



DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Region 1 – Northern
601 Locust Street
Redding, CA 96001
www.wildlife.ca.gov

EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



March 12, 2015

Mr. Samuel P. Schuchat
Executive Officer
Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 13th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612-2530

Subject: Hamilton Creek Fish Passage Improvement Project

Dear Mr: Schuchat:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has been involved in intensively monitoring the Smith River's coho salmon population since 2011. Because we have been monitoring coho salmon and their habitats throughout the entire 719 square mile watershed, specific salmonid barrier restoration goals within the basin are prioritized based on the maximum immediate benefit to coho salmon production. The culvert barrier at Picnic Road on Hamilton Creek is the last significant man-made barrier to coho salmon in the Mill Creek watershed and prevents access to over one kilometer of excellent coho salmon spawning and rearing habitats (Figure 1).

Additionally, Hamilton Creek has a large beaver-formed pond at the headwaters that has shown to augment stream flows during the current drought, adding to the ecological integrity of this sub-basin. All of the tributaries of similar size proximal to Hamilton Creek have been used substantially by coho salmon during our investigation (Figure 1) and we are confident spawning adults will colonize this stream once the barrier is removed.

Because upper Mill Creek represents the best available habitat for coho salmon in the Smith River basin, the impact of this barrier removal would be substantial towards increasing coho salmon production. The Department strongly supports the proposed restoration project to replace the existing culvert barrier at Picnic Road with a bridge.

Sincerely,

Neil Manji
Regional Manager

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Exhibit 3: Project Letters

ec: Justin Garwood and Tony LaBanca, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Justin.Garwood@wildlife.ca.gov, Tony.LaBanca@wildlife.ca.gov

Dan Yparraguirre and Stafford Lehr, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Dan.Yparraguirre@wildlife.ca.gov, Stafford.Lehr@wildlife.ca.gov

Peter Jarausch, State Coastal Conservancy
Peter.Jarausch@scc.ca.gov

Jeff Bomke, California State Parks
JBomke@parks.ca.gov

Grant Werschkull, Smith River Alliance
Grant@smithriveralliance.org

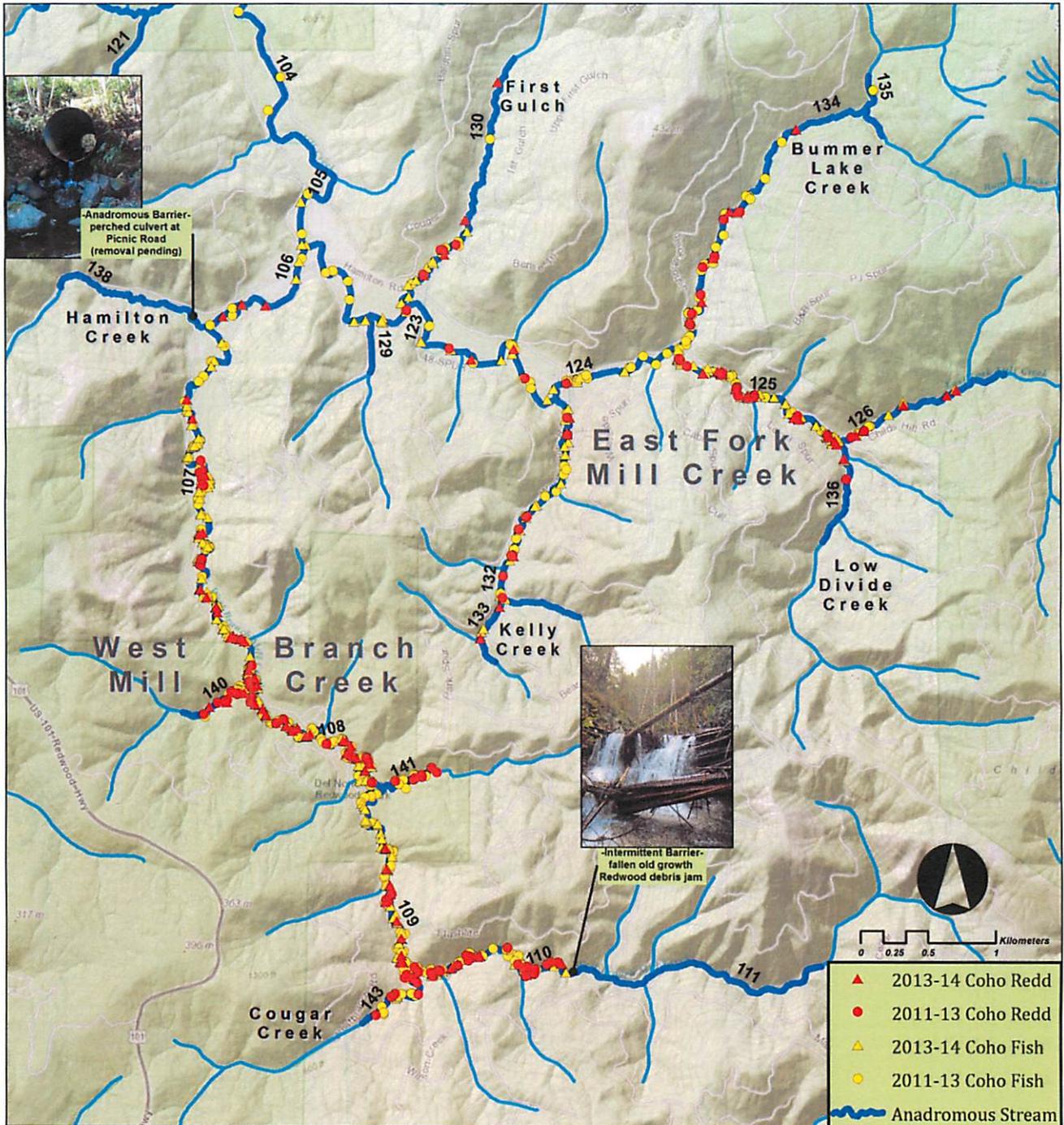


Figure 1. Distribution of observed adult coho salmon and verified coho salmon redds in the Mill Creek spawning ground census (Life Cycle Monitoring Station) area during the winters of 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014 Smith River Basin, Del Norte County, CA. Note: redd location symbols are displayed above fish observation symbols and may obscure fish observations in reaches containing high densities of verified redds. Two current barriers blocking access to significant anadromous fish habitat are identified.