

INFORMATIONAL
CALENDAR ITEM

MINUTE ITEM
This Calendar Item No. C78
was approved as Minute Item
No. 78 by the State Lands
Commission by a vote of 3
to 0 at its 11/15/94
meeting.

A 1

C78

S 2

W 25083

J. Sekelsky

11/15/94

PROPOSED LAND EXCHANGE REGARDING
FORESTED SCHOOL LANDS IN HUMBOLDT COUNTY

PARTY:

Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy
PO Box 173
Petrolia, California 95558

BACKGROUND:

In 1992, staff was contacted by representatives of the Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy ("Conservancy") regarding their efforts to save forested lands in the Mill Creek Watershed ("Watershed lands") in Humboldt County. The subject lands, consisting of approximately 550 acres, are largely old-growth Douglas-fir forest, and provide habitat for the northern spotted owl and other old-growth dependent wildlife species, as well as substantial recreational opportunities. Mill Creek itself also provides spawning habitat for the Coho Salmon and Steelhead, both of which have been petitioned for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Eel River Sawmills, a mill operator in Humboldt County, holds title to the Watershed lands and the rights to the timber and is moving ahead with plans to harvest, in order to maintain a steady supply of timber to the mill. The Conservancy is concerned that timber harvest in the watershed will destroy its critical habitat and recreational values.

The Conservancy proposes a three way exchange to achieve protection of these important environmental values and employment in the timber industry. Eel River Sawmills will relinquish its interests in the Watershed lands in exchange for timber to be harvested from State owned school lands. The State would be paid fair market value for its timber. Finally, the Watershed lands would be transferred to the Conservancy, the State, or BLM for management as open space and habitat.

More specifically, Eel River Sawmills would receive rights to timber located on California State school lands in Mendocino County in exchange for their interests in the Mill Creek Watershed. They would acquire the rights to State timber only after preparation of an environmentally sensitive Timber Harvest Plan ("THP") which satisfies the California Department of

Forestry, Mendocino County, and other responsible agencies under CEQA, and addresses any substantive concerns raised by environmental interest groups. The State would be compensated for timber harvested from its lands at fair market value. Funds would be raised by the Conservancy from private and public sources, possibly including, but not limited to, monies paid by BLM to acquire the Watershed lands for inclusion in the King Range National Conservation Area (KRNCA). \$500,000 in public funds is being held for the transaction by the State Coastal Conservancy.

The Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy, Eel River Sawmills, and staff of the California State Coastal Conservancy and this Commission have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to work together toward a binding agreement establishing the process to implement this proposal, in hopes of completing a THP by June 15, 1996.

STATUS:

The Conservancy has made substantial progress toward accomplishment of its goals. Eel River Sawmills has agreed to work with the Conservancy and the State to set aside its Watershed lands if an alternative source of timber is found. They have tentatively identified four school lands parcels which contain timber which would be suitable for their needs. They have hired a licensed forester to prepare a THP for harvest of the selected school lands parcels. The California State Office of BLM has indicated support for the project and has requested funding in next year's budget for the addition of the Watershed lands to the KRNCA. Senator Barbara Boxer, Congressman Dan Hamburg, and Assemblyman Dan Hauser have urged Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt to include such funding in the President's FY 1996 budget; as have the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the California Native Plant Society, and numerous other organization, individuals, and agencies concerned with the preservation of this unique property. The project is further supported by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, the Ukiah District office of BLM, the Mattole Union School District, the American Fisheries Society, Trout Unlimited, and the Shelter Cove Commercial Fisherman's Association. Copies of some of these expressions of support are attached as Exhibit "A".

CALENDAR ITEM NO. C78 (CONT'D)

If the Conservancy is successful in developing a creative THP which promotes harvest, assures continued production and employment at the mill, and at the same time avoids substantial adverse impacts to the environment, it may serve as a prototype for future timber practices on other parcels. We are hopeful that this public - private partnership will benefit both the economy and environment of the State.

EXHIBITS:

Letters of Support

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Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

August 19, 1994

The Honorable Bruce Babbitt
Secretary
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to urge you to consider including the Mill Creek Forest in California's Humboldt County on the Department of Interior's Priority list for the Land and Water Conservation fund for FY 1996.

