

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
June 1, 2023

**REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARK VISITOR CENTER AND RESTORATION PROJECT –  
PHASE 3 RESTORATION IMPLEMENTATION AND INITIAL TRAILS GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION:  
AUGMENTATION**

Project No. 14-055-04  
Project Manager: Su Corbaley

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Authorization to disburse \$1,347,257 received by the Conservancy from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Save the Redwoods League to augment the Conservancy's grant, authorized on March 24, 2022, of \$6,602,136 to the Yurok Tribe and California Trout, Inc. to restore approximately 11.5 acres of riparian habitat on lower Prairie Creek as part of the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project at the former Orick Mill A site in Humboldt County, as follows: \$1,097,257 to the Yurok Tribe and \$250,000 to California Trout, Inc.

**LOCATION:** 1.5 miles north of Orick, Humboldt County

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EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project Phase 3 Implementation and Initial Trails Gateway Construction staff recommendation dated March 24, 2022](#)
- Exhibit 3: [November 10, 2022 Technical Memorandum – Greenhouse Gas Analysis of Use of Curtain Burner](#)
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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes augmentation of two grants, totaling an amount not to exceed \$1,347,257 (one million three hundred forty-seven thousand, two

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hundred fifty-seven dollars) collectively, to the Yurok Tribe and California Trout, Inc. (“the grantees”) to construct elements of the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project at the former Orick Mill A site in Humboldt County as follows, subject to adjustment between the grantees by the Executive Officer: up to \$1,097,257 (one million ninety-seven thousand, two hundred fifty-seven dollars) to the Yurok Tribe and up to \$250,000 (two hundred fifty thousand dollars) to California Trout, Inc. for the implementation of riparian and fish habitat restoration projects on lower Prairie Creek.

This authorization is subject to all of the conditions imposed upon the grantees through the March 24, 2022 Conservancy authorization for this project (Exhibit 2).

**Findings:**

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

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding enhancement of coastal resources.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. California Trout, Inc. is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

On March 24, 2022, the Conservancy authorized grants to the Yurok Tribe and California Trout, Inc. (Caltrout) to restore approximately 11.5 acres of riparian habitat on lower Prairie Creek in Orick, Humboldt County. The project authorized for funding by the Conservancy on March 24, 2022 is Phase 3 of the Prairie Creek Floodplain Restoration Project, a multiphase restoration project occurring over 5 years. The first of two Phase 3 construction seasons was completed in 2022; the second will occur in 2023. Staff recommends the Conservancy augment the existing grant by authorizing the disbursement of up to an additional \$1,347,257 received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Save the Redwoods League (League). The existing grants to the Yurok Tribe and Caltrout disburse \$6,602,136 in funds received by the Conservancy from the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC), the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), and the League for the project. After augmentation, the total amount of the grants would be \$7,949,393, distributed as follows, subject to adjustment between the grantees by Executive Officer: \$6,378,966 to the Yurok Tribe and \$1,570,427 to Caltrout.

The project is fully described in the March 24, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2). No significant changes have been made to the project. The additional funds from the USFWS provide for the restoration of an additional 1-acre of riparian and wetland habitat at the backwater pond planned to be installed in the northwest pasture, as described in the March 24,

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2022 Staff Recommendation, specifically shown on exhibit 3 attached to the recommendation. The USFWS grant and the funds from the League will also support the removal of approximately 9 of the 21 acres of legacy asphalt that remained from the former mill operation. Lastly, USFWS funds will be used to revegetate the expanded pond, and perform monitoring and maintenance of vegetation in the Phase 1 and Phase 3 restoration areas. Phase 3 restoration is expected to be completed in 2023, with monitoring and maintenance continuing for approximately three years.

