

NORTH COAST FOREST CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

2016 ANNUAL REVIEW



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Project Orientation

At The Conservation Fund, we believe that well-managed forests can be both economically viable and ecologically sustainable. On California's North Coast, we are demonstrating a new approach to forest conservation that balances environmental restoration and stewardship with the economic imperatives of large-scale forest ownership and the desire to sustain the local timber economy. Since 2004, with the help of our public and private partners, we have protected more than 120,000 acres of forestland as part of our North Coast Forest Conservation Initiative. Of these protected forests, we own and manage more than 74,000 acres in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. We seek to demonstrate that large, understocked tracts of coastal forest can be returned to ecological and economic viability through patient, adaptive management by a nonprofit organization, in partnership with private and public entities and community stakeholders. We are making conservation work for America.

We invite you to learn more about the major accomplishments, challenges and activities of our program in 2016. Our success results from the strong support of a diverse set of partners—neighbors, local businesses, government agencies and conservation groups. Thank you for your interest and continued support!

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Caspar Index Named after our North Coast hometown, this is a customized index to share some of the measurements we track. Past North Coast Reviews are available at conservationfund.org.

	2014	2015	2016
Northern Spotted Owl Conservation			
Northern spotted owl activity centers	29	28	28
Northern spotted owls successfully fledged	2-Garcia	0	2-Garcia 2- Big River
Forest acres set aside for Northern spotted owl habitat	2,900	2,800	2,800
Coho Salmon & Steelhead Conservation			
Approximate cubic yards of sediment saved through road improvement projects	15,807	15,723	5,240
California Department of Fish and Wildlife salmonid spawner survey reaches sampled	6	6	6
Numbers of logs added to streams to improve salmonid habitat.	65 (North Fork Gualala)	0	75 (East Branch Little North Fork Big River)
Water Quality			
Total number of instream remote water temperature monitoring stations on all Forests (monitoring on Gualala & Buckeye provided by Gualala River Watershed Council)	83	83	83
Big River Forest lowest summer stream temperature Mean Weekly Average temperature	58 (Lower North Fork Big River)	52 (Upper Two Log Creek in Big River)	52 (Lower North Fork Big River)
Big River Forest highest summer stream temperature Mean Weekly Average temperature	68 (Mainstream Big River at easternmost property line)	71 (Mainstream Big River at western property line)	71 (Mainstream Big River at western property line)
Environmental Monitoring & Assessment Program reaches monitored per year on the Garcia River by The Nature Conservancy and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (65 total reaches established)	3	3	6
Forest Economics			
Estimated local economic contribution (employment, contractors, purchases)	\$3.9 million	\$3.6 million	\$3 million
Volume of logs removed (net board feet)	3,455,000	3,466,930	1,879,230
Number of log trucks	772	829	434
Verified forest carbon offsets	330,236	120,607	Verification still in progress
Community Outreach			
Number of participants in the Pedestrian and Equestrian Stewardship Access Program on Salmon Creek, Big River	20	18	15
Public tours	6	5	10

Timber Harvests



Big River Forest redwood logs on their way to the mill.

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The total volume of sustainably harvested trees in 2016 was 1,879,230 net board feet from the Big River, Salmon Creek and Garcia River Forests. All redwood and Douglas-fir logs were sold to local sawmills in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. None of our forest conservation would be possible without a healthy forest industry—we offer our thanks to the local sawmills, logging contractors and resource professionals who help make our program successful.

Forest Certification



Redwood logs stacked and ready to be milled into lumber.

© Lily Engle

As they have every fall since 2007, verifiers from the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC-C001535) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) programs completed a field audit of the North Coast Forest Conservation Initiative. The Program, and our other forest projects around the country, were found in overall conformance with the standards—the two most strict and comprehensive standards for forest management available. The Fund actively participates in the California SFI Implementation Committee and we welcome comments and suggestions regarding our forest certification. Full audit reports are available on our website: conservationfund.org/projects/north-coast-forest-conservation-initiative/north-coast-reference-documents

Habitat Restoration



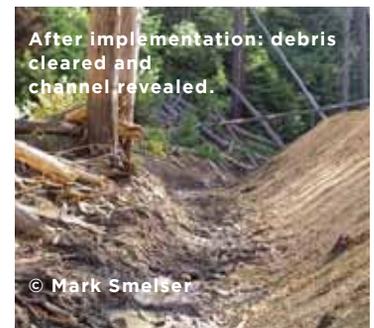
Before implementation: geologist assessing landslide debris on Big River project.

