

GRAY MATTERS

# Historic byway

## Volunteers needed Sunday at Freshwater Farms Reserve and Nature Trail

By **Maureen McGarry**  
For the Times-Standard

On the 2015 Summer Solstice, outdoor enthusiasts and supporters of the Northcoast Regional Land Trust paddled up the Freshwater Slough from Woodley Island in Humboldt Bay to the Freshwater Farms Reserve. (Do a search on YouTube for a short video "Paddling up the Slough" and you'll see how fun it was.) It was both a great way to start the summer and an introduction to the new trail along the slough within the open-air expanse of the reserve.

Freshwater Farms Reserve is located around the bend from Three Corners Market on Myrtle Avenue. At the entrance is the towering, historic Graham-Long Dairy barn. Just inside the driveway is a lovely little farm store and gateway to the reserve. The land is a mixture of grazing, farming and wildlife habitat. Prior to these uses, the location was primarily mud flats, channels and Humboldt Bay. Before the building of dikes and levees that pushed the bay back to where it now borders the Highway 101 corridor, this estuarine area supported one of the largest Coho salmon populations in Humboldt Bay.

"Walking on this trail is like walking on history," said Kerry McNamee, project manager at NRLT. "This property was

once a marsh, then it was converted to agricultural land, and now a portion of the property is marshland again."

The trust is restoring some marsh areas within the farmland. Its mission is dedicated to the protection and economic viability of working landscapes, farms, forests and grazing lands, and to the preservation and protection of land for its natural, educational, scenic and historic values. This work includes restoring Wood Creek, which flows through the property into Freshwater Slough.

Restoration efforts in 2009 included removing a tide gate, and developing and enhancing a network of Wood Creek channels and ponds that had been compromised by land uses in the past. Tides flush the estuarine area with brackish (slightly salty water) making better habitat for the Coho and other salmonids.

This coming Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to noon, Northcoast Regional Land Trust is looking for volunteers to help with various projects related to the newly built public access trail and help with future barn restoration. RSVP and Volunteer Center of the Redwoods are working with NRLT to recruit volunteers and expand environmental stewardship volunteer opportunities.

"Volunteers will sort through materials, determine what can be reused, remove debris and



MAUREEN MCGARRY

Rees Hughes, Northcoast Regional Land Trust board member, and Kerry McNamee, NRLT project manager, pause while working at the Freshwater Farms Reserve. This coming Sunday the trust will be leading a crew of volunteers to work on the new trail along Freshwater Slough within the open-air expanse of the reserve. All skill levels are needed to get the work done.

help haul the various items to their next location," said McNamee. "Volunteers with trucks are needed and greatly appreciated."

There are tasks for volunteers at all skill levels, such as weed-whacking vegetation and pulling invasive plants like English ivy.

"If you give ivy an inch, it will eventually take over a mile," McNamee said. "Other activities include raking gravel, moving it in wheelbarrows to a new location, picking flagging out of branches, and installing a gate."

Volunteers who help during this workday are helping to develop a new trail in the open

pasture land right next to Freshwater Slough.

"Freshwater Farm has the potential to be a very special place," said Rees Hughes, NRLT board member. "We want to demonstrate that working land can successfully combine restoration and conservation with recreation and agricultural activity. But it is a big task and we would love to have as much help as possible as we try to transform this community asset."

*For more information about the volunteer workday, contact Kerry at 822-2242 or [k.mcnamee@ncrlt.org](mailto:k.mcnamee@ncrlt.org), or call VCOR/RSVP at 442-3763.*