

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 3, 2013

HUMBOLDT COMMUNITY FOREST ACQUISITION

Project No. 13-008-01
Project Manager: Joel Gerwein

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to accept \$1,000,000 in grant funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and disburse up to \$950,000 of these funds to Humboldt County to acquire 1,005 acres in the Ryan Creek watershed, tributary to Humboldt Bay, Humboldt County, for the purposes of public access, habitat protection, and sustainable timber production.

LOCATION: Humboldt Bay, Humboldt County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources Protection

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site photographs](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Section 31220 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby accepts \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) in grant funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (“USFWS”) and authorizes the disbursement of up to \$950,000 (nine hundred fifty thousand dollars) to Humboldt County (“the County”) to acquire approximately 1,005 acres in the Ryan Creek watershed, Humboldt County Assessor’s Parcel Numbers 015-061-001, 015-171-001, 016-181-002, 016-191-004, 016-201-005, 017-031-007, 017-032-006 (portion), 017-071-010, 017-071-011, 017-072-004, 017-073-003, 017-073-006, 017-141-004, 017-151-007, 017-164-002, 017-173-003, 300-011-008 (portion), 300-011-013 (portion), 300-011-014 (portion), 303-011-003 (portion), 303-012-001 (portion), and 303-012-006 (portion) (“the property”), as shown on Exhibit 1 to the accompanying staff recommendation, for open space and natural resource protection and enhancement, the conservation of declining wetlands, habitat protection for listed and sensitive species, public access, and sustainable timber production, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of any Conservancy funds for the acquisition, the County shall submit for review and approval by the Executive Officer:
 - a. All relevant acquisition documents, including but not limited to an appraisal, environmental assessment, agreement of purchase and sale, escrow instructions, and documents related to title.
 - b. Evidence that the County has obtained all funds necessary to complete the acquisition.
2. The County shall dedicate the property for open space and natural resource protection and enhancement, the conservation of declining wetlands, habitat protection for listed and sensitive species, public access, and sustainable timber production, in a manner acceptable to the Executive Officer.
3. The County shall pay no more than fair market value for the property, as established in an appraisal approved by the Executive Officer.
4. Conservancy and USFWS funding shall be acknowledged by erecting and maintaining a sign on the property that has been reviewed and approved by the Executive Officer.
5. The County shall purchase the property only from willing sellers.
6. The County shall ensure compliance with and assist the Conservancy in complying with the grant terms of the USFWS.
7. The County shall prepare a forest management plan for the property, and submit this plan for approval by the Executive Officer within a reasonable time after acquiring the property, but no later than December 31, 2016. The plan shall include descriptions of specific lands and reserve areas, an explanation of how indicators of ecosystem health and forest productivity will be monitored and evaluated, a public access component, and an explanation of educational and outreach programs that will be implemented regarding sustainably managing redwood forests. The plans shall be updated periodically, and the updates submitted for approval by the Executive Officer.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 5.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources Protection.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize the acceptance of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (“USFWS”) and disbursement of up to nine hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$950,000) to Humboldt County (“the County”) to acquire

approximately 1,005 acres in fee simple in the Ryan Creek watershed, tributary to Humboldt Bay, Humboldt County (Exhibit 1). The remaining \$50,000 of the USFWS award is available to the Conservancy to cover staff costs for developing and implementing the project. The County will manage the land as a community forest, protecting it from development in perpetuity and allowing for habitat protection, public access, and sustainable timber management (the “project”). Community forests are distinctive in having some form of community involvement in their management, in this case through management by the County government. Community forests are often managed for multiple public benefits, such as habitat, recreation, and revenue generation through sustainable timber production.

The property is located adjacent to the City of Eureka on the west side of Ryan Creek. The project area is privately owned and managed by Green Diamond Resource Company (Green Diamond) as part of its 7,550 acre working forest known as the McKay Tract. There is increasing pressure to convert the western portions of the McKay Tract from forest into residential development. The project vicinity just outside of the Eureka city limits is one of the fastest growing regions in Humboldt County. The subject property, with its low gradient slopes abutting developed neighborhoods at its western edge, is under heavy development pressure. In 1995, the Eureka Community Plan rezoned 256 acres of the McKay Tract from timber production to commercial, multi-family, and single family residential use. As part of its General Plan Update (GPU), Humboldt County is identifying additional areas in the McKay Tract to be considered for rezoning for residential use. Residential development of this area would result in degradation of wetland functions, riparian condition, and water quality, and threaten the fish and wildlife dependent on the watershed’s natural resources.

