



Salmonid Restoration Federation

Marshall Ranch Flow Enhancement Implementation Project Gets Green Light

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South Fork Eel residents may be enjoying an endless summer but this long dry season impairs water quality for aquatic species and water reliability for landowners. Since 2013, Salmonid Restoration Federation has been monitoring flows in Redwood Creek and developing flow enhancement strategies to protect fisheries resources.

SRF is excited to partner with the historic Marshall Ranch, the largest contiguous landowner in the Redwood Creek watershed. The Marshall Ranch is fully protected under Conservation Easement and the Ranch bridges Redwood Creek, Somerville Creek, and Sproul Creek. This working ranch that has been in the Marshall family ownership since the 1800s is now protected in perpetuity with restoration opportunities including a flow enhancement project that includes 10-million gallons of winter water storage between two off-channel ponds and 100,000-gallon water tanks that will be plumbed for fire-fighting emergencies. The purpose of this project is to release cool water into Redwood Creek during the five-month dry season to benefit threatened salmonids and other aquatic species. The flow releases will benefit the mainstem from the Marshall Ranch all the way to the confluence with the South Fork Eel River.

This project was developed by several restoration partners, including Stillwater Sciences, the lead technical consultants on the project; the Marshall Ranch General Manager, David Sanchez, and the Marshall Ranch family representative, Elizabeth Marshall Maybee who had the vision to preserve the Ranch through conservation easements; and Hicks Law who oversaw the Appropriative Water Right and provides expert legal guidance to the project team. SRF's Executive Director, stated, "SRF is the project proponent but this project could not have evolved without the ongoing support of the Wildlife Conservation Board and the hard work of the project team. In this era of extended drought conditions, climate change, and intensified fire risk, innovative projects like the Marshall Ranch Flow Enhancement are needed to improve instream flows."

The California Water Action Plan ranks the South Fork Eel as one of the highest priority watersheds in the state for flow enhancement projects. Similarly, the Salmon Habitat and Restoration Prioritization

Project in the South Fork Eel River recognizes that although Redwood Creek is densely populated and suffers from legacy impacts, it still retains high habitat values for salmon.

After years of outreach, monitoring, and a Redwood Creek feasibility analysis, SRF and Stillwater Sciences have developed a range of flow enhancement opportunities ranging from groundwater recharge in the headwaters of Redwood Creek, flow release projects in the mainstem on the Marshall Ranch, storage and forbearance projects downstream, and eventually a forest thinning component.

Recent project milestones include:

- In January the Marshall Ranch Flow Enhancement Implementation project was unanimously approved by the Humboldt County Planning Commissioners. Humboldt County Planning Department is the lead agency for CEQA for this exciting project and they adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project.
- Concurrently, the State Water Board completed their final review of the Marshall Ranch Appropriative Water Right application and the Appropriative Water Right was approved in June 2022. This is an exciting milestone because the off-channel ponds will be filled during the winter season for metered cool water flow releases throughout the five-month dry season.
- The Wildlife Conservation Board's Streamflow Enhancement Program will be funding the implementation of the project which will begin during the summer of 2023. SRF will also be receiving funding through the North Coast Resource Partnership to identify, design and implement five water storage tanks as part of a storage and forbearance program that will help ensure that the dedicated flows from the Marshall Ranch project remain instream and to improve water availability for landowners who may not have sufficient water storage in this underserved region.



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