BLM takes reins of Whitethorn property

Some hope acquired land will connect with King Range

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A Whitethorn property just donated to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management may fit well with a vision of a regional trail system for Southern Humboldt County.

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust turned over the 320-acre plot that it bought seven years ago with $1.4 million from the California Coastal Conservancy and Sanctuary Forest. The land trust was unable to turn the land over to the state parks system after legislation passed barring the state from taking donations that would incur management costs.

“We didn't have the funds to manage it,” said land trust Executive Director Jim Petruzzi, “certainly not for public use.”

The 3 V's property, bought from the Barnum Timber Co. and Sanctuary Forest in 2000, has a salmon-bearing stream running through it, and some 60 acres of old-growth tanoak, fir and redwood forest.

The land is near the headwaters of the Mattole River, and is among a number of other publicly and privately held conservation lands managed under the Upper Mattole River and Forest Cooperative. It's also close to the King Range National Conservation Area, which many in the area hope to someday link up with through a network of trails.

“As you start piecing them together ... you can start seeing this trail system,” said BLM Arcata Field Manager Lynda Roush.

Sanctuary Forest Executive Director Eric Goldsmith said that he's pleased that BLM is taking on the ownership of the 3 V's property. Other properties through which Ancestor and Baker creeks flow have been identified as a place to develop access for hiking and educational efforts, he said, and eventually the areas could be linked to the King Range.

“The long-term goal is to connect these trails that are part of the cooperative lands to the King Range and the Sinkyone State Park,” Goldsmith said.