Habitat degradation on the property also occurs due to unmanaged public access. As the property is currently used for industrial timber production and offers no public access, there is frequent illegal recreational use through unauthorized points of entry adjacent to residential areas. These activities, including motorcycle and mountain bike riding on existing and abandoned dirt roads, lead to erosion problems. Residential development would likely increase unlawful use of the remaining forests of the McKay Tract. New homes would also increase exposure of the remaining working forests to trespassing, vandalism, and fire dangers.

The proposed acquisition project is a partnership between the Trust for Public Land (TPL), Green Diamond, and the County to protect the entire McKay Tract through a two-stage acquisition process.

Stage 1 of the acquisition, the subject of the proposed Conservancy authorization, entails the fee-simple purchase from Green Diamond of approximately 1,250 acres west of Ryan Creek to be conveyed to Humboldt County and managed as part of a community forest. Following the model of the nearby Arcata Community Forest, which the Conservancy has supported with grants for acquisitions in 2006 and 2010, the property will be managed to maintain and enhance the integrity of its natural resources, while providing public access and sustainable timber production. Due to the needs of the seller and timing issues related to grants, this acquisition may occur in two separate purchases of approximately 1,005 acres and 245 acres. The Conservancy’s USFWS grant funds would be directed to the initial acquisition of 1,005 acres. The negotiated purchase agreement requires this portion of the transaction to be completed by October 25, 2014, with a 2-year extension possible if adequate progress is made. TPL is continuing its fundraising efforts for the remaining 245 acres for the Community Forest, with

grant applications pending to multiple sources, including the Urban Greening grant program, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Caltrans Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program. If TPL is unable to raise the additional funds for the fee simple acquisition of the remaining 245 acres, it would be included in the conservation easement acquisition in Stage 2.

Stage 2 of the project entails the purchase of a conservation easement over 6,300 acres of Green Diamond lands east of Ryan Creek. TPL has applied to the US Forest Service Forest Legacy Program for funding for the conservation easement. The forest would be protected from development, and would continue to be owned and managed by Green Diamond for timber production.

Humboldt County is currently developing a management plan for the community forest. Potential management goals identified by the County for the forest include:

- Provide public access and recreation opportunities within a forest near the greater Eureka area.
- Create opportunities for outdoor educational activities through schools and other organizations.
- Enhance the quality of living for nearby communities.
- Create a new destination to support the tourism sector for Eureka and Humboldt County.
- Provide a buffer between existing residential areas and timberland that will continue to be managed with a focus on timber management.
- Protect productive timberland from conversion to non-timber use.
- Maintain a working forest that supports timber-related jobs and economic productivity.
- Maintain a cohesive forest unit and protect the associated wildlife and fisheries habitat and watershed services.

The County has stated that it is not trying to compete with private timber management companies, but recognizes the multiple benefits that a community forest can offer. The County anticipates managing the forest through its Public Works Department, along with its existing parks and trails system. The County currently has a Forestry Review Committee consisting of seven Registered Professional Foresters with expertise in forest management, which has helped plan for the community forest, and is considering the formation of a Citizen's Advisory Committee to provide input on community forest management as well.

The protection and conservation-based management of the property will further the recovery of multiple listed species. The Ryan Creek watershed supports important habitat for resident and migrating songbirds, waterfowl, and shorebirds; and critical spawning, rearing, and migration habitat for anadromous fish. The McKay Tract includes approximately 97 acres of wetlands, of which 73 acres are located within the fee acquisition area, and 15 stream miles. The property supports: Coho salmon, Steelhead trout, and Chinook salmon, all listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA); tidewater goby, listed as endangered under the federal ESA; longfin smelt, listed as threatened under the California ESA; and Coastal cutthroat trout, a California Species of Special Concern. Listed as threatened under the federal ESA, the Northern spotted owl is known to occur both east and west of Ryan Creek on the McKay Tract. Green Diamond adopted a terrestrial Habitat Conservation Plan ("HCP") in 1992, which established protection measures for the northern spotted owl. Peregrine falcons, fully protected by the State

Fish and Game Code, currently nest in the project area despite ongoing timber operations. The property also hosts five rare plant species and three animal species of special concern: the Northern red-legged frog, Western pond turtle, and Sonoma tree vole (Exhibit 1).

