEALING*

The causes of the loss of salmon habitat in the Navarro River Watershed, just like the causes elsewhere, are varied and did not occur over-night. No one land use or natural event is the source of the problem. Rather, many changes over generations of use have conspired with the high level of natural erosion in our watershed to make things very tough on salmon, especially the coho. In the same way that time and many individual actions have lead to serious damage to the watershed, time and many individual actions are the source of healing.

Louisiana-Pacific and Their Navarro Forestland: What are LP's Plans for the Salmon?

Join us **Tuesday evening, May 27, from 7 - 9 PM** at the **Apple Hall** (Dining Room) at the County Fairgrounds in Boonville to for a presentation and discussion about **Louisiana-Pacific's draft Sustained Yield Plan's section dealing with their Navarro River watershed lands.** The evening will focus on their efforts to conserve and restore coho and steelhead salmon habitat. Steve Harmon, who is LP's Project Leader for their Sustained Yield Plan (SYP) and a senior analyst in their Geographic Information System department, will be representing LP. Tom Dougherty, LP's fisheries biologist, is also expected to participate.

Louisiana Pacific is the largest landowner in the Navarro River watershed, owning close to a third of basin including significant portions of the main stem and much of the North Fork. The greatest extent of healthy coho salmon habitat and fish populations for the whole watershed appears to be in their North Fork ownership. **This workshop provides a unique opportunity for Anderson Valley residents and the general public to learn first hand what LP's long term plans are for their lands here and how they intend to aid in the recovery of salmon.**

This is another of Anderson Valley Land Trust's *free* public service workshops and everyone is welcome.

Restoring riparian vegetation, stabilizing streambanks, repairing gullies, replacing road culverts and putting old roads "to bed" are things we can all do to help the watershed function better. With less sediment reaching the streams through gullies, landslides, poorly drained roads and other typical sources, the water flows will be able to more efficiently clear out the sediment and gravel loads the creeks are already burdened with. Better water quality and cleaner flowing creeks will both us human residents and our aquatic neighbors.

This kind of work is an investment in the future of our land and our community. To help rebuild the salmon populations and keep us from losing more productive soil downstream, we need to focus on three things:

Conservation: Take care of the best remaining habitat and make sure it is not degraded. Ditto for existing riparian forest, well-vegetated hillslopes, roadless and houseless areas. Avoid waste and increase efficiency in use of water.

Prevention: In our land use activities, whether it is ranching or raising a family, apply the best management practices available when you are disturbing soil, cutting timber, raising crops or grazing animals. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Restoration: When there's a stream reach or hillslope that can be restored in an effective and financially-feasible way, we can all get some help and do it. Soil that's not lost into the creek will be there for growing trees and crops. The Navarro Watershed Restoration Plan will provide an overview of how your property and your sub-basin fits into the big picture of the Navarro, and specific things you can do to help in restoration.



For example, let's say you've got some stream frontage, some of which has good tree cover and some which doesn't. Your restoration work consists of planting fast growing trees like willow or alder where there are none, to stabilize the stream channel and to provide shade to keep water temperatures lower. You also want to restore lost conifers to the woods because they live longer than hardwoods and provide important habitat, so you cut out some of the existing alder back a bit from the creek and interplant redwood. You decide that you'll fence out this area from your sheep to make sure the new plants are not damaged. Thanks to some of the cost share funds available through Natural Resource Conservation Service (described on the next page) you've got some financial assistance for this long term investment. Now most of your work is done: time and nature will take over for you.

To help protect that investment in long term restoration, you might consider creating a conservation easement for your property. This could permanently restrict land use like road building, grazing or timber harvesting in the riparian area that you have carefully restored, so that future owners don't undo the restoration work you have done, starting the cycle of watershed degradation over again. That's important because time is the element most needed to bring the watershed back into balance: time to grow big trees again along the creek and time for the natural hydrological processes to clean out the channels of sediment. By donating the conservation easement to the Anderson Valley Land Trust, you may receive a significant income or estate tax deduction based on the easement's value. That kind of pay-back can make your restoration work even more satisfying.

New Federal Cost Share Program Targets Navarro River Watershed for Funding of Conservation Practices by Agricultural Producers

The Natural Resource Conservation Service of the US Dept. of Agriculture recently unveiled EQIP -- the Environmental Quality Incentive Program created in the 1996 Farm Bill. This new program replaces four previous USDA programs, including the Agricultural Conservation Program. EQIP provides technical, financial and educational assistance to agricultural producers to address priority natural resource concerns. It is being administered locally by a Working Group that consists of the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District, the Farm Service Agency and its local FSA committee, and Cooperative Extension, under the general leadership of NRCS. NRCS is staffed in Mendocino County by Tom Schott.

There are four priority watersheds for EQIP in Mendocino County: The Navarro, Garcia, Eel and Russian Rivers. Funding and other assistance through EQIP will be offered through a new mechanism: Five to ten year contracts will provide cost sharing and incentives for a group of specific practices identified in an approved conservation plan for the ag property. The priority practices for the Navarro River watershed, and corresponding cost shares, focus on upland erosion control (including road or landing stabilization or removal, fence installation, planting, grade stabilization, etc.), water conservation (including irrigation system improvements) and fish habitat improvement (channel vegetation and stabilization, fish screening, riparian buffers, riprap, etc.). A complete list of practices is available from NRCS.

In addition to cost shares, there will be "incentive payments" to encourage the adoption of innovative land management practices by recipients. To be eligible for EQIP you must be engaged in livestock or agricultural production, including non-industrial timber management. Total cost-share or incentive payments are limited to \$10,000 per contract per year or \$50,000 over the life of the contract. To conclude a contract, the producer must develop and submit a conservation plan that addresses the key conservation needs on their land. This plan can be developed with the assistance of NRCS staff.

