

THE CONSERVATION FUND

America's Partner in Conservation

North Coast Forest Conservation Initiative 2010 Annual Report



Photo by Matthew Gerhart

At The Conservation Fund, we believe that well-managed forests can be both economically viable and ecologically sustainable. On California's North Coast, the Fund is demonstrating a new approach to forest land conservation that balances environmental restoration and stewardship with the economic imperatives of ownership and the desire to sustain the local timber economy. Since 2004, we have purchased 40,000 acres of North Coast forestland--the Garcia River, Big River and Salmon Creek forests--as part of our North Coast Forest Conservation Initiative. Through this effort, we are seeking to demonstrate that large, understocked tracts of coastal forest can be returned to ecological and economic viability through patient, adaptive management by a non-profit organization, in partnership with private and public entities and community stakeholders.

We invite you to learn more about the major accomplishments, challenges and activities of our program in 2010, as well as some of our plans for 2011. Our success is a result of the strong support from a diverse set of partners--neighbors, local businesses, government agencies, and conservation groups. Thank you for your interest and support!

Caspar Index

	2009	2010	2011 plans
Number of instream water temperature monitoring stations (Hobo gauges)	38	38	38
Lowest summer stream temperature (MWAT)	49F (Upper Two Log Creek in Big River)	46F (Upper Two Log Creek in Big River)	
Highest summer stream temperature (MWAT)	73F (mainstream Big River at easternmost property boundary line)	75 F (mainstream Big River at easternmost property boundary line)	
Numbers of logs added to streams to improve salmonid habitat and production	62	0	266
DFG salmonid spawner survey reaches sampled	6	5	5
Cumulative miles of roads covered in Sediment Source Assessments	375	450 (All roads have now been assessed)	
Sites treated to reduce sediment delivery	316	487	
Miles of roads treated to reduce invasive weeds	10	3	25
Hours spent on botanical surveys	744	768	750
Northern Spotted Owl activity centers	32	32	32
Northern Spotted Owl successfully fledged	5	8	2
Barred owl activity centers detected	1 Salmon Creek	1 Salmon Creek, 3 Garcia River	1, Salmon Creek, 3 Garcia
Timber harvest volume	1484 mbf	5329 mbf	2000 mbf
Number of log trucks	330	1250	450
Estimated local economic contribution (employment, contractors, purchases)	\$2.1 million	\$3.9 million	\$2.8 million
Carbon offsets: Climate Reserve Tonnes generated and verified	511,546 metric tons of CO2 reductions	739,762 metric tons of CO2 reductions	275,000 metric tons of CO2 reductions
Number of forest inventory plots installed	4481 (to date)	956	650
Number of participants in the Pedestrian and Equestrian Stewardship Access Program	12	19	16
Tours offered on the property	9	12	10
Estimated number of large illegal marijuana gardens on the Garcia River Forest	16	14	12

2010 Highlights

Timber Harvests

In 2010, despite the challenging log market, we were quite successful with our timber harvests on Big River, operating three harvest plans the Laguna Pass, Coombs Gulch and Wheel Gulch (continued from 2009); with a combined net harvest volume of 5,219 mbf. Due to poor markets and contractor availability only 110 mbf was harvested on Garcia and as planned we deferred all harvest on Salmon Creek



Management Planning

Also in 2010, we completed an invasive plant management plan for the Salmon Creek Forest. The Plan was developed by our contracting botanist, Geri Hulse Stephens, and was the basis for a successful proposal for cost-share grant funding to begin to implement the plan. Effectiveness monitoring will be ongoing and lessons from this experience will guide invasive plant control on our other properties.



Restoration

To advance our water quality and salmon habitat enhancement goals, we have completed road-based sediment source assessments for all three properties; these planning documents form the blueprint for ongoing road upgrade and decommissioning projects. We completed a sediment reduction project in the North Fork of the Garcia and on Blue Waterhole, made possible by mitigation funding through Pulte Homes and the US Environmental Protection Agency, saving approximately 25,098 cubic yards of sediment from entering the Garcia River watershed. The CA Fish & Game-funded Signal Creek road upgrade and sediment prevention project in the Garcia is underway and will be completed in 2011. Complete teardown and replacement of the Mill D Bridge across the mainstem of Garcia was completed, restoring internal access to the Garcia property south of the mainstem.

