

SPRING 2014

NORTHCOAST REGIONAL LAND TRUST



Farm Mustard Field

Andrew Daniel

Cows, Crops, Cattails and Coho

Next Phase of Restoration at Freshwater Farms Reserve

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is actively designing a second phase of restoration on the Wood Creek estuary at Freshwater Farms Reserve. This wetland project, on approximately 10 acres, will build on the success of the first phase of the Wood Creek Tidal Marsh Enhancement Project by creating a more diverse, productive and scenic marsh complex. The effort will connect the already restored marsh and channel habitat downstream with the wetlands restoration work being done upstream by ranching neighbors Sean and Kathy O'Day (see page 3).

The phase II project area currently consists of an extensive patch of cattails and a vegetation choked stream channel with little standing water to support fish.

During the first phase of the Wood Creek project, completed in 2009, NRLT worked with partners to restore tidal flows to 35 acres of estuarine habitat, including historic backchannel habitat where young salmon could escape the high velocity wintertime flows occurring in the main stem of Freshwater Creek. The project included five years of monitoring in order to gauge effectiveness. From these observations, we

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The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is a member of the Land Trust Alliance, the California Council of Land Trusts, and the CA Northern Region Land Trust Council

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From the Executive Director

As the new Executive Director of the Northcoast Regional Land Trust, I am excited to work with this inspiring community. The North Coast is the place where I learned how important it is to support the people who produce our food and fiber. Farmers and ranchers are at the beating heart of our economy and represent the spirit and character of our unique way of life. If we can support our neighbors and keep land working, we will also protect habitat for wildlife and clean water for all of us. These straightforward principles have guided the Northcoast Regional Land Trust's work for the last 14 years and the results have been inspiring – the conservation of 25,000 acres of wild and working lands.

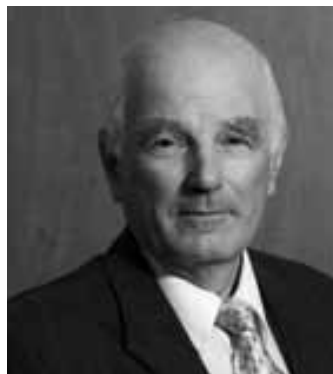


Since I began work here in January, I have learned that Northcoast Regional Land Trust does a remarkable amount of work because it maintains a smart, hardworking and close-knit team of staff. We are guided in our work by an accomplished, passionate and experienced Board of Directors, composed of folks who are used to rolling up their sleeves and who fully understand how to make a difference in the community we serve. Our insightful advisors lend their expertise from all walks of life, connecting us to the community, while bringing us an increased understanding of the sciences, ranching, farming, and politics of this work. Our partners include landowners of great vision and courage, who step forward to permanently protect their farms, ranches and forest lands from subdivision. We are also lucky to maintain strong partnerships with allies, members, donors and supporters throughout Humboldt, Trinity and Del Norte counties where we work and beyond. It takes a whole community to protect wild and working lands, and Northcoast Regional Land Trust is dedicated to the community we serve. Our partnership with you is the greatest asset we have.

I want to acknowledge and thank Lindsay Green for the outstanding job she has done as Executive Director for the last five years. The quality of the Land Trust's work and its overall health are a direct result of her inspiring leadership. It speaks volumes about Lindsay's care, character and work ethic that she is continuing with NRLT as a part-time staff member (while juggling twins!) to support the Land Trust's work. I also want to thank Bill Bragg and Susan Marshall for their amazing service as they step away from the Board of Directors. Bill has been critical in shaping NRLT; his clear and thoughtful direction, expertise, and sense of humor have been of tremendous value to the organization. Bill's care and commitment will continue as he stays on as an advisor. Susan's specialized knowledge, passion and direct experience with wildland soils and resources contributed greatly to our conversations and we will greatly miss her perspective.

I am still in the process of meeting our partners and supporters, so if you're tempted to reach out to connect, or have ideas to share, please do. Let's do this vital work together to protect the North Coast lands we love, and the quality of life they provide.

Michael Cipra
 Michael Cipra



Thank you, Bill and Susan!

Freshwater Ranch: Bottomlands Management through the Landowner Lens

In 2009, Kathy and Sean O'Day approached friends Joe and Debra Frazier with a proposal to partner in the purchase of 210 acres located in the Freshwater drainage. Sean and Kathy had been introduced to the property through friend and fellow rancher Chris Prior, who characterized the ranch as a diamond in the rough. The property is located adjacent to Freshwater Creek to the northeast, with a beautiful mature redwood forest on the southeast. Wood Creek originates on the property and meanders through the ranch. They recognized the property's potential to be productive sub-irrigated pastureland.