The Mill Creek Forest is 550 acres of predominantly old-growth douglas fir and tan oak next to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) King Range National Conservation Area on California's North Coast. Protection of the old growth reserve will maintain the biological diversity and essential habitat in the northern portion of the King Range for old growth dependent species such as coho salmon and northern spotted owl.

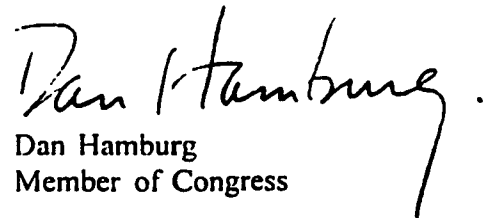
The Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy, a locally based land trust, has developed broad grass roots support for the acquisition. State BLM Director Ed Hasteley has assured us of his support for acquiring the Mill Creek Forest in FY 1996 even though the BLM State Office only recently learned of the opportunity for the acquisition. We cannot overemphasize the importance of moving swiftly to obtain this land. Although the owners are quite willing to sell, economic pressures may force them to log the forest if funding for BLM acquisition is not forthcoming soon.

We strongly support prioritizing acquisition of the Mill Creek Forest in the President's FY 1996 budget. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Dan Hamburg
Member of Congress

cc: Bonnie Cohen, Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget
George Frampton, Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

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CALIFORNIA STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY

1330 BROADWAY, SUITE 1100
OAKLAND, CA 94612-2530
ATSS 541-1015
TELEPHONE 510/286-1015
FAX 510/286-0470



August 8, 1994

Honorable Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Land and Water Conservation Fund FY 96: Mill Creek Forest, California/BLM

Dear Secretary Babbitt:

I'm writing to urge your support of a Land and Water Conservation Fund project that our agency has been committed to for years -- the preservation of the Mill Creek Forest in northern California. The Bureau of Land Management's California Director, Ed Haste, is supporting this \$3 million addition to the King Range National Conservation Area as a priority for Land and Water funding in FY 96. I'd like to tell you, briefly, about our agency's commitment to this project.

In 1988, California voters approved a bond act that set aside \$500,000 for our agency, the State Coastal Conservancy, to acquire and protect the Mill Creek Forest. Since then, the price of timber has sky-rocketed, and the property is now worth about \$3.5 million. We have been working with a local land trust called the Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy to find new funding and a new way to protect the resource.

The project has grown from a simple acquisition into an land exchange that would preserve the old-growth forest while creating timber-harvesting jobs. We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the sawmill landowner (Eel River Sawmills), the local land trust, and another state agency called the State Lands Commission to exchange the sensitive old-growth for nearby state-owned lands that are timbered with second-growth trees that are suitable for harvest. This cooperation among "the environmentalists," the timber industry, the state, and now, the federal government (BLM) is truly heartening. However, we need more money. California voters turned down a parks bond act in June, and our agency has no more money besides the allocated \$500,000 to complete this exchange. BLM's participation is urgently needed.

Thank you for considering this request. Please call me or Janet Diehl on my staff at (510) 286-1015 if we can answer any questions.

Sincerely,


Michael L. Fischer
Executive Officer

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2) BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Certified copy of portion of proceedings, Meeting of

May 19, 1987

RESOLUTION NO. 87-59

SUPPORT OF A GRANT TO THE HILL CREEK
CONSERVANCY TO ACQUIRE OLD GROWTH HABITAT
ON HILL CREEK IN THE MATTOLE RIVER WATERSHED

WHEREAS, the old growth forest on Hill Creek on the Mattole River Watershed is the last remaining old growth forest from Honeydew to the ocean; and

WHEREAS, the old growth forest protects some of the last prime spawning gravels in cool waters on the Mattole River; and

WHEREAS, the forest provides wildlife habitat unique to old growth, where spotted owls and golden eagles with their young can be seen; and

WHEREAS, this grant will enable the old growth forest to be preserved and enjoyed by the public; and

WHEREAS, the old growth forest on Hill Creek in the Mattole River Watershed will be considered by the California State Coastal Conservancy from the California Wildlife, Coastal, and Parkland Conservation Act of 1988.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that by the Board of Supervisors of Humboldt County, California, are in support of a grant to the Hill Creek Watershed Conservancy to acquire old growth Douglas fir habitat on Hill Creek in the Mattole River Watershed.