**Site Description:** The 125-acre Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project site was formerly the location of a sawmill (Orick Mill A) and contains the lower mile of Prairie Creek before it discharges to Redwood Creek, three miles upriver from the Pacific Ocean. The site has been significantly altered by past operations, leaving the creek confined and lacking floodplain and riparian habitat. The site condition is more fully described in the March 24, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:** Each grantee is fully qualified to carry out the project, as discussed in the March 24, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:**

The project remains consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

**Grant Augmentation**

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ( <i>via</i> grant to the Conservancy) | <b>\$980,000</b>   |
| Save the Redwoods League  | \$367,257          |
| <b>Total Augmentation</b>   | <b>\$1,347,257</b> |

**March 24, 2022 Authorization**

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| Ocean Protection Council ( <i>via</i> a grant to the Conservancy)         | \$975,000          |
| Wildlife Conservation Board ( <i>via</i> a grant to the Conservancy)      | \$5,921,136        |
| Save the Redwoods League  | \$1,084,000        |
| Caltrout ( <i>via</i> US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program Grant) | \$24,997           |
| <b>Subtotal March 24, 2022 Authorization</b>                              | <b>\$8,005,133</b> |
| <b>Conservancy Authorization Total</b>                                    | <b>\$9,352,390</b> |

The OPC, WCB, and League funds for Phase 3 habitat restoration are discussed in the March 24, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2). The funds for the augmentation will complete Phase 3

and derive from funds granted to the Conservancy specifically for the restoration of approximately 11.5 acres of riparian habitat on Prairie Creek and a cash contribution from the League for habitat restoration activities. The USFWS has awarded \$1,000,000 to the Conservancy for Project implementation, contingent on compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). The proposed authorization to disburse \$980,000 of the USFWS grant will support project implementation directly, while the remaining \$20,000 would pay for Conservancy staff costs. In 2021, the League pledged \$867,257 to assist with the restoration by providing funds toward the removal of legacy asphalt at the mill site; \$500,000 of League funds were included in the March 24, 2022 Conservancy authorization. The remaining \$367,257 are included in this augmentation. **The total cost to restore 11.5 acres of riparian habitat on Prairie Creek is \$7,974,390.** Included in the Conservancy Authorization Total is an additional \$1,378,000 that was authorized by the Conservancy on March 24, 2022 for public access improvements at the Trails Gateway. This included \$794,000 of the WCB funds specifically for public access that were awarded to the Conservancy and an additional \$500,000 provided by the League as match for the WCB public access funds.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

The project is undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 (Sections 31251-31270) of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, as described in Exhibit 2, and remains consistent with this chapter.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S [2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 1.2 Return Power to Tribes**, the proposed project was developed in partnership with the Yurok Tribe and supports work by the Yurok Tribe to restore riparian habitat and steward ancestral lands.

Consistent with **Goal 1.4 Incorporate Workforce Development in Our Projects**, the proposed project incorporates workforce development by providing opportunity to the all-Yurok construction crews to construct the project and opportunities to the Yurok Tribe Fisheries Department’s technicians, under the supervision of experienced engineers, to train in field measurement / survey techniques.

Consistent with **Goal 3.2 Restore or Enhance Habitats**, the proposed project will restore 11.5 acres of important coastal stream and riparian floodplain habitat.

Consistent with **Goal 3.2 Restore or Enhance Habitats**, the proposed project will complete a project that improves anadromous fish habitat.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

On September 3, 2020, the Conservancy adopted the “Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project”

(IS/MND) and authorized funding for the project. The Conservancy filed a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse on September 8, 2020. The project remains substantially unchanged from its description in the IS/MND, and no new environmental information or change in circumstances require a re-evaluation of the potential environmental effects of the project. (14 Cal Code. Regs. Section 15162(b)). After completing the second construction season in 2022, it was determined that use of a curtain burner to manage removed invasive and non-invasive vegetation would be beneficial and efficient for the project and would not create greenhouse gas emissions in excess of the California Air Resources Board threshold used for assessing the project’s potential greenhouse gas impact. This minor change to the project was made after the Conservancy approved the MND, but no new MND is required because the change causes no new significant impacts. An analysis of air quality related to the use of the curtain burner is attached to this staff recommendation (Exhibit 3). Accordingly, the proposed authorization remains consistent with the CEQA findings adopted by the Conservancy in connection with the September 3, 2020 authorization.