Before the purchase of the Freshwater Ranch, the O'Day's focus was on their cow-calf operations on Palace Rock Ranch near Bridgeville and on their home ranch near Fortuna. "Freshwater provided an opportunity to further vertically integrate our business. The addition of prime bottomland pasture enables us to grow out calves once they have been weaned into animals either ready for the grass fed market or for further finishing."

While the Freshwater Ranch presented an ideal fit, it needed rehabilitation and new infrastructure to realize its potential. "We had partnered with local rancher Dean Hunt on cattle for a number of years. Dean's expertise on running cattle on the bottomlands is second to none. With his

guidance, we developed a rotational grazing system. We put in a new water system that gives the cattle access to clean water and keeps them out of Wood Creek."

A rotational grazing system is fairly intensive – during the late spring, when the grass production is at its peak, cattle are moved from one pasture to the next every few days. As the growing season tapers, the period between moves stretches out to as long as 45 days. "We recognized two advantages to the ranching operation soon after we commenced rotational grazing. Both the quantity and quality of the grasses growing on the ranch improved dramatically. The native grasses came back, replacing the non-native invasive species which had previously dominated the property. The tremendous improvement in grazing conditions and the quality of the pasture is doing more than benefiting the cattle. We have witnessed a significant increase in population of waterfowl and other birds."

Sean and Kathy are equally committed to achieving the durable economic viability of their working land, while creating a better environment for wildlife. Whether it is improving grazing conditions and quality on their mountain ranch or on the bottoms, the goal is the same – holistic management. "We are seeking sustainability. We have encouraged our children to educate themselves in resource management

and animal husbandry. One day they will be managing these ranches and we trust their goal will be as ours has been, to continue to do their part in making the land a better place for the next generation."



Kathy & Sean O'Day, Freshwater Ranch Landowners

Donor Voices: Eddie Tanner, NRLT Advisor, DeepSeeded Farm Owner and Farmer

Since deciding to make a career of farming my relationship to the land has deepened and changed. I came late to the business – having grown up in the suburbs, farms and ranchlands were something I appreciated in the abstract: "Open space is beautiful" and "No farms, no food." The natural beauty and working landscapes of Humboldt County were big factors in my move here, and over the last 15 years of farming I have come to realize that we cannot take these assets for granted. When economic pressures cause a farm or ranch to cease production, that land is often subdivided and loses some of its natural integrity. Without security it is harder for landowners to be stewards and the environment can suffer. This is why I am so grateful for the work of the Northcoast Regional Land Trust. Their programs are helping to maintain the qualities that make us all happy to live in this region. Locally produced, quality food from a thriving landscape just makes life better!



Conservation Property for Sale



Red Mountain, Mad River, CA +/- 35 Acres

Looking for a conservation buyer for gorgeous Lassics Wilderness Area property. Unique offering of approx. 35 steep to gently sloping acres with some flats and sweeping mountain views. Property will have a conservation easement to protect its natural resources. \$120,000

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COWS, CROPS, CATTAILS AND COHO

Continued from page 1

know that the restoration area is being utilized by coho salmon and other fish species as envisioned. In March 2012, net surveys conducted in a small, newly constructed seasonal freshwater pond detected over 123 juvenile coho salmon utilizing the new habitat at one time. We enter the second phase of restoration confident that constructing these off-stream pools provides significant benefits to the watershed's salmon population.

The upcoming restoration will involve excavating several ponds that are hydrologically connected to Wood Creek so that juvenile coho salmon – and other fish, including coastal cutthroat trout, Chinook salmon, steelhead trout and Tidewater Goby – will have the habitat they need to feed well and grow fast. Increasing the diversity of native wetland plant stands and planting riparian hardwood trees such as willow, alder and cottonwood will further enhance the value of the habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife. These and other design elements, including project funding strategies, are currently being developed with support from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the California State Coastal Conservancy.



Freshwater Creek supports the largest population of federally listed coho salmon in Humboldt Bay. Research by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife shows that up to 21% of the entire Freshwater Creek coho population utilize the Wood Creek restoration site. This property is especially important to young coho because it is providing the low-velocity, nutrient-rich rearing habitat they need to grow. Data shows that juvenile salmon grow up to four times faster in this restored estuary than in faster flowing stream sections. Faster growth contributes directly to increased ocean survival and return rates for adult coho salmon.

