

MOVING FORWARD

Slough project goes to commission

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THE TIMES-STANDARD

A project that would recreate part of Freshwater Creek's historic estuary will get under way next year if the California Coastal Commission clears it on Friday.

The plan is to excavate former channels, remove a tide gate and build mounds to accommodate a range of different plant species on 54 acres owned by the Northcoast Regional Land Trust. Some pasture would also be retained for continued grazing on the property northwest of the intersection of Felt Road and Myrtle Avenue near Freshwater Corners.

The main goal is to rebuild rearing habitat for salmon, especially coho salmon, where they can get out of high winter flows, and feed and grow during the summer before going down Freshwater Slough to Humboldt Bay.

"If (salmon) can't spend time in a brackish environment and get bigger,

Freshwater Slough is channeled by dikes that helped create much of the farmland in the area. It doesn't meander and split into numerous channels like it once did. In 2006, about a year after the land trust bought the property from Freshwater Farms' Rick Storre, biologists propped open the main tide gate to see the effects of a high tide. From that information, a design was formed to recreate some of the old channels.

"It's going to be pretty significant," said land trust project manager Ryan Wells of the channel excavation.

Wells said he doesn't expect any tidal inundation above the Wood Creek culvert where cattle cross, and the tides should be muted to some degree since the old tide gate weir will restrict flow. He hopes improved drainage on the land trust property will also improve drainage upstream, across Myrtle Avenue.

The land trust also is looking to blend the agricultural and restoration elements of the project with an interpretive trail, and possibly a link to the slough system for kayakers and canoeists.

"We definitely want to utilize it and have it available to the public," Wells said.

Wells said he expects the project to begin in August of 2009.

Coastal Commission staff are recommending the permit appli-

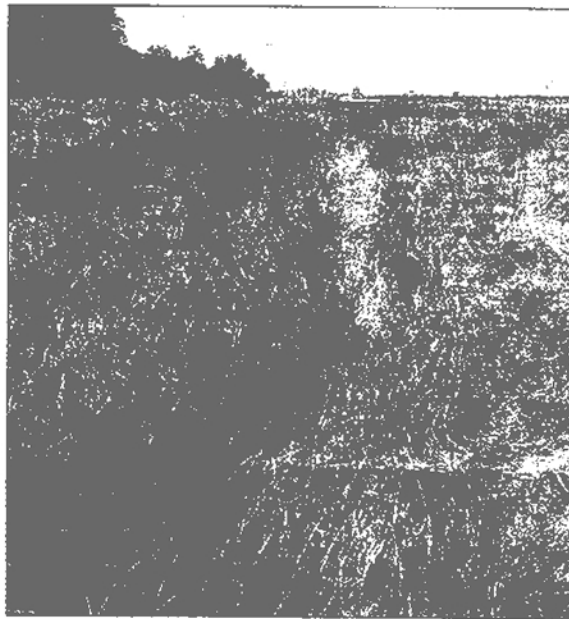


their chances of survival go down," said Don Allan, co-director of Redwood Community Action Agency's Natural Resources Services.

The project would restore tidal action to about 29 acres, and enhance 4,500 square feet of rearing habitat along Wood

Creek, which currently flows through the tide gate to the slough, according to the Coastal Commission's report. A culvert that Wood Creek flows through will be replaced with a bridge.

■ See SLOUGH/A8



Agencies are looking to restore part of the Freshwater Slough estuary, shown above, with a project that will rebuild channels and enhance habitat for salmon and steelhead along Myrtle Avenue near Freshwater Corners.

cation be approved with conditions. The commission will hear the matter Friday in Ventura.

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