



Hello Elk River landowners and stakeholders,

I hope this Newsletter finds you all well and enjoying summer.

In this fourth edition of our Newsletter, we are pleased to update you on recent activities of the Elk River Stewardship Program. Here is a brief summary:

- o First, we are pleased to introduce two new members of our Project Team – Elizabeth Pope, who is the new Regional Water Board Humboldt Bay Steward, and Katy Gurin, who is now leading CalTrout’s Elk River Design Team.

- o We are pleased to present to you the recently completed Elk River Recovery Plan (described in more detail on the next page).

- o We also have updates on the Stewardship’s Health and Safety efforts.

- o And last, we provide links to two new Reports that are available, and information about the forthcoming Regional Water Board hearing, to be held in Eureka **Tuesday, August 30**.

But first, our new team members:

In March 2022, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board welcomed Elizabeth Pope as the Humboldt Bay Watershed Steward. Elizabeth comes to the Regional Board from CDFW where, for the past 20 years, she worked as both a freshwater fisheries and marine biologist. She also spent two years as the Acting Marine Advisor to the California Fish and Game Commission. Elizabeth has worked closely with stakeholders on a variety of projects including marine protected areas, abalone recovery, coastal fishing communities, salmonid restoration, citizen science, and outreach and education efforts. Elizabeth lives and works in Eureka where she loves spending time exploring the incredible places throughout the North Coast.

The Elk River Recovery Program also welcomes Katy Gurin, who joined California Trout in March of 2022 as our Elk River project manager. Katy earned her undergraduate degree in Environmental Resources Engineering from Cal Poly Humboldt in 2011 and her Master’s degree in Creative Writing from the University of California at Riverside in 2019. She has worked as an engineer on restoration and rehabilitation projects throughout California, including the restoration of Wishon Quarry, the decommissioning of the Humboldt Bay Nuclear Power Plant, and the removal of San Clemente Dam. Katy is honored to support the efforts of the Elk River community in her new role.

ELK RIVER RECOVERY PLAN

Use the links below or scan the QR codes with your device's camera to view and download the Elk River Recovery Plan and supporting documents.

The Recovery Plan

<https://caltrout.org/elk-river-stewardship-program-recovery-plan-public-draft>



Appendices

https://caltrout.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Appendices-A-G-Elk-River-Stewardship-Recovery-Plan-Public-Draft-July_2022.pdf



South Fork Elk River Draft Conceptual Design Report

<https://caltrout.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/South-Fork-Elk-River-Draft-Conceptual-Design-Report.pdf>



The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) is pleased to announce the availability of the draft ***Elk River Watershed Stewardship Program: Sediment Remediation and Habitat Rehabilitation Plan*** (Recovery Plan) now out for public review. With CalTrout as the contracted lead and Northern Hydrology Engineering and Stillwater Sciences as subcontractors, this draft Recovery Plan provides the results of field investigations, sediment transport and hydrodynamic modeling, and interactions with numerous landowners in the Elk River to generate a series of proposed recovery actions. These actions represent the Stewardship Program's proposed approach to reducing flooding frequency, improving water quality, and improving habitat conditions through rehabilitation and remediation efforts.

This Recovery Plan is the culmination of several years of effort to identify and prioritize voluntary Actions and develop a plan to carry out these Actions in an expedient way. This Recovery Plan describes the overall scope of the Stewardship Project, presents the results of our analyses, and lays out the technical and regulatory pathways to implement these remediation and restoration Actions.

The Recovery Plan contains the following information:

o **Chapters 1-3** describe the purpose and need for the Recovery Program, including historical and regulatory contexts, and Program objectives.

o **Chapter 4** (Project Description) describes the proposed remediation and rehabilitation Actions, their anticipated benefits, and their distribution throughout four discrete Planning Areas (see map on facing page). These Actions emerged as recommendations from the Elk River Recovery Assessment and were vetted and refined with direct input from private landowners to ensure their voluntary support of these Actions on their properties.