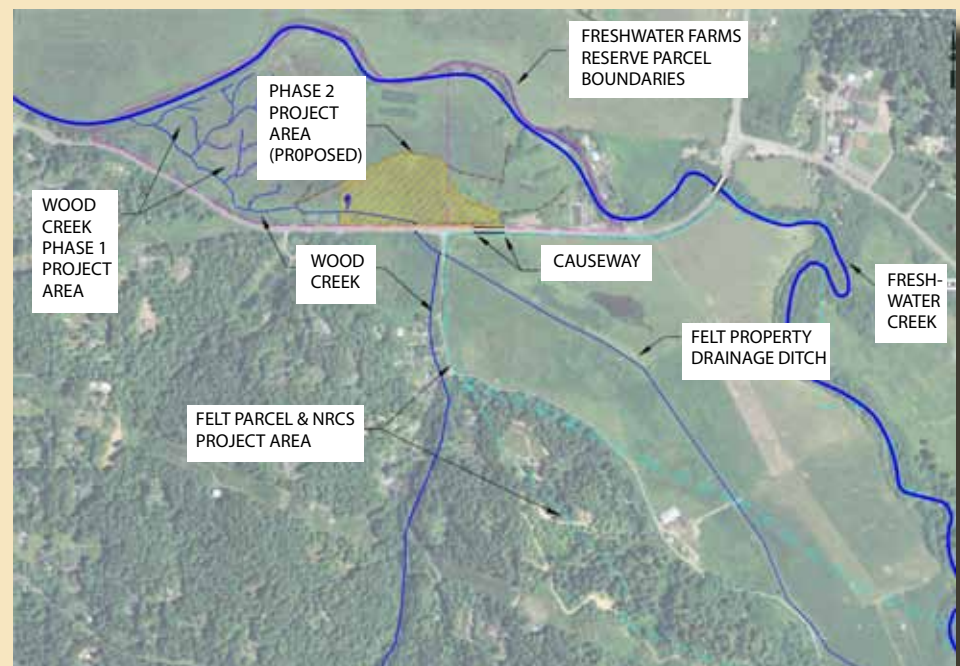
True to the property's agricultural history, cattle grazing will continue across much of the property and flash grazing may be incorporated into the long-term maintenance of restored areas. A trial run at flash grazing in 2013 showed much promise where implemented, with the practice increasing scenic, park-like qualities in the agricultural wetlands complex and leaving distinctive stands of native wetland plants unharmed. Due to the drought conditions and low rate of grass growth in 2013, the additional feed created by expanded grazing was also a boon to the resident cattle operation.

In addition to continued grazing, the restoration project will be designed to accommodate other uses of the property, including the improvement of a nature trail, educational programming, scientific research and the continued operation of the Kneeland Glen Farm Stand by farmer and rancher Kathy Mullen. Cows, crops, cattails and coho will continue to co-exist at Freshwater Farms – increasingly a nexus for connecting the lands, waters, people and priorities of our community.

Wood Creek Phase II proposed restoration site



Wood Creek Phase II proposed project map, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Program, 2014



Agriculture and Sea Level Rise on Eureka Slough – A Case Study

By Aldaron Laird, *Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planner and NRLT Technical Advisor*

The land that drains to Eureka Slough by way of Fay, Freshwater and Ryan Slough is diked former tideland that is vulnerable to flooding. By 1898, most of the salt marsh areas on Eureka Slough had been diked off to become agricultural lands (Figure 1) and today agriculture still dominates the landscape in the form of grazing. Flooding is common in winter on these lands around Humboldt Bay with high groundwater because over time the land has compacted up to 3 feet as the organics in the former salt marsh soil have oxidized.

Today, there are approximately 14.5 miles of earthen dikes on Eureka Slough, with some in better shape than others. A recent shoreline inventory and mapping project (Laird 2013) found that 7.2 miles or 50 percent of the dikes are highly vulnerable to breaching from erosion or by overtopping during storm surges and/or King tides (Figure 2). If the dikes were breached today, as much as 1,500 acres could be flooded with salt water (Figure 3). These low lying lands face two challenges going forward: rising sea levels and rising groundwater. Compounding their vulnerability is the fact that the Humboldt Bay region is subsiding – add in sea level rise and over the last century the tides are about 18 inches higher.

