



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

Refer to NMFS No: 10012WCR2016AR00011

Douglas Bosco, Chairman  
Governing Board, Coastal Conservancy  
1330 Broadway, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, California 94612

**SEP 12 2016**

Re: Support for the *Smith River Estuary Restoration* proposal

Dear Mr. Bosco:

The purpose of this letter is to express support for the *Smith River Estuary Restoration* proposal recently submitted for funding under the Proposition 1 Grants Program. As Recovery Coordinator for the Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast (SONCC) coho salmon with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), I can speak to the role of this project in recovery of SONCC coho salmon.

The Smith River estuary is of utmost importance to coho salmon. Estuaries are important transition zones for juvenile salmonids transitioning from freshwater to saltwater. Functioning estuaries provide productive feeding areas and refuge from predators, increasing growth and survival of smolts entering the ocean. These functions are particularly important given the degraded habitat conditions elsewhere in the Smith River. Currently, the Smith River estuary is impaired due to past diking and filling of tidal wetlands, which resulted in the loss of estuarine habitat. Most of the remaining estuarine habitat is diminished in quality.

The Smith River is identified as a Core population in NMFS' SONCC coho salmon recovery plan. This means that, given our current framework, SONCC coho salmon cannot be recovered unless the Smith River coho salmon population is at low risk of extinction. "Impaired Estuarine Function" is rated as a very high stress to the Smith River coho salmon population in the recovery plan, and the plan identifies actions to restore the Smith River estuary ecosystem as necessary to prevent a further significant decline in the species as well as to bring the population to sustainable levels. In short, restoration of the estuary is absolutely critical to the recovery of SONCC coho salmon in the Smith River basin.



Exhibit 2: Project Letters

We respectfully encourage you to support the *Smith River Estuary Restoration* proposal in order to allow for restoration of the ecosystem and to aid in the recovery of SONCC coho salmon. If you have any questions about this letter, you can reach me at (707) 825-5168 or via e-mail at [julie.weeder@noaa.gov](mailto:julie.weeder@noaa.gov).

Sincerely,



Julie Weeder  
Recovery Coordinator  
Northern California Office

cc: CHRON File (pdf)  
Division- File copy