



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
1655 Heindon Road
Arcata, California 95521-4573

February 24, 2021

Refer to NMFS No: 0012WCR2021AR00040

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

Re: NOAA Fisheries Support to Restore the Redwood Creek Estuary through with a Corps CAP 1135 'New Start' Request

Dear Humboldt County Supervisors:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) offers our support for restoring the Redwood Creek estuary through a Continuing Authorities Program Section 1135 (CAP 1135) 'new start' request to the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The 'new start' will initiate a Feasibility Study Phase in lower Redwood Creek and its estuary, which has been adversely affecting salmon, steelhead, and adjacent landowners since the 1968 Redwood Creek Flood Control Project was built.

Since 2017, representatives from NOAA Fisheries' West Coast Region and Restoration Center have participated in a landowner led, agency-supported Redwood Creek estuary stakeholder group (Stakeholder Group). With management from the non-profit California Trout, the Stakeholder Group has agreed on a conceptual approach to restore salmon and steelhead habitat in the estuary, and to improve agricultural function, and reduce flooding of surrounding lands. The Stakeholder Group recently identified the CAP 1135 process as a path forward to study the feasibility and long-term sustainability of an estuary restoration project to address these issues.

The Redwood Creek watershed contains populations of threatened salmon and steelhead that are critical to recovery of those species. The estuary and four miles of lower Redwood Creek have been confined by Corps levees since 1968. The levees reduced flooding of adjacent floodplains but have presented long-term unintended environmental consequences and increasingly undesirable conditions for agricultural land use operations, public safety, and fish habitat. The historic productive estuary, sloughs, freshwater mainstem creek, riverine floodplain, and tributaries that once connected to a broad and deep embayment are greatly diminished and disconnected. The CAP 1135 is a mechanism to address environmental issues within a Federal Flood Control Project without needing additional Congressional approval. The primary objectives of this CAP 1135 project are to restore critical estuarine fish habitat and address damaging flood conditions adjacent to the Redwood Creek estuary.



NOAA Fisheries will continue to support this effort with staff time and expertise to define and analyze a feasible project with the Stakeholder Group. In addition, NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region plans to fund California Trout to increase project management capacity and to sub-contract for environmental studies in spring 2021. While the Corps decides whether to pursue this new start project, the Stakeholder Group will continue to define and analyze a suite of actions, plan for environmental compliance, and develop the understanding of easements, liability, and operations and maintenance responsibilities associated with the project. The Stakeholder Group's work will be closely aligned with Corps process, using approved tools and mechanisms to best leverage the ongoing work.

Restoration of the Redwood Creek estuary is a very high priority recovery action in our coho salmon, Chinook salmon and steelhead recovery plans, and critical to recovery of these listed species. In addition, this effort aligns with other restoration efforts that we are involved in and/or funding within the Redwood Creek watershed. As members of the Redwood Creek estuary stakeholder group, NOAA Fisheries' West Coast Region and Restoration Center support the pursuit of a CAP 1135 new start, and look forward to working with Humboldt County on the opportunities offered by the CAP 1135 to help recover salmon and steelhead populations in the Redwood Creek watershed.

Please contact Leslie Wolff of the West Coast Region at 707-601-5455, or Bob Pagliuco of the Restoration Center at 707-834-2215 for more information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Justin Ly
North Coast Branch Chief
Northern California Office

cc: Joél Flannery, US Army Corps of Engineers, Joel.R.Flannery@usace.army.mil
Thomas Kendall, US Army Corps of Engineers, Thomas.R.Kendall@usace.army.mil