Since 2010, the Humboldt Bay sea level rise adaptation planning project has been inventorying and mapping shoreline vulnerability, preparing inundation models

and maps, and exploring regional adaptation strategies. One of the more important findings as a result of this effort is that these diked former tidelands cannot be protected one parcel at a time or one jurisdiction at a time; every entity behind a shared dike is in this together.

To build and maintain the dikes when they were first constructed on the banks of the sloughs in 1894, the Board of Supervisors authorized the formation of a Reclamation District covering the former tidelands from Freshwater Slough in the south to Brainard's Point in the north. The District

was disbanded long ago but perhaps this concept is worth reconsidering again, at least on discrete hydrologic units where landowners who share a common dike to hold back the tides can join together to protect their lands from flooding. Aligning with organizations like the Northcoast Regional Land Trust, landowners may be able to organize and potentially secure programmatic permits that would allow agriculture to continue, at least for another 4 or 5 more decades, until rising groundwater converts the land or rising tides overcome these historic dikes.

Figure 1. Inter-tidal lands on Eureka Slough (U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, 1870)

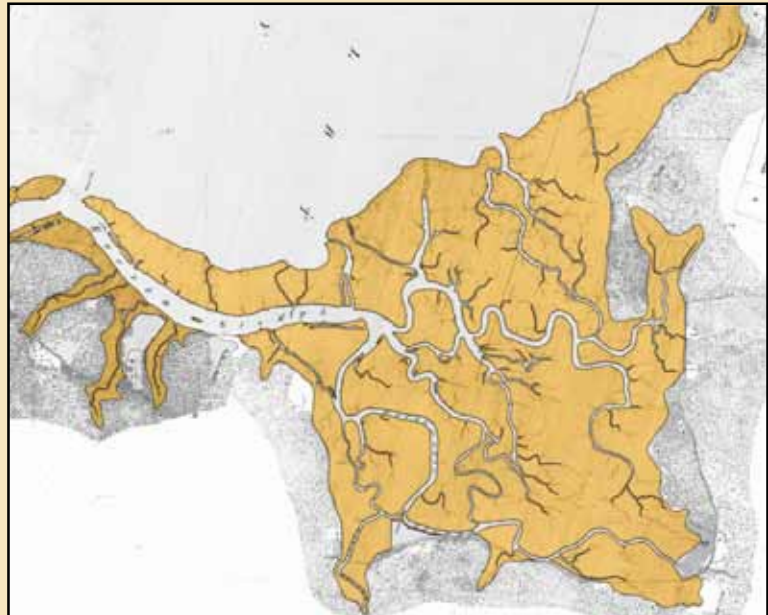


Figure 2. Shoreline vulnerability on Eureka Slough: red is highly vulnerable, yellow-moderately, and green low (Laird, 2013)



Figure 3. Potential inundation area on Eureka Slough if the diked shoreline were to be breached or overtopped (NHE, 2013)

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

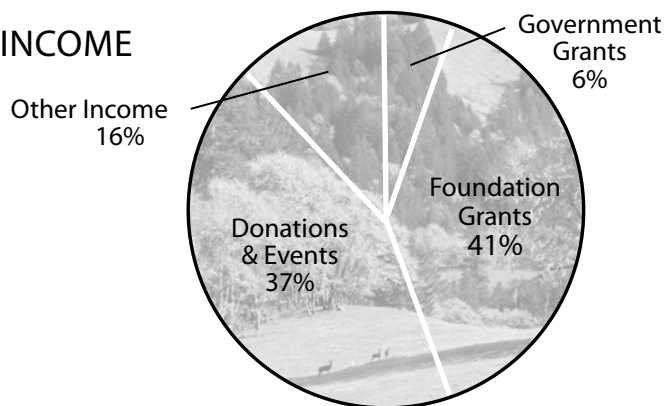
The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is pleased to provide our members with an accounting of organizational and programmatic accomplishments for 2013:

- Freshwater Farms Reserve thrived as we completed our fourth year of restoration monitoring and continued leasing the property to a local producer for grazing. The Farm Stand was opened, selling locally produced food and products.
- NRLT monitored nine easement properties, covering over 25,00 acres, and received nearly 50 inquiries for new projects throughout the year, including a 408-acre easement located in the upper Summit and Panther Creek drainages in the Trinity River watershed.
- The Martin Slough Enhancement Project moved forward with

