

Mendocino Council
of Governments
California
Transportation
Commission
Presentation
2024

*Conserving wild and working
landscapes since 1945*



MCRCD Mission:

To Conserve, protect,
and restore wild and
working landscapes to
enhance the health of
the water, soil, and
forests in Mendocino
County.



MCRCD's PROGRAMS

Water Resources

Soil Health and
Agriculture

Forest Health and
Resiliency

Land Stewardship



MCRCDD's HISTORY

MCRCDD was formed as an independent special district under the provisions of the California Soil Conservation District Act and was established by election on May 14, 1945.



CalTrans Mitigation Projects

Geyserville
Bridge
Mitigation

Eel River
Projects

Willits Bypass
Mitigation



Geyserville Bridge Mitigation Project 2010 - 2023

- Feliz Creek Dam Removal
- Mill Creek Bridge Installation
- Mill Creek - Talmage Fish Passage Improvement
- Upper Russian River *Arundo donax* Eradication
- Lower Forsythe Creek Bank Stabilization
- Forsythe Creek Floodplain & Riparian Restoration



Geyserville Bridge Mitigation Project 2010 - 2023

2010 - \$1.75 M to MCRCD
for 3 Goals

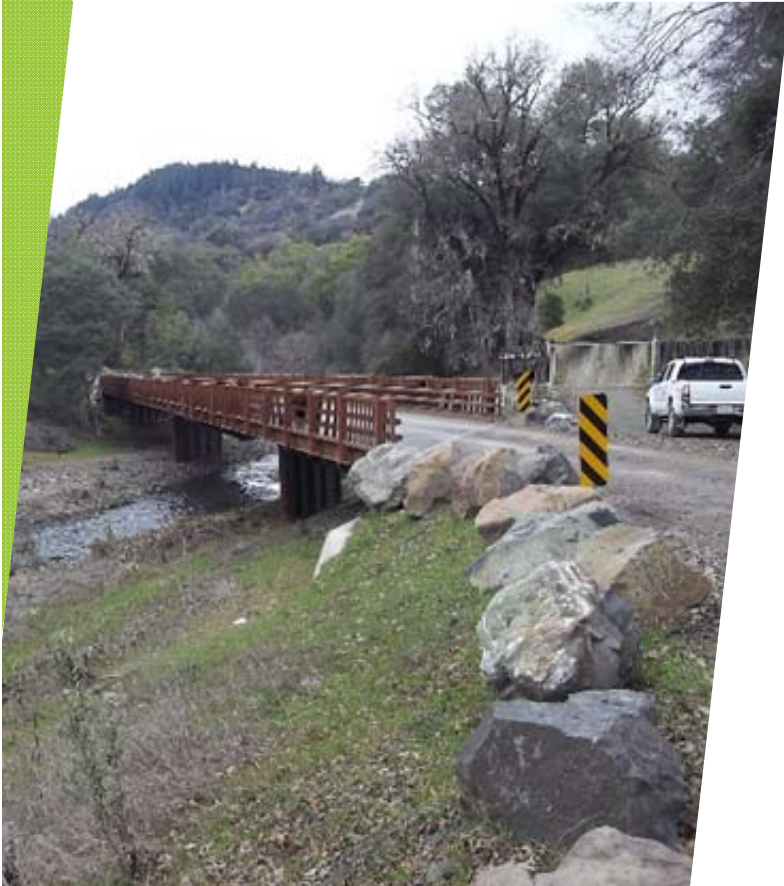
1. Improve fish passage
2. Enhance riparian habitat
3. Enhance aquatic habitat



Eel River TMDL Implementation and Planning Project

Unpaved Road Upgrades and Stormproofing

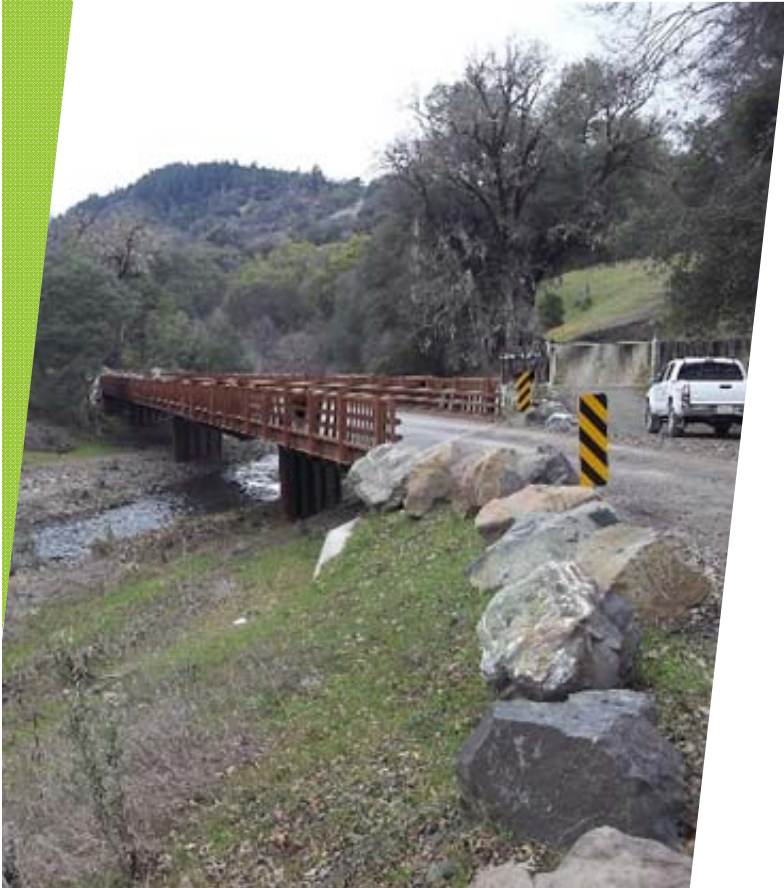
- Eel River Ranch Road
Middle Fork Eel
- Ten Mile Creek Road
South Fork Eel
- Jack of Hearts Road
South Fork Eel