Protection of the property will facilitate the recovery of coho salmon. The coho salmon population utilizing the project area is part of the Southern Oregon Northern California Evolutionary Significant Unit, an imperiled population that is critical to the evolutionary legacy of the species, yet is at high risk of extinction, with most local population sizes so small that their long-term viability is uncertain. In the early 1990s, the Freshwater Creek sub-watershed, which contains Ryan Creek, hosted one of the last seven populations of coho salmon numbering in the hundreds annually in all of northwestern California. While the Humboldt Bay watershed contains some of the last healthy salmon streams in California, many of these tributary streams suffer degraded in-stream habitat quality and complexity, especially in the low-gradient reaches that are important for salmonids. Passage barriers such as culverts and tide gates, along with riparian vegetation removal and sedimentation, have reduced the extent and quality of tidal freshwater and estuarine coho rearing habitat. These impaired watershed conditions make the protection of Ryan Creek especially vital for the recovery of this species. Ryan Creek still offers functional off-channel rearing habitat, and some of the best connectivity between estuarine rearing and upstream spawning habitat for coho in the Humboldt Bay watershed. If the project area were to be developed into homes, habitat loss and fragmentation would undermine the excellent coho conservation work that has been underway for many years. Development would result in the loss of wetlands and riparian areas and could impede fish passage. Upstream off-channel habitat could be lost. Water quality would be degraded as a result of elevated water temperatures, urban storm water runoff, and increased invasive populations.

The proposed project will allow for continued timber harvest on the property with specific terms for habitat protection. The nearby Arcata Community Forest provides a model for sustainable forestry that has resulted in the enhancement of sensitive fish and wildlife populations. Management techniques that will benefit sensitive species include the establishment of no-cut reserves around streams and wetlands, road decommissioning and improvement, the enhancement of in-channel and floodplain habitat, and the use of selection harvests¹ to promote late seral forest conditions, including elements such as large trees, standing snags, multiple age classes, and downed logs. Revenue generated through timber harvest and other means would initially be used to finance the cost of forest management and maintenance, habitat enhancement, and the development of trails and other amenities. It is expected that these expenditures will consume the majority of the revenues from timber production. Revenue could also be used to fund management and maintenance of County Parks. Such expenditures would need to be included in the management plan, subject to the approval of the Conservancy.

Public access for hiking, biking, and wildlife viewing will be a primary goal of the community forest. Public roads border the property and intersect with existing logging roads that can be converted into public trails. These existing logging roads are in good condition, traverse gentle terrain, and provide a ready-made trail network for hikers, bikers, and equestrians throughout the property and along the length of Ryan Creek. The Humboldt Trails Council has committed to

¹ Selection harvesting involves the implementation of specific silvicultural techniques—usually either 'single tree selection', 'group selection' or a combination of the two—to create an uneven-aged or all-aged condition in a forest stand, one more akin to a late successional or 'climax' condition.

partnering with the County to plan and develop trails for the community forest, and the City of Eureka has also committed to planning connections with its trail system. TPL and the County are exploring the potential to create a Bay to Headwaters trail by connecting trails in the community forest to Humboldt Bay on the north, and through Humboldt Redwood Company (HRC) land to BLM's Headwater Forest trails to the south. Initial discussions with HRC and BLM have indicated that such a trail could be feasible. In addition, the County will work with community groups to provide educational programs as part of the public access component of the community forest. Three schools are located within a few blocks of the planned community forest, providing excellent opportunities to work with their students. The Humboldt Fish Action Council also provides educational programs focused on salmonids in the Freshwater Creek watershed, and will continue this work in the Ryan Creek watershed (Exhibit 3).

Humboldt County is highly qualified to carry out the project with the assistance of TPL, and to hold and manage the property as a community forest. The County Public Works Department would manage the property through its Parks and Trails staff, which currently manages nearly 950 acres across 17 County parks. Oversight for the community forest would be provided by a Forest Review Committee, made up of the Community Development Director, Assessor, and seven registered professional foresters appointed by the County Board of Supervisors.

TPL is highly qualified to assist the County in carrying out this project. Since 1972, TPL has completed more than 4,250 park and conservation projects in communities nationwide, including in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The Conservancy has supported TPL on numerous acquisition projects in the past, ranging from the 7,000-acre Coast Dairies acquisition in Santa Cruz County to the 5.6-acre EcoVillage Farm Center acquisition in the City of Richmond.

Site Description:

The property is part of the McKay Tract, which encompasses about 80% of the Ryan Creek watershed. Ryan Creek, a tidally influenced stream, is a part of the Freshwater Creek sub-watershed, one of the four main subwatersheds of the Humboldt Bay watershed. Ryan Creek flows north for eight miles from the Elk River, draining 9,400 acres. At the northern tip of the project property, approximately two miles from Humboldt Bay, Freshwater Slough and Ryan Creek converge to form Ryan Slough, which provides important estuarine habitat for the watershed. The relatively flat, seasonally flooded lower reaches of Ryan Creek support abundant marshes and riparian wetlands. The wetlands feature a variety of woody and herbaceous vegetation, such as willows, cattails, rushes, and pondweeds. Along Ryan Creek, dense willow thickets and a sapling and shrub layer of bigleaf maple and alder provide cover, shade, and food for wildlife. Understory layers of sword fern, lady fern, wood fern, and fruit-bearing shrubs attract migrating and nesting songbirds. Grand fir and Sitka spruce canopy the meandering stream, maintaining stream temperatures ideal for salmon and providing shady, protected habitat for otters and red-legged frogs.