© Mark Smelser

The placement of large wood in streams and maintaining and upgrading our road infrastructure to reduce future sediment delivery is a high priority for salmon habitat restoration. Maintaining the road infrastructure is also critical to our ability to move through the forests for log hauling, stream restoration projects, botanical surveys and northern spotted owl surveys. A significant portion of the money we make through timber and carbon sales is re-invested in road infrastructure improvements. These projects are part of the decade-long process of improving the 500-plus miles of legacy roads on our forests.

An example of these important projects is the ongoing Mainstem Garcia Sediment Reduction and Habitat Enhancement Project on the Garcia River Forest that we are implementing with cost-share funding from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). To date we have treated 5 miles of road, resulting in the prevention of 12,416 cubic yards of sediments entering Garcia River tributaries. The project will be completed in 2017. Implementation began in 2016 on the Graphite Creek Sediment Reduction and Habitat Enhancement Project on the Garcia River Forest, also with cost-share funding from CDFW. Features treated in the 2016 work season include 4 stream crossings and 1 landslide. Project accomplishments include: storm-proofing approximately 0.74 miles and decommissioning 0.08 miles of forest road.

In 2016, we implemented the CDFW-funded East Branch Little North Fork Big River Large Wood Debris (LWD) and Instream Barrier Modification Project. Approximately 60 streamside trees were felled into a 1.3-mile reach of East Branch Little North Fork. The addition of these logs will enhance spawning and rearing habitats by providing cover and refuge from peak winter flows, increasing pool complexity, depth and frequency, and sorting and collecting spawning gravels, all of which will increase the quality and quantity of rearing habitat within the project reach. The second portion of the project improved fish passage and stabilized an estimated 800 cubic yards of historic landslide debris consisting of 250 yards of soil and 550 yards of woody debris. Contractors for the Fund excavated a channel through a portion of the landslide that had blocked the East Branch Little North Fork. The removal of the barrier increased salmonid access to 0.79 miles of instream habitat and prevented approximately 250 cubic yards of sediment from entering the stream channel.



After implementation: debris cleared and channel revealed.

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Climate Action

Forest conservation is an important tool in the fight against climate change. The Fund has four carbon sequestration projects on the North Coast. Redwood forests store more carbon per acre than any other forest type. Our forests were among the first and largest to receive verification as a source of greenhouse gas reductions under the protocols of the Climate Action Reserve. The Fund is now in the process of transitioning our projects to the California Air Resources Control Board Cap-and-Trade Program—a key element of California's climate plan that allows regulated entities to use allowances or offsets to meet a portion of their emission reduction obligations. The Fund's forests are among the top producers of forest-based carbon offsets in California's system. The revenue generated by the sale of these offsets is used to protect and restore our forests. The carbon revenue combined with modest timber harvest revenue allows us to let the trees grow while we restore water quality through sediment reduction projects and instream habitat improvement. Our carbon projects comply with state protocols and are certified through ARB-approved third party verifiers to ensure that the carbon offset credits are real, verifiable and permanent.

Management Planning



Staff discussing conservation management goals.

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The Buckeye Forest Integrated Resource Management Plan was approved by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. The purpose of our forest wide management plans is to ensure a consistent framework for the sustainable management of each forest. Management plans are available at conservationfund.org.

The CDFW-funded Buckeye Forest sediment source assessment began in 2016 with the objective to reduce impacts to and restore Coho habitat through the development of a site specific and prioritized action plan for erosion prevention and habitat restoration on 43 miles of forest roads.

In 2016 the sediment source assessment was completed on the Gualala River Forest, which will be used to facilitate road upgrading and decommissioning projects beginning with the Signal Creek watershed in 2017.

Public Access Program

2016 was another successful year for our permit-based pedestrian access program in the Big River and Salmon Creek Forests, as well as our equestrian program on the Salmon Creek Forest. These programs were launched in 2007 to provide access, cultivate stewardship and increase surveillance on the forests. Participants sign a pedestrian or equestrian permit to hike or ride on logging roads in the forests. On Big River, the Fund provides access to local community members to harvest firewood for home use. Since 2012 we have allowed limited, permitted hunting for Mendocino County residents on the Garcia River Forest. In addition, multiple tours of all forests to review harvests and restoration projects are offered throughout the year. We are currently evaluating the potential for providing public access to Buckeye Forest. Please contact hnewberger@conservationfund.org to sign up for any of these public access opportunities.



