



THE
CONSERVATION
FUND

LAND SUSTAINS US

North Coast Forest Conservation Initiative

2025 ANNUAL REVIEW

Caspar Index

Named after our North Coast hometown, this is a customized index that shares some of the important forest health and economic indicators we measure and track. Past North Coast Reviews are available at: <https://www.conservationfund.org/our-impact/projects/north-coast-reference-documents/>

	2023	2024	2025
Northern Spotted Owl Conservation			
Northern spotted owl activity centers	29	29	29
Northern spotted owls successfully fledged	1 – Garcia	2 – Garcia	2 – Garcia
Forest acres set aside for northern spotted owl habitat	2,900	2,900	2,900
Coho Salmon and Steelhead Trout Conservation			
Approximate cubic yards of sediment saved through road improvement projects	859	683	737
California Department of Fish and Wildlife salmonid spawner survey reaches sampled on TCF Forests	5	5	9
Big River Coho Salmon Population Estimates (derived from redd counts) provided by California Department of Fish and Wildlife	490	1,572	2,418
Garcia River Coho Salmon Population Estimates (derived from redd counts) provided by California Department of Fish and Wildlife	270	515	959
Water Quality*			
Big River Forest lowest summer stream temperature (mean weekly average temperature)	57 (Two Log Creek)	58 (Two Log Creek)	57 (Two Log Creek)
Big River Forest highest summer stream temperature (mean weekly average temperature)	68 (Mainstream Big River at western property line)	70 (Mainstream Big River at western property line)	65 (Mainstream Big River at western property line)
Forest Economics**			
Volume of logs removed (gross board feet)	4,562,100	2,860,830	5,074,940
Number of log truckloads to mill	968	596	869
Estimated local economic contribution (employment, contractors, purchases)	\$4.6 million	\$3.6 million	\$3.8 million
Verified forest carbon offsets	171,805 Buckeye Forest verification is still in progress	244,983 Buckeye Forest verification is still in progress	Verification in progress
Miles driven by an average passenger car*** that are equal to above forest carbon offsets	437,511,665	623,863,800	Verification in progress
Community Outreach			
Number of participants in the pedestrian, equestrian and hunting Public Access Program	12	10	30
Public tours provided	2	2	4

*Stream temperatures fluctuate annually due to changes in solar radiation, air temperature, riparian vegetation and streamflow.

**Economic contribution is influenced by the volume of logs sold, which is affected by log price based on supply and demand, overall economy, mill production and logging expenses.

***The EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator, used to convert the verified metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent to number of miles driven by an average car, can be found at www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator.



Project Background

At The Conservation Fund, we know that well-managed forests can be both economically viable and ecologically sustainable. On California's North Coast, we continue to refine and demonstrate our pioneering approach to forest conservation, including environmental restoration, sustainable timber harvests, sale of carbon offsets and support of 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. Our goal is to manage large, understocked tracts of coastal forest and return them to ecological and economic viability through patient, adaptive management.

We invite you to learn more about the major accomplishments, challenges and activities of our program in 2025. Our success depends on the strong support of a diverse set of partners, including public agencies and community stakeholders. Without their assistance none of this would be possible.



Habitat Restoration

High priority strategies for salmon habitat restoration are focused both instream, with the installation of large woody debris structures, and across our more than 500 miles of road infrastructure. Road maintenance, consisting of culvert replacement, adding rock to road surfaces and installing water bars and rolling dips, is critical for reducing road-borne sediment into streams and maintaining access for land management activities.

Through the timber harvest plan process in 2025, we upgraded 15.1 miles of road in the forests with 737 cubic yards of sediment savings. Road upgrades include diverting water from the road surface and placing culverts at stream crossings. Erosion control and prevention work (storm-proofing) applied on a watershed scale is the first and perhaps most important step when restoring watersheds and their anadromous fish populations where sediment running off into the stream is a limiting factor to fisheries production.

The California Department of Fish & Wildlife, Fisheries Restoration Grant Program has funded two upcoming instream salmonid habitat enhancement projects; in Robinson Creek and Buckeye Creek, in the Gualala River watershed. These projects restore waterways by adding wood structures to increase habitat complexity, reduce water temperatures, and provide shelter for endangered salmonids. The installation of these wood structures support fish populations by improving spawning, rearing, and foraging conditions.

The California Department of Fish & Wildlife released salmon and steelhead spawning survey numbers for coastal Mendocino County during the 2024–2025 season. Spawning surveys occurred approximately every two weeks from mid-November 2024 through early June 2025. Consistent rain through the winter and spring provided very good river conditions for salmon and steelhead spawning, egg incubation, and smolt outmigration. The Coho Salmon adult population estimate for the Mendocino Coast was 30,197, nearly doubling the largest return of 15,467 from last year and well above average (4,926) since monitoring began.