Nearly 90 percent of the Ryan Creek watershed is densely forested with conifers, particularly coast redwoods, which thrive in the persistent fog and cool temperatures. The timber stands in the McKay Tract are generally even-aged and dominated by second- and third-growth coast redwoods and Douglas fir. The forests and upland streams not only buffer the wetlands from soil erosion and contaminants, but also provide important wildlife habitat. The property is undeveloped, except for a network of logging roads.

Although habitat on the property is threatened by future development and stressed by unmanaged public access, valuable habitat is present and habitat enhancement is ongoing. Upon acquiring the McKay Tract in 1998, Green Diamond initiated a watershed restoration program that involved the decommissioning of roads near main watercourses and in riparian areas, upgrading culverts, removing obsolete stream crossings, and stabilizing stream banks. These efforts have decreased fine sediment influxes into salmonid rearing habitat, improved off-channel habitat complexity, and restored high-quality spawning gravels and dense riparian vegetation. Furthermore, use of less damaging harvesting techniques, including reduced opening sizes, has allowed for sustainable maintenance of second- and third-growth redwood stands.

Project History:

The Conservancy has supported protection and restoration of coastal wetlands, forests, and salmon habitat around Humboldt Bay for many years, and has also supported public access projects in this area. Recent Conservancy grants supported the acquisition of community forest land for public access, habitat protection, and sustainable timber production by the City of Arcata in 2010 and 2006. TPL approached the Conservancy for assistance with this project in 2012. Conservancy staff worked with TPL to apply for a USFWS National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant for the project, which was awarded in January 2013.

PROJECT FINANCING

Wildlife Conservation Board (pending)	\$4,500,000
California Natural Resources Agency	\$1,210,000
<u>Coastal Conservancy (USFWS Grant)</u>	<u>\$ 950,000</u>
Project Total	\$6,660,000

The USFWS will contribute up to \$950,000 towards the cost of the acquisition, and up to \$50,000 to cover related costs, such as Conservancy staff time for project management. The California Natural Resources Agency has committed \$1,210,000 to the project through its River Parkways program. The Wildlife Conservation Board expects to consider its contribution to the project at its November 2013 board meeting. In addition, the Humboldt Trails Council (HTC) is committing \$25,000 in in-kind match in the form of trail planning and construction. HTC's commitment to trail construction will also include community outreach. HTC will organize four to six community trail development workdays. Humboldt County's in-kind support of \$5,400 consists of staff time to plan community forest management.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION: The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 5.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resource Code Section 31220.

Consistent with Section 31220(a)(6), the project involves granting funds to acquire and protect coastal wetlands, riparian areas, sensitive watershed lands, and fish and wildlife habitat within a

coastal watershed in order to improve and protect coastal water quality and habitats. As required by section 31220(a), the Conservancy has consulted with the State Water Resources Control Board regarding the grant's consistency with Chapter 3 of Division 20.4 of the Public Resources Code, regarding water quality of coastal waters and beaches.

Consistent with Section 31220(b)(2), the conservancy may award a grant for a project that protects or restores fish and wildlife habitat within coastal watersheds. The McKay Tract lies within the Humboldt Bay watershed, and the acquisition of the property for its intended use as a community forest will reduce threats to fish and wildlife, protect coastal and riparian wetlands, floodplains and other sensitive watershed lands, and provide for public access compatible with resource protection and restoration objectives. Consistent with Section 31220(c), the project will include a monitoring and evaluation component to assess the effects of future timber management, trail construction and use, and habitat enhancement projects on the property's resources. Further, the project is consistent with the Humboldt Bay Management Plan, and with the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Basin, in which the project area is located. See "Consistency with Local Watershed Management Plan/State Water Quality Control Plan" Section below.

Under Section 31104, the Conservancy may apply for and accept federal grants.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will protect a 1,005-acre significant coastal resource property.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on November 10, 2011, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** The project enjoys broad public support, including from the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, Assemblyman Wes Chesbro, State Senator Noreen Evans, Congressman Jared Huffman, the City of Eureka, the Humboldt Trails Council, and the Humboldt Fish Action Council. (See Exhibit 3: Project Letters)
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located partly within the coastal zone of Humboldt County. The portion of the project area that is located outside the coastal zone provides critical habitat for salmon and steelhead populations.