Stewardship Permit Access Program

In March, we launched a permit-based pedestrian access program in the Big River and Salmon Creek forests, an effort to provide access, cultivate stewardship and increase surveillance on the property. Thirteen community members attended the orientation and participated in the program. 2010 was the second year of our permit-based equestrian program in the Salmon Creek forest. Six local equestrians attended an orientation in March. We are pleased with the development and acceptance of the access programs and will continue to evaluate them annually on cost of administration, avoidance of environmental impacts and respect for our neighbors' privacy and property rights.

Forest Certification

In September, verifiers for the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) programs conducted a successful audit of the Fund's North Coast efforts. TCF forest management operations remain in overall conformance with both standards. Full audit reports are available at: www.conservationfund.org/north_coast_forests/documents.

Climate Action

Both the Garcia River Forest and the Big River and Salmon Creek forests are Conservation-Based Forest Management projects registered with the Climate Action Reserve (CAR) and verified by Scientific Certification Systems. In 2010, the forests produced 737,762 metric tons of verified emission reductions. The increase in carbon offsets is due primarily to the re-inventory of the Garcia River Forest and harvest levels being lower than projected. We are fortunate to have



been an early participant in the development of forest carbon projects and the sale of these offsets has provided significant additional financial support for the forests, enabling us to defer harvests when log prices are low and accelerate restoration activities. Additional references and project documents are available on the CAR website: www.climateactionreserve.org. In addition our use of carbon offsets has been written up as a case-study for the USDA Farms of the Future project; links available at our website.



Plans for 2011

- THPs that will be completed or initiated in 2011 include Big River's Piccoloti and Garcia River Forest's Lower North Fork #2 and Upper North Fork.
- We expect to complete numerous road upgrade and decommissioning projects, including:
 1. Signal Creek (Garcia): cost-share funding from CA Department of Fish & Game), begun in 2010 and to be completed in 2011. Includes a large wood installation project to enhance stream habitat (funding by TNC).
 2. North Fork (Garcia): primarily decommissioning of streamside roads but also includes a large wood installation project; cost-share funding from NOAA and TNC.
 3. North Fork and Blue Waterhole (Garcia): road upgrade projects, funded by TCF.
 4. East Branch Little North Fork (Big River): road upgrade project, funded by a private foundation.
 5. Little North Fork (Big River): large wood installation project, cost-share funding from DFG.

We are particularly excited about the three large wood installation projects, which offer almost immediate habitat benefits. Our low-impact approach follows on the pioneering work by The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and Campbell Timberland Management, and is designed to more closely mimic natural recruitment patterns and be more cost-effective than historic (engineered and anchored) approaches. The newly-added logs will help form pools that provide important hiding and resting places for fish, provide shelter from high winter flows, increase stream complexity and diversity and eventually lower stream temperature.

Acknowledgements

Primary Contractors 2010:

Christopher Blencowe, Stream Monitoring and Restoration
Rick Cooper, Security & Patrols
Kerry Heise
Margery Hoppner, Accounting
Geri Hulse-Stephens, Botany
Lynsey Kelly, GIS
Darcie Mahoney, Salmon Creek Forestry
Pacific Watershed Associates
Philbrick Logging
William and Robert Piper, Road Restoration
Mike Stephens, Spotted Owl Biology
Lee Susan, Summit Forestry, Big River Forestry

Partners and Financial Supporters, 2010:

Bright Horizon Foundation
California Department of Fish and Game
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Mendocino Land Trust
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Pulte Holmes Inc.
S. D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation
Salmon Creek Project Team
The Nature Conservancy

Major Customers, 2010:

Disney Company*
Humboldt Redwood Company
Mendocino Forest Products
Pacific Gas & Electric Company*
Redwood Empire
UPS*

*carbon offset sales

Advisory Group:

Leslie Dahlhoff, Moat Creek Managing Agency Board Member
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

Please see our website for more information on the North Coast Forest Conservation Initiative: www.conservationfund.org/north_coast_forests. Detailed monitoring reports are also available by topic from our office in Caspar (14951A Caspar Road, Box 50, Caspar, CA 95420; attention Holly Newberger, Office Manager, hnewberger@conservationfund.org, 707-962-0712).

Thank you from The Conservation Fund's North Coast Staff: Jordan Golinkoff, Forest Carbon Analyst; Jenny Griffin, Program Manager; Chris Kelly, California Program Director; Scott Kelly, Senior Forester; Holly Newberger, Office Manager; Evan Smith, Vice President, Forestland Acquisition & Finance; Madison Thomson, Forest Technician