Adopted on motion by Supervisor Pritchard, seconded by Supervisor Sparks and the following vote:

AYES: Supervisors-- Renner, Pritchard, Chesbro, Neely, Sparks
NOES: Supervisors-- None
ABSENT: Supervisors-- None
ABSTAIN: Supervisors-- None

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
County of Humboldt)^{ss}

I, ROBERT E. HENDRIX, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, County of Humboldt, State of California, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a full, true, and correct copy of the original made in the above entitled matter by said Board of Supervisors at a meeting held in Eureka, California as the same now appears of record in my office.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of said Board of Supervisors

ROBERT E. HENDRIX May 19, 1987

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Humboldt, State of California

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By: *Doris A. ...*

RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT OF A GRANT
TO THE MILL CREEK CONSERVANCY TO ACQUIRE
OLD GROWTH HABITAT ON MILL CREEK
IN THE MATTOLE RIVER WATERSHED

Resolution No. 3.22

WHEREAS, the old growth forest on Mill Creek on the Mattole River Watershed is the last remaining old growth forest from Honeydew to the ocean; and

WHEREAS, the old growth forest protects some of the last prime spawning gravels in cool waters on the Mattole River; and

WHEREAS, the forest provides wildlife habitat unique to old growth, where spotted owls and golden eagles with their young can be seen; and

WHEREAS, this grant will enable the old growth forest to be preserved and enjoyed by the public; and

WHEREAS, the old growth forest on Mill Creek in the Mattole River watershed will be considered by the California State Coastal Conservancy from the California Wildlife, Coastal, and Parkland Conservation Act of 1988.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Mattole Union School District are in support of a grant to the Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy to acquire old growth Douglas Fir habitat on Mill Creek in the Mattole River Watershed.

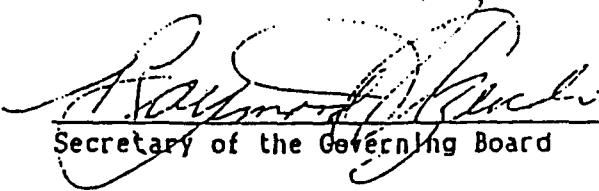
PASSED AND ADOPTED ON May 10, 1988, at the regular meeting of this Board by the following vote:

AYES: Roger Safier, Steve Carey, Montanna Jones, Freeman House, Tim Showen

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

I certify that the foregoing resolution was duly introduced, passed, and adopted at the time and place and by the vote stated.


Secretary of the Governing Board

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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ARCATA RESOURCE AREA

1125 16th Street, Rm 219

Arcata, California 95521-5580



IN REPLY REFER TO:

8000

CA-056

AUG 8 1989

Rex Rathbun
Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy
P.O. Box 173
Petrolia, California 95558

Dear Mr. *Rex* Rathbun:

The Bureau of Land Management fully supports your efforts and progress toward establishing the "Lightning Trail" through the Mill Creek Forest and onto public lands within the King Range National Conservation Area. By providing legal access from the County's Lighthouse Road, this important loop trail will expand the public's opportunity for experiencing a variety of primitive types of recreation. These seldom-used lands along Prosper Ridge and Johnny Jack Ridge will offer the hiker or backpacker outstanding views of the expansive upland grasslands as well as the Pacific Ocean and wilderness coastline.

I have reviewed the Trail Plan for the "Lighthouse Trail" and find it consistent with our management objectives for the area. Prior to construction we will need to do an Environmental Assessment, with full public review and enter into a Cooperative Management Agreement with all parties concerned.

Please keep me informed of any new developments regarding your proposed Trail Plan. If I can be of further help to you, please feel free to call me at 707-822-7648 or write to the above address.