Sustainable Timber Harvest

The total volume of sustainably harvested trees in 2025 was 5,074,940 gross board feet from the Big River Forest. We continue to harvest at or below the agreed upon volume in our forest management plans and our CalFire approved Sustained Yield Plan. All redwood and Douglas fir logs were harvested by local logging companies and sold to sawmills in Mendocino and Sonoma counties.

In 2025, we planted 3,150 redwood cultivars seedlings in the Garcia River Forest. These trees were specifically cultivated for high elevation sites and were planted following a timber harvest to provide a new age-class of trees within the forest. Over time they will create a complex multi-age and diverse stand structure for the long-term health of the forest.

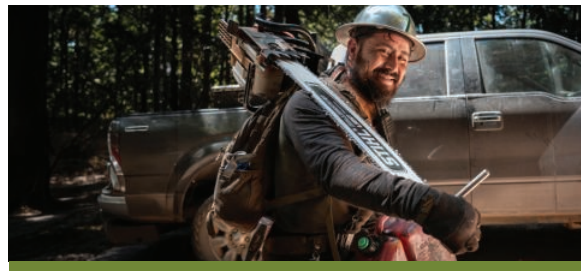
Our forest conservation would not be possible without a healthy forest industry; from logging contractors to sawmills to seedling nurseries to natural resource professionals. Sustainable timber management is an essential component of our local rural economy.





Fire Resiliency

A 100-acre shaded fuel break project was completed along 4 miles of the rugged, mountainous Fish Rock Road, which follows a strategic ridgeline dividing the Garcia River and Gualala River watersheds. Our goals with this fuel reduction project are threefold: to improve the safety and effectiveness of Fish Rock Road as an evacuation route for local residents; to reduce the intensity, duration and spread of a wildfire by removing understory brush, thereby increasing forest resilience and firefighter safety; and to improve forest health by reducing competition for soil moisture and improving spacing among remaining trees.



Did You Know?

A report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that foresters believe they have the happiest and most meaningful work of any major industry.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey



Forest Certification

As they have every fall since 2007, third-party verifiers completed a field audit of the North Coast Forest Conservation Initiative to the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®-C001535) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) standards. This project and our other working forests throughout the country were in overall conformance with the standards in 2025. These are two of the most strict and comprehensive standards for forest management. We actively participate in the California SFI Implementation Committee and welcome comments and questions regarding our forest certification.

Full audit reports are available on our website: conservationfund.org/projects/north-coast-forest-conservation-initiative/north-coast-reference-documents



Did You Know?

Redwood forests are home to a diverse array of wildlife — marbled murrelets, northern spotted owls, banana slugs and a variety of salamanders.



Climate Action

Forest conservation is a critical tool in the fight against climate change, and redwood forests store more carbon per acre than any other forest type. Before we purchased the North Coast forests, they were at risk of conversion or continued over harvesting. Our goal has always been to sustainably manage and restore the forests. The emergence of a market for carbon credits stimulated by California's 2006 Global Warming Solutions Act allowed us to purchase additional lands, reduce harvest levels and accelerate the pace of watershed restoration. Our North Coast forest carbon projects comply with California Air Resources Board (CARB) forest offset protocols and are verified to ensure that the carbon offsets are real, verifiable, additional, enforceable and permanent.



Did You Know?

Redwood forests are effective carbon sinks, absorbing and storing large amounts of carbon dioxide.



Public Tours and Recreation Access

Multiple public tours are offered throughout the year to review and discuss timber harvests and restoration projects. These tours provide an opportunity for community members to see our forests on the ground and learn, firsthand, about our land stewardship philosophy, goals and plans. The Conservation Fund provides pedestrian and bicycle access in the North Coast Forests, and equestrian access in the Salmon Creek Forest. These access programs were launched in 2007 to provide outdoor recreation and cultivate stewardship on the forests. Participants sign a permit to hike or ride for free on logging roads. Additionally, since 2012, we have allowed limited permit-based hunting in the Garcia River Forest to local residents. Please contact hnewberger@conservationfund.org to sign up for any of these public access opportunities.



Did You Know?

The coast redwood is one of the world's fastest-growing conifers, or cone-bearing trees. In contrast to the tree's size, redwood cones are very small — only about an inch long.



Partnership

We have entered into a joint venture with Apple, Inc. where we remain as land manager of the Gualala River Forest but share in the project's revenues, expenses and carbon credits. The Gualala River Forest will remain under the management of The Conservation Fund and will continue to provide clean water, sustain local jobs, enhance wildlife habitat, and promote carbon storage long into the future.



Acknowledgments

PROJECT PARTNERS & FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

California State Coastal Conservancy

Mendocino County Resource Conservation District

Mendocino Forest Products

Mendocino Land Trust

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

North Fork Lumber Company

Redwood Empire

Salmon Creek Project Team

Schmidbauer Lumber Company, Inc.

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

The Nature Conservancy

Trout Unlimited

California Wildlife Conservation Board

Willits Redwood Company

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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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