Eel River TMDL Implementation and Planning Project

\$1.9M to address load
reduction targets

- Middle Fork Eel
62 tons/year
- South Fork Eel
763 tons/year



Willits Bypass Mitigation Project



Bypass Construction

- 5.9 miles bypass
- 2 interchanges
- 6 bridges spanning local roadways/RR & creek crossings
- Viaduct spanning 100-year floodplain of several creeks



Bypass Impacts

- Wetland impacts:
 - 48.5 acres (permanent)
 - 25 acres (temporary)
- Other Waters of the US
 - 2.6 acres (permanent)
 - 3.5 acres (temporary)
- North Coast semaphore grass
 - 0.3 acre
- Baker's meadowfoam habitat:
 - 121 acres
- Riparian corridors:
 - 16.1 acres
- Oak woodland (tree canopy) habitat: 12.5 acres
- Oak woodland (grassland) habitat: 53 acres



Willits Bypass Mitigation

The overall vision of the projects' compensatory mitigation strategy is to establish, rehabilitate, reestablish, and preserve a mosaic of high functioning habitats in perpetuity, thus increasing the ecological value and improving water quality in the Eel River Basin.

- **Wetlands Establishment (60.5 acres)**
- **Wetlands Enhancement (442.6 acres)**
- **Riparian Preservation (201 acres) and Establishment (53.5 acres)**
- **Oak Woodland Preservation (230.3 acres) and Establishment (6.5 acres)**
- **Conservation Grazing Lands (1,078 acres)**

Mitigation and Monitoring Goals

Willits Bypass Mitigation

Provide ecologically and economically sustainable management of the grazed mitigation lands

Support a cooperative and effective partnership with the grazing tenants

Reduce targeted invasive plant species

Watson West Parcel
June 7, 2018

Maintain and expand populations of Baker's meadowfoam and North Coast semaphore grass

Maintain and improve the structure and function of seasonal wetlands, oak woodlands, and riparian habitats

Protect cultural resources

Mitigation and Monitoring Goals

Mitigation Accomplishments

265,384 herbaceous plants
14 Wetland Establishment
sites

509,720 herbaceous and
6,248 tree and shrub
plantings installed across
most of the Wetland
Rehabilitation sites (approx.
25 acres)

400 acres of Riparian
Establishment was also planted
(76,836 herbaceous and 38,019
trees and shrubs)

Overall, just under 1 million
plants went into the ground
by the fall of 2016



Ongoing Challenges

- Management of pervasive non-native species
- Affects our ability to meet the USACE performance criteria
- Use of native sod and high-density planting techniques
- Herbicide restriction requires all weed maintenance be done by hand
- Still unable to meet the stringent USACE criteria for native cover



Planting Treatments

Over the last few years, we've developed two planting treatments to increase the percent cover of native wetland plants:

- Native sod
- High-density planting

Native sod

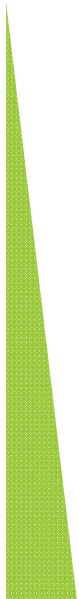
- In 2017 / 2018 we tested a technique using native wetland species grown out and planted similar to lawn sod.
- The densely compact plantings prevented non-native weed species to establish.
- While successful, we determined that this technique was too expensive for the amount of area we could cover . 4' x 4' plot = \$4250



High-density Planting

- In 2018 / 2019 we modified our planting technique to cover more area at a lower cost
- The high-density technique is just what it sounds like; installing plants in a dense planting area or plot.
- We could cover more area and was more cost effective. 4' x 4' plot = \$1200
- We have expanded the use of this technique and are seeing an increase in the percent cover of our native species in areas that have been treated.





Agency Engagement

- Caltrans has engaged with USACE on the Performance Criteria issue.
- The USACE recently rejected a proposal to revise some of the mitigation criteria and are expecting Caltrans to propose an alternative wetland establishment to remediate for any acreage of unsuccessful wetland establishment that was stipulated in the permit.
- This would require additional funding and extend monitoring time.
- USACE continues to be the most challenging and least engaged of the 3 agencies.
- Multiple turnover of PMs who are unfamiliar with the Mitigation Lands.
- Largely focused on meeting specific metrics and not the overall improvement to habitat.
- Caltrans remains optimistic and committed to the ultimate success of the Mitigation Lands



2016



2021



2015

2022





2016

2023





MCRCD Project Management Overview

Grazing management

Infrastructure
maintenance

Habitat maintenance

Wildlife monitoring

Stream channel
assessment and
maintenance

Community outreach

California Rare Plant Rank: 1B.1
State of California status: Rare.



North Coast Semaphore Grass
(*Pleuropogon hooverianus*)



Baker's Meadowfoam
(*Limnanthes bakeri*)



Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County



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ULTRAFIRE XR6





Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County





Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County





Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County

2018-02-27



ULTRAFIRE

RECONYX



Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County





Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County



MCRCD Project Partners

City of Willits

Willits Environmental
Center

Trout Unlimited

Cal Poly Humboldt

Sherwood Valley Band of
Pomo Indians



Questions and Discussion