Sincerely,

John T. Lloyd
Area Manager

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National Audubon Society



666 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
 Washington, DC 20003
 (202) 547-9009
 (202) 547-9022 fax

August 9, 1994

Mr. Bruce Babbitt
 Secretary of the Interior
 1849 C Street NW
 Washington D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Babbitt:

Bruce

The National Audubon Society supports the addition of the Mill Creek Forest to the BLM priority acquisitions list in California for FY 1996. The Mill Creek Forest is a remnant stand of old growth forest located in the lower Mattole River watershed. We wish to add our support for the priority listing of this area to that of Representative Dan Hamburg, the California state office of BLM, and the many local persons, led by the Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy

Biological, geographic, and temporal conditions merit the Mill Creek Forest's placement on the priority acquisition list. The area is old growth forest of Douglas fir and Tan oak that supports critical habitat for tailed frogs and spotted owls, and contains a viable spawning stream for coho salmon. The forest is adjacent to other BLM holdings and would extend the ecological reserve these holdings represent into the lower Mattole River watershed. The acquisition would also facilitate the expansion of the trail system in the King Range National Conservation Area and improve hiking access within these areas. Timing may prove to be the most pressing reason for supporting the Mill Creek Forest's inclusion on the priority list for this year. The current owners, Ecl River Sawmills, is in the process of preparing a timber harvest plan for the area. To delay this needed acquisition any longer may well mean that nothing will be left to protect next year.

Part of the funding necessary for acquisition already is in place. Approximately \$550,000 is available for the acquisition of the Mill Creek Forest through California's Proposition 70 funding which was passed in 1988.

We feel strongly that the Mill Creek Forest should be a high priority on the BLM acquisition list for the state of California. The environmental attributes of the region merit and the future threat of logging warrant the public purchase and protection of this fragment of a vanishing ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Brock

Brock Evans
 Vice President for National Issues

BE/jwt

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S I E R R A C L U B

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA/NEVADA/



HAWAII FIELD OFFICE

August 8, 1994

Mr. Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of the Interior
1849 O Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Babbitt:

We are writing to express Sierra Club's support of a proposal to include the Mill Creek Forest in Northern California in the BLM's list of proposed acquisitions for 1996. This 550-acre forest is an important piece of a critical watershed, the lower Mattole River. It will enhance the ecological values of the King Range National Conservation Area.

As an old-growth stand that is potentially due to be cut by the current owner, the Mill Creek Forest has biological and wildlife values that will be irreplaceable if the parcel is not acquired. As you may know, this acquisition has the support of Ed Hasteley, State BLM Director, and of Congressman Dan Hamburg, who represents the area.

Thank you for your attention to the need for placing this key parcel on the agency's 1996 priority acquisitions list.

Sincerely,

Carl Pope
Executive Director

Barbara Boyle
CA/NV/HI Regional Director

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(510) 654-2847 FAX (510) 634-4936	
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California Native Plant Society

Rnx 381
Carmel Valley, CA 93924
Aug. 16, 1994

The Honorable Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Babbitt:

The California Native Plant Society, composed of some 10,000 scientists and laypersons involved in the preservation of our state's remarkable native flora, would like to urge your support for the acquisition by the Bureau of Land Management of the Mill Creek Forest in northern California's Mattole River watershed.

As a result of the narrow loss of Proposition 180, the June '94 Park Bond Act in California, which our society supported very actively, the state funds needed to complete this purchase are not available. However, thanks to the efforts of the Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy, the Mattole Restoration Council, and Congressman Dan Hamburg, this unique 550-acre parcel is on the BLM state priority list for purchase in Fiscal Year 1996. We understand that \$550,000 in state funds is still available from Proposition 70 to aid in acquiring this old-growth forest, which is valued at \$3,000,000, and that the state BLM office has given high priority to funding the balance of the cost.

The purchase is justified by the fact that the land is contiguous to other BLM holdings and will help complete protection for a highly sensitive watershed which provides habitat for coho salmon, tailed frogs, and spotted owls with minimum administrative costs. It also presents a means of providing access for backpackers and hikers into the existing King Range National Conservation Area trail system. We are told that a Timber Harvest Plan is in the works by the present owner, Eel River Sawmills, if the parcel is not acquired for habitat protection.

As you know, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been greatly underused in recent years—contrary to the legislation's original intention—for the acquisition of critical habitat areas that are in jeopardy of degradation. The result has been loss of significant areas that could have prevented the "train wrecks" of species endangerment about which you have spoken so eloquently. We urge your personal attention to assure that a similar opportunity is not lost for the BLM to acquire the Mill Creek Forest.

