



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

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March 3, 2021

District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Attn: Planning Branch
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Subject: Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) Section 1135 New Start Request
for Redwood Creek Flood Control Project

Dear Sir or Madam:

This letter is to request the assistance of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, as amended, in improving the environment in the lower Redwood Creek and in the town of Orick, Humboldt County, CA, which has been adversely affected by the 1968 Redwood Creek Flood Control Project.

Redwood Creek is a critically important watershed in northern coastal California. The watershed hosts Redwood National and State Parks, working agricultural and timber lands, the town of Orick, and populations of threatened salmon and steelhead. The estuary and four miles of lower Redwood Creek are confined by a 1968 Army Corps levee system that was installed to provide flood protection to the community of Orick. The levee system has reduced flooding but has presented long-term unintended environmental consequences and increasingly undesirable conditions for agricultural land use operations, public safety, and salmonid habitat. The historic productive estuary, sloughs, freshwater mainstem, riverine floodplain, and tributaries that once connected to a broad and deep embayment are greatly diminished and disconnected. The endangered Tidewater Goby has been locally extirpated and listed salmonid species are severely compromised by the degraded conditions.

The levee project created an armored and straightened channel that terminates approximately 750 feet from the ocean and impair natural estuarine processes of free-flowing connections with freshwater tributaries. On the north side, annual high flows no longer drain to the estuary and create nuisance flooding of agricultural property and Hufford Road, a County roadway. The drainage issues occur adjacent to the terminal end of the north levee where floodwater backs up due a plug of sand and driftwood at mouth of Sand Cache Creek. On the south side, the

agricultural land use is protected and Strawberry Creek drains to the historic mainstem. However, the historic mainstem has impaired water quality and poor habitat due to being cut-off by the southern levee, non-functional tide gates, and increasing blockage at the downstream end.

A process-based restoration approach supported by the CAP 1135 program would create the rich aquatic habitat where fresh and salt water mix and drainage functions to support agricultural activities along with resilient populations of native wild fish. A Redwood Creek Estuary Stakeholder Group formed in 2017 is in full support of the County's request for a new start (see attached letters of support). The Stakeholder Group includes: the Hufford and Zuber families; Northcoast Regional Land Trust; National Park Service as a land manager; 5th District Supervisor Madrone; US Fish and Wildlife Service; NOAA/NMFS; CDFW; and non-profit California Trout. The Stakeholder Group has developed consensus around conceptual design elements and are actively assessing the concept's ability to restore aquatic habitat and maintain protection for the agricultural activities that are currently protected by the levees.

We, County of Humboldt, understand that the Section 1135 program has two Phases: (1) a feasibility study, and if a feasible project is identified then (2) a subsequent design and construction phase. This letter is a request for a new start for a feasibility study phase. As the local sponsor we acknowledge that we are responsible for 50 percent of feasibility study costs exceeding \$100,000 in Federal expenditures. For the design and construction phase the local sponsor will be responsible for 25 percent of project design and construction costs. In the design and construction phase a local sponsor's cost share obligation would include provision of all lands, easements, rights-of-way, relocations, and dredged material disposal areas required for the project. In the design and construction phase a local sponsor would assume responsibility for operation and maintenance of the project upon completion. We acknowledge that the cost share contribution can be in the form of "in-kind" services that contribute a direct component to the study, cash, or a combination. We intend to pursue budgetary actions so that funds are available to meet our cost sharing requirements.

The County of Humboldt has designated Hank Seemann (707-445-7741; hseemann@co.humboldt.ca.us) as the point of contact for this project.

Sincerely,

Virginia Bass, Chair
County of Humboldt Board of Supervisors

Attachment: Support Letters