5. **Need:** While TPL has secured significant funding from other sources for the project, Conservancy funding provides a significant portion of the acquisition cost and is necessary to implement the project.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Ryan Creek watershed, within which the project area is located, is identified in the 2012 Draft Recovery Plan for the Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit of Coho Salmon as a key area for recovery actions, and Humboldt Bay has been prioritized in state and national conservation plans.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Preventing development on the McKay Tract will allow room for wetlands to migrate inland as sea level rise occurs.

Additional Criteria

8. **Urgency:** The project must be implemented in the near future to take advantage of the significant federal funds available at this specific site and the willingness of Green Diamond to donate a portion of the easement value in Phase II, and to prevent development from degrading valuable natural resources on the property.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Readiness:** TPL, the County, and the landowner are prepared to move ahead with the acquisition. An appraisal is currently under review by the Department of General Services and USFWS.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.”
12. **Cooperation:** Humboldt County, TPL, the Humboldt Trails Council, and the Cities of Eureka and Arcata will all contribute to this project, whether through carrying out the acquisition, managing the property, advising on community forest management, or coordinating public access.
13. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** Changing temperature and precipitation may result in increased threats to native plant and wildlife communities on the site. Humboldt County’s monitoring of the property will allow for the possibility of adaptive management to protect vulnerable biological communities.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The project area is partly within the Coastal Zone of Humboldt County. Rivers, creeks, sloughs, gulches, wetlands, estuaries, and associated riparian habitats are identified in the County of Humboldt Local Coastal Program (Humboldt LCP) as environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA) within the County of Humboldt’s coastal zone. [Humboldt LCP (3-42)].

The Humboldt LCP cites Public Resource Code Section 30231, a provision of the Coastal Act, as follows: “The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored...” (Humboldt LCP, 3-48). Consistent with Section 30231, this project will protect the McKay Tract, and facilitate future habitat enhancement of coastal wetlands and riparian habitat in the project area.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN/ STATE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN:

The proposed project is consistent with the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation, and Conservation District's Humboldt Bay Management Plan (2007) (HBMP). The HBMP includes the following goal and objective relevant to the project: "Goal: Protect and sustain the physical and biological environment maintaining the Humboldt Bay ecosystem... Objective: Protect, maintain, and enhance the biological populations and processes in Humboldt Bay, in the nearshore Pacific Ocean, and in the Bay's watershed." (p. 200.) Policy CAE-3 of the HBMP states that the Harbor District should "Protect and maintain environmentally sensitive habitat areas." (p. 201.) Consistent with the HBMP's goals, objectives, and policies, the project will protect environmentally sensitive habitat that plays an important role in the Humboldt Bay ecosystem."

The proposed project is consistent with the Humboldt Bay Watershed Salmon and Steelhead Conservation Plan (2005), which was prepared by the Humboldt Bay Watershed Advisory Committee. The proposed project will protect upland forests in the watershed from development and ensure that forest management will prioritize habitat enhancement, thereby meeting the following Plan objectives for the Freshwater Creek watershed, within which Ryan Creek is located:

- I-B-7. Retain soils in the upper watershed through management practices including retention of large wood on landscape and retention of vegetative cover on steep slopes.
- III-C-2. Ensure adequate cover is provided in spawning reaches for coho, Chinook, and steelhead
- III-C-5. Reduce the input of fine sediments in the vicinity of known spawning reaches in all areas that contribute.
- V-A-d. Identify areas of high quality riparian habitat that are at risk of being degraded; work with landowners, agencies, and conservation organizations to provide protection.

The proposed project is also consistent with the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Basin (adopted by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board in 2011) in that it would protect fish and wildlife habitat in a coastal watershed and coastal wetlands, including habitat for state- and federally-listed species, and thereby protect and enhance the following existing beneficial uses identified by the Water Quality Control Plan for the Freshwater Creek watershed:

- Estuarine habitat
- Fish Migration
- Preservation of Rare and Endangered Species
- Fish Spawning
- Cold Freshwater Habitat
- Wildlife Habitat

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Acquisition of the project area is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15313 because it involves an acquisition of lands for preservation of fish and wildlife. Additionally, the acquisition is exempt under Section 15325 as a transfer of an interest in land to preserve open space and habitat.

Preparation of the forest management plan is exempt under Section 15262.

Staff will file a notice of exemption upon Conservancy approval.