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Educational Tall Ship



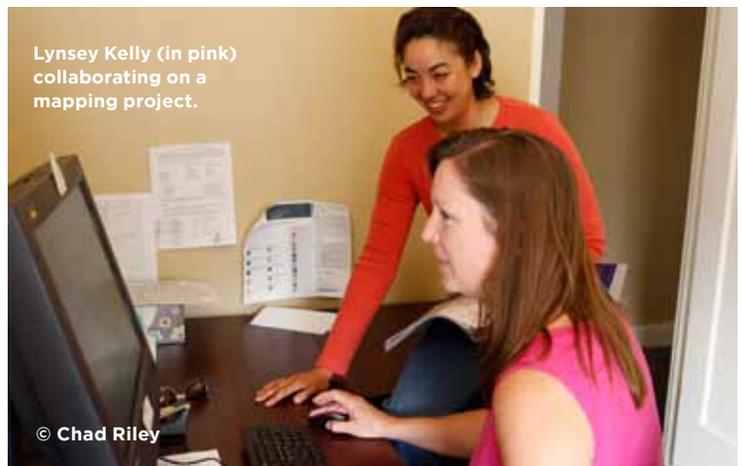
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Fund Staff spending a few hours volunteering at the Educational Tall Ship.

In 2012, The North Coast program donated 73 Douglas fir logs or approximately 50,000 board feet of logs from our Big River Forest to the Educational Tall Ship (ETS) project. This Forest Stewardship Council-certified lumber is the principal wood used in the 19th century-inspired tall ship's construction and makes up more than 50% of the vessel's structure. The \$6.2m ship, launched in April 2017, will be used to take groups of young students out on San Francisco Bay to learn traditional sailing skills, as well as getting better acquainted with the Bay Area's rich maritime history and marine ecology. Please see these websites for more details: www.educationaltallship.org and www.conservationfund.org/projects/educational-tall-ship-in-san-francisco.

Community Member Spotlight

Our approach to forest conservation includes a desire to sustain the local timber economy and local community. Our success stems from our consistent, dedicated team of employees and contract consultants. An important member of the team is our Geographic Information System (GIS) Specialist, Lynsey Kelly. Lynsey began working as a consultant with the Fund in 2007. She transitioned to part-time staff with the North Coast team in 2016. Lynsey's GIS skills allow her to create maps and analyze geographic data, which is critical to timber harvest planning, forest inventory and carbon offset analyzation. She manages all the GIS geospatial data for the North Coast program and creates maps for everything from Northern Spotted Owl nesting sites to forest strata to equestrian trails. The Fund thanks Lynsey and all our contractors and staff for their commitment and enthusiasm for our projects.



Lynsey Kelly (in pink) collaborating on a mapping project.

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Acknowledgments

Primary Contractors:

Bob Baker Trucking, Roadwork

Christopher Blencowe,
Stream restoration and monitoring

Kerry Heise, Botanical surveys

Geri Hulse Stephens, Botanical surveys

Jacobszoon Forestry Consulting,
Timber inventory & THP writing

Lynsey Kelly, GIS services

McFarland Trucking

Don Miller, Security & patrols

Pacific Watershed Associates,
Assessments & restoration

Robert Piper, Logging & road restoration

William Piper, Road restoration

Redwood Resources,
Tree planting & thinning

Ken Smith, Stream restoration

Elias Steinbuck, Geologic assessments

Mike Stephens, Northern spotted owl
biological surveys

Mark Taylor, Security & patrols

Wylatti Resource Management,
Road restoration



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Project Partners and Financial Supporters:

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California State Coastal Conservancy

David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Dell

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Mendocino Land Trust

North Coast Regional Water Quality
Control Board

Richard King Mellon Foundation

S. D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation

Salmon Creek Project Team

Sonoma Land Trust

Sonoma Agricultural Preservation and
Open Space District

The Nature Conservancy

The North Face

The Walt Disney Company

U-Haul

UPS

Wildlife Conservation Board

Advisory Group Members:

Bill Heil, Salmon Creek Project Team

John Hooper, Oz Farm

Alan Levine, Coast Action Group

Darcie Mahoney,
Registered Professional Forester

Linda Perkins,
Salmon Creek Project Team

Chris Poehlmann,
Friends of the Gualala River

Contact Us

Please see our website for more information on the North Coast Forest Conservation Initiative:
conservationfund.org

Detailed monitoring reports are also available by topic from our office in Caspar, CA:
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