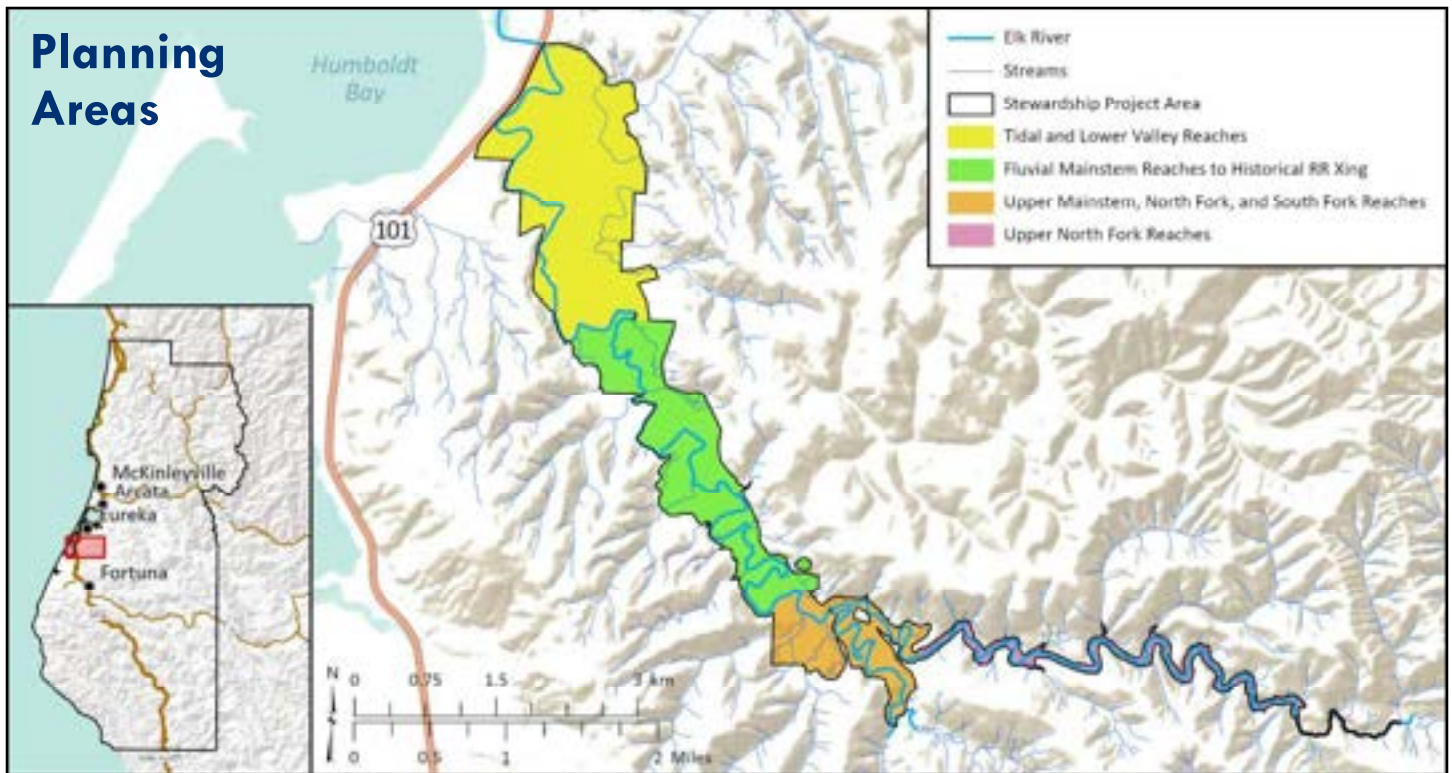
o **Chapter 5** (Project Evaluation) reports the results of analyses of these actions that were carried out to assess their overall effectiveness in meeting program goals, using our conceptual and hydrodynamic modeling tools to help prioritize actions and ensure the maximum benefit from their implementation.

o **Chapter 6** (Implementation Framework) describes an implementation plan that includes project phasing, construction methods, a proposed implementation timeline and program costs.

o **Chapter 7** (Regulatory Compliance Strategy) provides a strategy for complying with all required local, state, and federal requirements that are necessary to authorize, permit, and ultimately implement the Recovery Plan.

o **Chapter 8** (Monitoring and Evaluating Performance) provides a monitoring and adaptive management framework to evaluate the performance of remediation and habitat actions and track longer-term trends in watershed recovery.