Thank you very much for your interest in this important matter.

Sincerely yours,



Mary Ann Matthews
State Forestry Coordinator

cc Sen. Dianne Feinstein
Sen. Barbara Boxer
Rep. Sam Farr
Rep. Dan Hamburg
Mike Dombeck, BLM
Ed Hastey, BLM
Timothy NCC ✓



Dedicated to the preservation of California native flora

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4099 ©



**WESTERN
Ancient Forest
CAMPAIGN**

August 4, 1994

The Honorable Bruce Babbitt
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Babbitt,

The Western Ancient Forest Campaign seeks your support of the purchase by the Bureau of Land Management of the Mill Creek Forest in the watershed of the Mattole River in northern California as a part of the agency's FY 1996 Land and Water Conservation Fund request.

Due to the efforts of Representative Dan Hamburg, the Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy, the Mattole Restoration Council and a number of northern California groups, the acquisition of the Mill Creek Forest has been included in the list of proposed acquisitions for the BLM in California for FY 1996. Mr. Ed Hastey, your BLM Director in California, has written in support of purchasing the Mill Creek Forest, calling it "an extremely worthy acquisition project" that "would not only significantly enhance the conservation of old-growth forests on the North Coast of California, but would further implementation of the President's Forest Plan by providing critical habitat components for aquatic and terrestrial species."

After working diligently with you and your office on the President's Forest Plan, we are impressed with this opportunity to guarantee that the implementation of the Plan will succeed. We are also concerned that this opportunity may be lost beyond 1996, since the present owner of the property, Eel River Sawmills, has begun preparing Timber Harvest Plans for the old growth Douglas Fir and Tan Oak in the tract.

We hope that you will endorse the strong community support and the sound biological reasons for the acquisition of this property by BLM-California. Your assistance in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

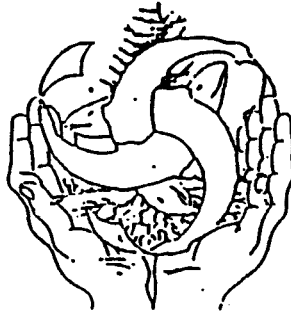
Jim Owens
Executive Director

Capitol Office
Jim Owens,
Executive Director
Phone 202 / 939-3324
1400 16th Street NW
Suite 294
Washington, DC 20036
Fax 202 / 939-3326
E-mail WAFCD
@ igc.apc.org

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Los Angeles Audubon
Kimery Wiltshire
The Willamette Fund

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MATTOLE RESTORATION COUNCIL

Box 160
Petrolia, CA 95558

June 8, 1990

Nongame Heritage Program
Lands and Natural Areas Project
Department of Fish and Game

Dear People:

The Mattole Restoration Council is a watershed-based coalition of people and small groups, joined by the mutual desire to enhance the health and productivity of the Mattole watershed. This watershed encompasses 304 square miles of rugged coastal California, and supports significant populations of Californian wildlife of many species, including native salmonids, raptors, and the habitat they need.

Much of the wildlife habitat of the Mattole watershed is recovering from an onslaught which occurred 30-40 years ago. This onslaught consisted of a combination of fire, flood, and widespread tractor logging on steep and fragile slopes. This is the situation to which the Mattole Restoration Council has addressed itself for the past eight years, through research, education, and on the ground restoration work.

What we have consistently found to be true is that retention of healthy areas is preferable to attempting to restore damaged areas. In addition, the presence of high-quality old-growth forest greatly aids the recovery of damaged areas through dispersal of elements supporting biodiversity.

The Mattole Restoration Council fully supports the acquisition of the Mill Creek Forest. Our support is available in any form we can provide, and we encourage you to help preserve this important element of our biological heritage for the future.