Applications for EQIP will be accepted for the first sign-up period beginning May 5, 1997 and ending on June 7, 1997. You may apply at the Farm Service Agency, 405 Orchard Ave., Ukiah or call 707-468-9225 for more information. If you want help assessing your property or technical information on conservation practices and costs, contact NRCS at the same address or call 707-468-9223.

Join the Anderson Valley Land Trust

Work with your friends and neighbors to help preserve the abundant natural resources of this valley for the benefit of generations to come.
We can't do it without you!

News from the Navarro Watershed Restoration Project: **Field Study Results Now Available**

The Navarro Watershed Restoration Plan, jointly sponsored by the Anderson Valley Land Trust, the Mendocino County Water Agency, and the State Coastal Conservancy, has completed its study of the current conditions in the Navarro Watershed, and has identified the main problems diminishing water quality, and limiting the coho salmon and steelhead trout fisheries. The project consultants, Trihey and Associates, spell out in a report submitted to the project's Advisory Group the specifics of habitat degradation in the Navarro and its tributaries.

According to fisheries biologist Tom Taylor, the two greatest problems affecting the fish are lack of large woody debris in stream channels and high summertime water temperatures. The related third major problem is sedimentation of streams. Sedimentation is a result of excessive erosion from land disturbances, such as roads, grading, agriculture, timber harvest, and grazing.

Coho salmon, which until fifty or sixty years ago returned in great numbers every winter to spawn in their natal tributary streams in the Mainstem, Rancheria Creek, Indian Creek, Mill Creek, North Fork, and perhaps Anderson Creek basins, are now limited to only a half dozen or so tributaries to the North Fork. Juvenile coho, which rear for one year in fresh water before migrating to the sea, are well adapted to the cold, shaded forest streams with deep pools created by huge fallen logs that formerly characterized the watershed. Through the last 150 years of settlement, loss of the riparian forest, salvaging of logs from the streams, and filling of pools with sediment, together have altered stream conditions to the point that coho are unable to successfully reproduce in any great numbers.

If you'd like to receive a copy of the Navarro Watershed Restoration Plan Field Study Report please write the Anderson Valley Land Trust or call Dan Sicular at 895-3173 or 510-649-7624

Steelhead, which are more tolerant of a range of environmental conditions, have fared better in the Navarro. Steelhead can survive, and under certain conditions even thrive, in warmer, faster water and in brighter light. While their numbers have declined over the decades, they are still broadly distributed throughout the watershed, and appear to be recovering some of their former abundance. According to local fishermen, this year's steelhead run was the best in years.

The Field Study Report has both bad news and good news for all of us who want to see a return of the fish, and the aesthetic, spiritual, and economic benefits they bring. Implications for restoration of water quality overall are equally challenging. The bad news is the report spells out in unimpassioned, scientific fact the extent and degree of habitat destruction and accelerated sedimentation the Navarro has suffered in recent decades. The good news is that many of the worst disturbances, such as the unregulated logging practices of the 1940's through early 70's, are a thing of the past, and many streams are showing some degree of recovery of their riparian cover and their form. Good news, too, because many of the worst problems are relatively easy to treat. Landowners in the Anderson Valley can make important contributions by controlling erosion, protecting and restoring riparian areas, leaving logs in streams, and conserving water. The next phase of the Watershed Project aims to assist interested landowners with these and other efforts to protect and enhance fish habitat and water quality.

- Dan Sicular, Project Coordinator

Restoration Planning is Focus of Navarro Watershed Project This Summer



The lower Navarro River Estuary.

The project to create Navarro Watershed Restoration Plan is about to live up to its name. At their meeting in June, the project's Advisory Group will discuss how to focus efforts to protect, conserve, and restore the Navarro's native coho salmon and steelhead trout fisheries. Based on Trihey and Associate's analysis of the study of watershed conditions, the Advisory Group will consider which tributary basins should be given top priority as areas for habitat protection and enhancement. Project staff, Advisory Group members and consultants will then seek the cooperation of landowners in these priority areas to plan together specific actions necessary to improve habitat conditions and water quality.

The final Restoration Plan will have something for everyone. Besides a comprehensive overview that highlights the current conditions in each region of the watershed, the plan will specify the types of conservation and restoration actions that landowners can take to ensure that they are contributing to the long-term health of the ecosystem. The plan will include suggestions for "best management practices" to protect resources from further degradation; conservation practices that minimize impact on land and water; and methods for controlling erosion, repairing gullies, stabilizing streambanks, replanting native vegetation, and restoring riparian and aquatic habitat.

If you are a lucky owner of property in an area that is identified as a high priority, project staff will be contacting you this summer to discuss your interest in restoration planning. If you own just an average piece of Paradise, watch out for information that could help you in your efforts to be a responsible and enlightened steward of your land.

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"Dedicated to the Voluntary Preservation of the Land
and its Abundant Natural Resources for the Benefit of Generations to Come"

___ **Yes!** I want to contribute to the preservation of the natural heritage of our valley by supporting the Anderson Valley Land Trust.

___ **I want to learn more** about the Anderson Valley Land Trust and private land conservation. Please send me additional information.

___ **I want to volunteer** my time to work with the Anderson Valley Land Trust.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$15) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer (\$100) |
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Thank you!

Please mail this form and your tax-deductible contribution to:

The Anderson Valley Land Trust, Inc., P.O. Box One, Yorkville CA 95494