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Restore

Degraded coastal landscapes represent a huge portion of the distance salmon and steelhead must travel on their journey to and from the Pacific Ocean. Historical timber cutting and road building practices have filled the rivers with sediment and bisected them with culverts and other barriers to fish passage. As a result, partnerships with mining and timber companies are a key part of the effort to bring these fish back for the next generation of Californians.

The North Coast Coho Project: 10 Years of Success

In 1998, building on the success of a North Bay Chapter restoration project at Lagunitas Creek, TU launched its North Coast coho restoration effort. The project engaged two timber companies, Mendocino Redwood Company and Campbell Timberland Group, which together own almost 500,000

acres in Mendocino County, plus significant acreage in at least a dozen key watersheds or subwatersheds.

Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) was the first partner to sign on, when it acquired all of Louisiana-Pacific's holdings on six coastal rivers: the Garcia, Navarro, Noyo, Big River, Elk Creek and Hollow Tree Creek. The areas had been heavily logged for decades, and much of the habitat was severely degraded.

Under the groundbreaking partnership, MRC agreed to close damaging roads, provide scientific information

and restore coho and steelhead habitat on the lands. MRC is developing a habitat conservation plan for its holdings in Mendocino and Sonoma counties. This will be among the largest plans for private lands in the state of California.

Most recently, MRC waded into the bankruptcy reorganization of Palco timber company in Humboldt County, proposing a plan supported by TU to acquire almost 200,000 acres of timberlands and expand its sustainable timber harvesting, land



LEFT: VAL ATKINSON RIGHT: LARRY ULRICH

stewardship and fisheries restoration commitments to these acres.

In 2001, TU added Campbell Timberlands Group as a partner, when the company agreed to implement progressive road and stream improvements on their holdings in Ten-Mile River, Pudding Creek and Big River. The company's acreage spans hundreds of thousands of acres of priority coho habitat.

Today, 10 years after the start of the project, TU and the North Coast coho project partners have much to celebrate. They've improved or eliminated 410 miles of logging roads, removed three major fish migration barriers and installed 195 instream structures to improve coho and steelhead habitat.

Bohan & Canelis A New Approach to Gravel Mining

Bohan & Canelis Aggregates, a family owned mining company, has mined gravel from lower Austin Creek, near its mouth with the Russian River, since 1946. But a few years ago, when his mining permit was up for renewal, co-owner Homer Canelis says the National Marine Fisheries Service—a part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)—approached him and asked if he'd like to try a new, more fish friendly way of in-stream gravel mining.

Although he says he was "kind of leery about working closely with a federal agency," Canelis took NOAA up on the offer, and the partners quickly enlisted the help of TU, the California Department of Fish and Game, the Sonoma County Water Agency and the California Conservation Corps. Today, the alliance has grown to include the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District.

The new mining technique, known as alcove digging, involves digging deep off-channel rearing pools, which



provide critical coho habitat. Large root wads and boulders, paid for with a Community-based Restoration Program grant from NOAA, help recreate the dynamics of a natural coho stream.

Leah Mahan, marine fisheries biologist for NOAA, says that the agency hopes the project will serve as a model for other mined streams, and so far the signs are good. The stream has regained its natural serpentine look, and Redwood Empire Chapter volunteer Nick Morello, who worked a

fish trap every weekend during 2007's spring survey season, says that he and others counted more than 7,800 steelhead and 400 coho that year.

The news is heartening for Homer Canelis, who remembers standing on the bridge that crosses lower Austin Creek as a boy, looking for steelhead or salmon.

"We always were doing something along the creek, and we saw them all of the time," he says. "Sometime in the 1960s, they disappeared. I'd like to see them back again."