We are happy to receive any written comments you would like to provide by **September 15, 2022**. Please feel free to contact Elizabeth Pope, Humboldt Bay Watershed Steward, at elizabeth.pope@waterboards.ca.gov.



HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

As part of the Watershed Stewardship Program, Regional Water Board staff have developed a Health and Safety Team tasked with gathering information on the impacts of sedimentation and related flooding experienced by the Elk River community and to identify commonalities in those experiences. The Health and Safety Team has begun conducting interviews to assess the health and safety challenges faced by participants and to ask the types of solutions they support.

Health and safety interviews are designed to serve two primary purposes: 1) record residents' recent experiences of flooding and related hazards and 2) prepare a comprehensive list of the solutions participants favor for reducing the impacts of those hazards. During the interview, participants are provided with Northern Hydrology and Engineering's technical memorandum, "*1% Annual Chance Flood Elevation Estimates for the Lower Elk River, Humboldt County*," summarizing the results of a model that maps extreme flood events up to the 100-year flood. Participants are asked to describe the frequency,

duration, and extent of flooding on their property and to identify any critical infrastructure that has been inundated. Particular focus is paid to five critical health and safety topics: the 100-year flood elevation and extent, road flooding, impacts to structures, onsite waste treatment systems, and drinking water supply.

In March 2022, initial outreach and interview scheduling began. The first round of interviews began in May 2022 and are expected to continue through summer 2022. Interviews can be done in-person, on the phone, or virtually. To date, nine interviews have been conducted, eight in-person and one via conference call. Later phases of this effort will include a broader group of residents and additional interested parties.

Major challenges identified by participants cover a range of impacts, including road access on and off property, a loss of drinking water, decreased property value, loss of agricultural function, and hazards posed by log jams, among others. Potential solutions to these challenges proposed by more than one group of participants include timber harvest restrictions, connection to a community water supply, raising structures, and construction or replacement of bridges.

If you would like to participate in the health and safety interview process, please contact Elizabeth Pope, Humboldt Bay Watershed Steward, at elizabeth.pope@waterboards.ca.gov or Matt Graves, Engineering Geologist at matt.graves@waterboards.ca.gov.

PHASE 1 Elk River Recovery Assessment (ERRA)

- Conceptual Model and Hydrodynamic Sediment Transport Model Development (Complete)
- ERRA Recovery Framework Report (Complete)
- Pilot Project Implementation (In progress)

PHASE 2 Preferred Recovery Strategy

- Develop site-specific actions in consultation with landowners and regulatory agencies
- Present Preferred Strategy at Feb. 27 Public Meeting (Complete)

PHASE 3 Develop Elk River Recovery Plan

- Modeling and analysis of Preferred Recovery Strategy
- Modeling and Analysis of Vegetation Management
- Present results of analysis including preliminary impacts and cost considerations.

We are here

PHASE 4 Regulatory Compliance

- Conduct programmatic environmental review

PHASE 5 Planning and Design

- Engineering design of landowner-supported actions
- Permitting

Phased Implementation of Projects

The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board will host a special meeting regarding Elk River, in Eureka **Tuesday, August 30, 2022**. An agenda for the meeting is forthcoming (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/), as will meeting materials all Elk River Watershed items on the agenda. A public presentation of the Recovery Plan will be made by the CalTrout Team at the meeting. Sign up for the electronic mailing list (referred to as the Lyris list) at www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/reg1_subscribe.html

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Photo by Darren Mierau
Map by L. Raine Leblanc



Scan the QR code with your device's camera to connect to CalTrout's Elk River Recovery Program web page



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