Sincerely,

Jan Morrison
Chairwoman

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SIX RIVERS CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED
P.O. Box 129
Bayside, Calif. 95524

June 15, 1990

Mr. David Simpson
Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy
Box 173
Petrolia, Calif. 95558

Dear Dave,

The Six Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited fully supports your efforts to restore and preserve the Mill Creek watershed. Your efforts to save some of the last good habitat for coho salmon on the Mattole will help restoration of this important sport fish. Our members feel that by saving this tributary that you will not only have the right strain of silver salmon to repopulate other tributaries of the Mattole, but possibly other northern California coastal streams.

Your efforts to restore chinook salmon have been exemplary. We would like to see restoration programs include coho salmon and steelhead as well. We will be in touch to see if Trout Unlimited can be of assistance in helping your efforts.

Sincerely,

Dan Doble
Director, Six Rivers TU

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AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

HUMBOLDT CHAPTER June 15, 1990
P.O. Box 210, Arcata, CA 95521

Mr. David Simpson
Mill Creek Watershed Conservancy
P.O. Box 173
Petrolia, Calif. 95558

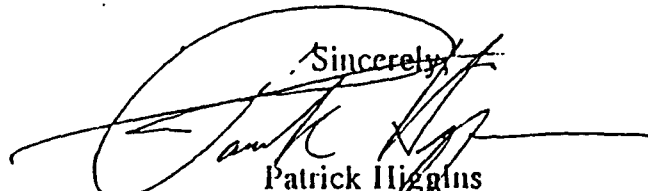
Dear Mr. Simpson,

I am writing this letter in support of the purchase of property on Mill Creek on behalf of the Humboldt Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. The American Fisheries Society is a national organization of fisheries professionals, fisheries educators and students. AFS is primarily concerned with the advancement of fisheries science and education but also with the proper management of our fisheries resources. It is because of our concern about wild coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) populations in California that we are supporting your proposal to purchase portions of Mill Creek as a preserve.

Coho salmon were once the dominant salmon species in smaller coastal streams throughout California extending south to Monterey. In recent years land disturbances from suburbanization in central California and timber harvest in the northern portion of the state, have caused a precipitous decline in abundance of this species. AFS is currently trying to assess whether this species or specific runs of coho salmon need special protection. Mill Creek is one of the few remaining watersheds that have not been heavily impacted by human activity and maintains a healthy population of these fish. The coho in Mill Creek may not only be important to restoring runs to the Mattole but also to other coastal streams in geographic proximity.

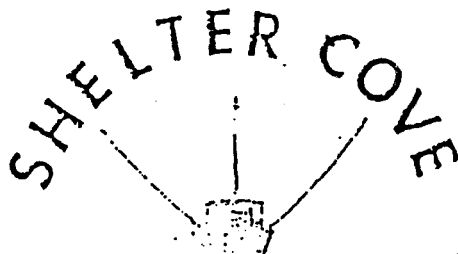
Another important aspect of preventing further degradation of the Mill Creek watershed is its importance with regard to giving us clues regarding how to restore coho salmon streams. Only when we have control streams that represent what prime fisheries habitat was like before disturbance can we tell how to restore systems to their former productivity. We hope that you are successful in your efforts to further protect Mill Creek.

Sincerely,



Patrick Higgins
Chair, Policy and Resolutions Committee

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COMMERCIAL FISHERMENS' ASSOCIATION

SHELTER COVE STORE, 492 MACHI ROAD, WHITTIER, CA 95489

To the Wildlife Conservation Board

RE: Purchase of 280 acres of Mill Creek old growth; Habitat protection of Mattole River Native Silver Salmon.

Dear Members of the Board,

The Shelter Cove Commercial Fishermen's Association encourages you to seriously consider helping purchase the 280 acres of Virgin Forest located on Mill Creek. Mill Creek is a major native silver salmon tributary of the Mattole River. This acreage is needed to insure habitat for a re-established native salmon run that was almost lost due to erosion and subsequent loss of habitat. The Mattole salmonoids, in general have suffered the same impacts making the Mill Creek run doubly important as a possible source of native salmon stocks for other tributaries in the Mattole.

The North Coast Salmon Fisheries recognize the biological and economic importance of North Coast native salmonoid stocks and the necessity of securing habitat for their procreation. Without viable native salmon runs in our local rivers the commercial salmon fleet would be met with economic disaster. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gene Brown
Treasurer, S. C. C. F. A.

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