



United States Department of the Interior
Redwood National Park
1111 Second Street
Crescent City, California 95531

September 17, 2021

Board of Supervisors
Humboldt County
825 5th Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Honorable Humboldt County Supervisors:

Two years ago, a landowner led, agency-supported Redwood Creek Estuary Stakeholders Group convened to produce a statement of consensus regarding on-going chronic issues at the Redwood Creek estuary in Orick. The estuary and four miles of lower Redwood Creek are confined by a 1968 US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Flood Control Project (levee system) that was installed to provide flood protection to Orick. The levee system has successfully reduced flooding in the town of Orick, but it has also created long-term unintended environmental consequences and increasingly undesirable conditions for agricultural land use operations, public safety, and salmonid habitat at the estuary. The historically productive estuary, sloughs, freshwater mainstem, riverine floodplain, and tributaries that once connected to a broad and deep embayment are now disconnected, and the embayment does not function ecologically. The Stakeholders Group recently identified the USACE Continuing Authorizations Program Section 1135 (CAP 1135), for submission of a 'new start' to study the feasibility and long-term sustainability of a restoration project at the Redwood Creek estuary to address these chronic issues.

The 'new start' under CAP 1135 is a mechanism to address environmental issues within a Flood Control Project. The primary objectives of this 'new start' would be to restore degraded estuarine salmonid habitat and address flood conditions on lands adjacent to the Redwood Creek estuary. During the year or more that it will take for the USACE to approve the new start, the Stakeholder Group will continue to define and analyze a suite of alternatives, plan for environmental compliance, and consider operations and maintenance costs associated with the project. The Stakeholder Group will work closely with USACE-approved tools and mechanisms to ensure efforts in 2021 can be utilized in a Feasibility Study.

The National Park Service (NPS) is an active participant in the Redwood Creek Estuary Stakeholders Group, contributing staff time and expertise towards improving resource conditions at the estuary. These efforts align with the overall restoration and stewardship goals of the NPS and are additive to restoration projects that the NPS is implementing with other partners in the Redwood Creek watershed. As a member of the Stakeholders Group and as land management agency charged with protecting the resources of our public lands, we look forward to working with County staff to better understand and consider the opportunities presented by the CAP 1135 program to support recovery of the salmon and steelhead populations of Redwood Creek.

Sincerely,

Steven N. Mietz
Superintendent