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## Coastal Conservancy News

### Preserving Humboldt County Ranch and Forest Lands

Price Creek Ranch, a 1,280-acre timber and cattle ranch west of Rio Dell in Humboldt County, will be preserved as a working ranch through a conservation easement to be acquired by the California Department of Forestry with the help of a \$1 million grant from the Conservancy, approved in December 2005. The Forest Legacy Program and the Wildlife Conservation Board will contribute the balance of funds, approximately \$630,000.



Laguna de Santa Rosa is the largest tributary of the Russian River.

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Four other properties are being considered for easements as part of a project to protect nearly 10,000 acres between Six Rivers National Forest and the ocean. Ranch owners in the area have been under heavy pressure to sell their lands for development, while struggling to survive on diminishing incomes.

The owner of Price Creek Ranch is developing a plan that will allow sustainable timber harvests and grazing in addition to habitat restoration and protection. The easement will prohibit residential development and commercial timber harvest within riparian corridors.

A grant of \$357,500 approved by the Conservancy in March will help the City of Arcata buy the Sunny Brae Forest, 175 acres of commercial timberland upslope from Arcata, to be added to the Arcata Community Forest. The land, owned by Sierra Pacific Industries, was to be logged this year. The City will use a mix of public and private funds, including \$1.3 million from the Department of Forestry, to meet the \$2.7 million purchase price.

It intends to harvest timber selectively, remove invasive plants, decommission roads, address erosion problems, keep up to 40 percent of the property in reserves, and permit recreational and educational uses where appropriate.

### Help for Salmon and Steelhead

Struggling fish populations will get a boost along the coast from Del Norte to San Mateo County, with the help of \$890,000 approved by the Conservancy for the removal of stream barriers and the creation of offstream water storage to protect flows.

Trinity County will receive \$700,000 for barrier-removal projects throughout Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Siskiyou, and Trinity Counties. At thousands of sites in these five counties, badly built road crossings, culverts, and other structures keep fish from migrating upstream to spawn. Some barriers in the Mad River watershed and elsewhere have already been removed with the Conservancy's help, resulting in the return of steelhead and coho and Chinook salmon.

Organic farmers along Pine Gulch Creek in Marin County have agreed not

to divert creek water for irrigation during the low-flow months of April through December. In return, the County, Coastal Conservancy, and Point Reyes National Seashore (through which Pine Gulch Creek flows before reaching the ocean) are helping to build offstream ponds for storing irrigation water for the dry months. The Conservancy will provide \$50,000 to help plan and design the ponds, negotiate transfer of water rights, and conduct an environmental analysis of the project. The farmers will be protected from further restrictions if endangered California red-legged frogs colonize the ponds. The project, developed in 1998, will help maintain habitat for state-listed endangered coho salmon, which returned to the creek in 2001 after an absence of 30 years.

The Conservancy will also provide \$120,000 to help build a well in San Mateo County's Memorial Park to provide water for park facilities, including a popular campground. Water now comes from a dam in Pescadero Creek that blocks salmon from swimming upstream. Removing the dam and other barriers will help restore riffles, pools, and other stream features that provide spawning habitat for salmon and steelhead. Another grant of \$20,000 will be used to identify other San Mateo County fish barriers for removal.

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