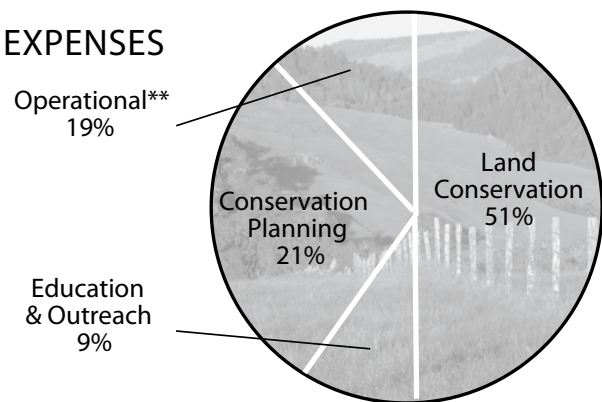
restoration design plans that include a two-phase fish passage improvement, wetland enhancement, and flood reduction.

- Among other local land trusts and conservation organizations, NRLT was selected to be a part of a national pilot study, the Durable Collaboration Initiative, exploring various options for sustainable collaboration in our region.
- Again this year, over 1,000 students participated in our Stewards of Tomorrow programs, getting outside to discover and play, while learning about scientific practices, ecology, restoration, local production and conservation.
- NRLT was nationally accredited, adopting policies and procedures to ensure our long term sustainability. Out of 1,700 land trusts nationally only 238 are accredited and NRLT is now one of them!

INCOME



EXPENSES



INCOME

2012

2013

Government Grants	\$131,870	\$16,541
Foundation Grants	\$130,164	\$122,530
Donations & Events	\$89,664	\$109,532
Other Income	\$30,785	\$49,209
Restricted Donations*	\$286,753	\$0
Investments	\$75,784	\$140,962
TOTAL	\$745,020	\$438,774

*Restricted donations are made to our Stewardship or Board Designated funds which allows for the ongoing monitoring and stewardship of our easement properties and continuation of our work.

EXPENSES

2012

2013

Land Conservation	\$280,769	\$181,593
Education & Outreach	\$32,158	\$34,140
Conservation Planning	\$15,363	\$76,111
Operational**	\$39,323	\$67,180
TOTAL	\$367,613	\$359,024

**Includes administration, fundraising, staff development & board expenses.

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Aldaron Laird
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Planner

THANK YOU NRLT Members and Supporters!

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is forever grateful to the following who gave cash grants, donations or project support from April 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014.

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is a tax-exempt, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization listed with the Internal Revenue Service under EIN #68-0456290. All donations are tax deductible.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Freshwater Farms Interpretive Walks: TBA, ncrlt.org
 Experience, firsthand, beautiful tidal salt marsh and pastureland at the Land Trust's restoration of wetland on the 74-acre Freshwater Farms Reserve. Each walk features a guest lecturer.

Canoe-the-Slough: TBA, ncrlt.org
 Paddle Humboldt Bay and the Freshwater Slough with a NRLT naturalist. Learn about the Bay's natural environment and the changes it has seen throughout the decades.

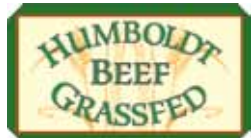
Pints for Non-Profits: Wed., July 16, 1-9pm, Mad River Brewing Company
 Join NRLT board members, advisors, staff and supporters in Blue Lake to celebrate conservation. \$1 of each beer sale goes to NRLT. Live music and food.

Annual Celebration: Sat., Oct. 11, 5-9pm, Fortuna River Lodge
 Celebrate NRLT's work in the community at our annual gathering. A delicious meal, live auction and other entertainment will be included in the festivities.

Lay of the Land: TBA, NRLT Office
 Join the Land Trust for the Lay of the Land, a one-hour presentation that gives an overview of what we are doing to protect and enhance our region's farms, forests, rangelands and natural areas.

NRLT's Mission *The Northcoast Regional Land Trust 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. We work with landowners on a voluntary basis to promote stewardship of Northern California's healthy and productive resource base, natural systems and quality of life.*

Special thanks to these sponsors for underwriting this issue:



COVER ARTIST – ANDREW DANIEL

Andrew Daniel has been painting and showing his art since 1992, graduating in 2001 with a BA in Fine Art from Humboldt State University. Long a student of art he tried many styles of painting, only to find that the simple approach of relating directly to the world in front of him and recreating it in paint was the best method for him. His paintings are inspired by the landscape and people of the Northcoast. He uses paint as a tool for slowing down and taking note of the constant flow of changes around him. Daniel lives and works in Arcata, dividing his time between his family, art and work with developmentally disabled adults. You can find more of his work at: andrewdanielportfolio.com



Winter Slough

ALSO THANKS TO:

