

STREAM INVENTORY REPORT

Cox Creek

INTRODUCTION

A stream inventory was conducted during the summer of 1996 on Cox Creek. The inventory was conducted in two parts: habitat inventory and biological inventory. The objective of the habitat inventory was to document the habitat available to anadromous salmonids in Cox Creek. The objective of the biological inventory was to document the presence and distribution of juvenile salmonid species. There is no known record of adult spawning surveys having been conducted on Cox Creek.

The objective of this report is to document the current habitat conditions, and recommend options for the potential enhancement of habitat for chinook salmon, coho salmon and steelhead trout. Recommendations for habitat improvement activities are based upon target habitat values suitable for salmonids in California's north coast streams.

WATERSHED OVERVIEW

Cox Creek is tributary to the North Fork Eel River, tributary to the Eel River, located in Trinity County, California. Cox Creek's legal description at its confluence with North Fork Eel River is T03S R07E S35. Its location is 40°09'26" North latitude and 123°21'34" West longitude. Cox Creek is a first order stream and has approximately 3.8 miles of ephemeral stream according to the USGS Shannon Butte 7.5 minute quadrangle. Cox Creek drains a watershed of approximately 4.8 square miles. Summer base flow is approximately 0.5 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the mouth, but over 5 cfs is not unusual during winter storms. Elevations range from about 1,830 feet at the mouth of the creek to 3,000 feet in the headwater areas. Mixed conifer forest dominates the watershed. The watershed is entirely National Forest and is managed for timber production and rangeland. Vehicle access exists via county route 520 from Kettenpom Valley north toward the Shannon Ranch airport. Turn right onto a dirt road located on the right bank of Kettenpom Creek. Follow the road to Shannon Place, and ford the North Fork Eel River. Walk downstream approximately 1,000 feet to the mouth of Cox Creek.

METHODS

The habitat inventory conducted in Cox Creek follows the methodology presented in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual* (Flosi and Reynolds, 1994). The Pacific Coast Fisheries, Wildlife, and Wetlands Restoration Association

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(PCFWWRA) members that conducted the inventory were trained in standardized habitat inventory methods by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). Cox Creek personnel were trained in May, 1996, by Scott Downie and Ruth Goodfield. This inventory was conducted by a two-person team.

SAMPLING STRATEGY

The inventory uses a method that samples approximately 10% of the habitat units within the survey reach (Hopelain, 1994). All habitat units included in the survey are classified according to habitat type and their lengths are measured. All pool units are measured for maximum depth. Habitat unit types encountered for the first time are further measured for all the parameters and characteristics on the field form. Additionally, from the ten habitat units on each field form page, one is randomly selected for complete measurement.

HABITAT INVENTORY COMPONENTS

A standardized habitat inventory form has been developed for use in California stream surveys and can be found in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*. This form was used in Cox Creek to record measurements and observations. There are nine components to the inventory form.

1. Flow:

Flow is measured in cubic feet per second (cfs) at the bottom of the stream survey reach using standard flow measuring equipment, if available. In some cases flows are estimated.

2. Channel Type:

Channel typing is conducted according to the classification system developed and revised by David Rosgen (1985 rev. 1994). This methodology is described in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*. Channel typing is conducted simultaneously with habitat typing and follows a standard form to record measurements and observations. There are five measured parameters used to determine channel type: 1) water slope gradient, 2) entrenchment, 3) width/depth ratio, 4) substrate composition, and 5) sinuosity.

3. Temperatures:

Both water and air temperatures are measured and recorded at

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every tenth habitat unit. The time of the measurement is also recorded. Both temperatures are taken in degrees Fahrenheit at the middle of the habitat unit and within one foot of the water surface.

4. Habitat Type:

Habitat typing uses the 24 habitat classification types defined by McCain and others (1988). Habitat units are numbered sequentially and assigned a type identification number selected from a standard list of 24 habitat types. Dewatered units are labeled "dry". Cox Creek habitat typing used standard basin level measurement criteria. These parameters require that the minimum length of a described habitat unit must be equal to or greater than the stream's mean wetted width. Channel dimensions were measured using hip chains, range finders, tape measures, and stadia rods. All units were measured for mean length; additionally, the first occurrence of each unit type and a randomly selected 10% subset of all units were sampled for all features on the sampling form (Hopelain, 1995). Pool tail crest depth at each pool unit was measured in the thalweg. All measurements were taken in feet to the nearest tenth.

5. Embeddedness:

The depth of embeddedness of the cobbles in pool tail-out reaches is measured by the percent of the cobble that is surrounded or buried by fine sediment. In Cox Creek, embeddedness was ocularly estimated. The values were recorded using the following ranges: 0 - 25% (value 1), 26 - 50% (value 2), 51 - 75% (value 3), 76 - 100% (value 4). Additionally, a rating of "not suitable" (NS) was assigned to tail-outs deemed unsuited for spawning due to inappropriate substrate particle size, having a bedrock tail-out, or other considerations.

6. Shelter Rating:

Instream shelter is composed of those elements within a stream channel that provide salmonids protection from predation, reduce water velocities so fish can rest and conserve energy, and allow separation of territorial units to reduce density related competition. The shelter rating is calculated for each fully-described habitat unit by multiplying shelter value and percent cover. Using an overhead view, a quantitative estimate of the percentage of the habitat unit covered is made. All cover is then classified according to a list of nine cover types. In Cox Creek, a standard qualitative shelter value of 0 (none), 1 (low), 2 (medium), or 3 (high) was assigned according to the complexity of the cover. Thus, shelter ratings can range from 0-300 and are

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expressed as mean values by habitat types within a stream.

7. Substrate Composition:

Substrate composition ranges from silt/clay sized particles to boulders and bedrock elements. In all fully-described habitat units, dominant and sub-dominant substrate elements were ocularly estimated using a list of seven size classes and recorded as a one and two respectively.

8. Canopy:

Stream canopy density was estimated using modified handheld spherical densimeters as described in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*, 1994. Canopy density relates to the amount of stream shaded from the sun. In Cox Creek, an estimate of the percentage of the habitat unit covered by canopy was made from the center of approximately every third unit in addition to every fully-described unit, giving an approximate 30% sub-sample. In addition, the area of canopy was estimated ocularly into percentages of coniferous or deciduous trees.

9. Bank Composition and Vegetation:

Bank composition elements range from bedrock to bare soil. However, the stream banks are usually covered with grass, brush, or trees. These factors influence the ability of stream banks to withstand winter flows. In Cox Creek, the dominant composition type (options 1-4) and the dominant vegetation type (options 5-9) of both the right and left banks for each fully-described unit were selected from the habitat inventory form. Additionally, the percent of each bank covered by vegetation was estimated and recorded.

BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY

Biological sampling during stream inventory is used to determine fish species and their distribution in the stream. In Cox Creek fish presence was observed from the stream banks. This sampling technique is discussed in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*.

SUBSTRATE SAMPLING

Gravel sampling is conducted using a 9 inch diameter standard McNeil gravel sampler. Sample sites are identified numerically

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beginning at the most upstream site in the stream. Gravel samples are separated and measured to determine respective percent volume using five sieve sizes: 25.4, 12.5, 4.7, 2.37, and 0.85 mm (Valentine, 1995).

DATA ANALYSIS

Data from the habitat inventory form are entered into *Habitat*, a DBASE 4.2 data entry program developed by Tim Curtis, Inland Fisheries Division, California Department of Fish and Game. This program processes and summarizes the data, and produces the following six tables:

- Riffle, flatwater, and pool habitat types
- Habitat types and measured parameters
- Pool types
- Maximum pool depths by habitat types
- Dominant substrates by habitat types
- Mean percent shelter by habitat types

Graphics are produced from the tables using Lotus 1,2,3. Graphics developed for Cox Creek include:

- Riffle, flatwater, pool habitats by percent occurrence
- Riffle, flatwater, pool habitats by total length
- Total habitat types by percent occurrence
- Pool types by percent occurrence
- Total pools by maximum depths
- Embeddedness
- Pool cover by cover type
- Dominant substrate in low gradient riffles
- Percent canopy
- Bank composition by composition type
- Bank vegetation by vegetation type

HABITAT INVENTORY RESULTS

* ALL TABLES AND GRAPHS ARE LOCATED AT THE END OF THE REPORT *

The habitat inventory of July 17, and 18, 1996, was conducted by Greg Mullins and Frank Humphrey (PCFWWRA). The total length of the stream surveyed was 8,765 feet with an additional 157 feet of side channel.

Flows were not measured on Cox Creek.

Cox Creek is a B2 channel type for the first 5,346 feet of stream reach, and a B1 for the remaining 3,419 feet of stream surveyed.

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B2 channels are moderately entrenched, meandering, riffle/pool channels on moderate gradients with high width/depth ratios and boulder-dominant substrates. B1 channel types are similar to B2 types, but have bedrock as their dominant substrate.

Measured water temperatures taken during the survey period ranged from 55 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit. Air temperatures ranged from 59 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit.

Table 1 summarizes the Level II riffle, flatwater, and pool habitat types. Based on frequency of **occurrence** there were 36% flatwater units, 34% riffle units, and 26% pool units (Graph 1). Based on total **length** of Level II habitat types there were 52% flatwater units, 26% riffle units, and 20% pool units (Graph 2).

Twelve Level IV habitat types were identified (Table 2). The most frequent habitat types by percent **occurrence** were low gradient riffles, 31%; mid-channel pools, 20%; and step runs, 18% (Graph 3). Based on percent total **length**, step runs made up 38%, low gradient riffles 24%, and mid-channel pools 15%.

A total of fifty-eight pools were identified (Table 3). Main channel pools were most frequently encountered at 81% and comprised 80% of the total length of all pools (Graph 4).

Table 4 is a summary of maximum pool depths by pool habitat types. Pool quality for salmonids increases with depth. Forty of the 58 pools (69%) had a depth of two feet or greater (Graph 5).

The depth of cobble embeddedness was estimated at pool tail-outs. Of the 58 pool tail-outs measured, none had a value of 1 (0%); 18 had a value of 2 (31%); 40 had a value of 3 (69%); and none had a value of 4 (0%) (Graph 6). On this scale, a value of 1 indicates the highest quality of spawning substrate.

A shelter rating was calculated for each habitat unit and expressed as a mean value for each habitat type within the survey using a scale of 0-300. Pool habitat types had a mean shelter rating of 74, and flatwater habitats had a mean shelter rating of 62 (Table 1). Of the pool types, the backwater pools had the highest mean shelter rating at 150. Scour pools had a mean shelter rating of 94 (Table 3).

Table 5 summarizes mean percent cover by habitat type. Boulders are the dominant cover type in Cox Creek and are extensive. Large and small woody debris are lacking in nearly all habitat types. Graph 7 describes the pool cover in Cox Creek.

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Table 6 summarizes the dominant substrate by habitat type. Boulder was the dominant substrate observed in five of the nine low gradient riffles measured (56%). Large cobble was the next most frequently observed dominant substrate type and occurred in 33% of the low gradient riffles (Graph 8).

The mean percent canopy density for the stream reach surveyed was 71%. The mean percentages of deciduous and coniferous trees were 92% and 8%, respectively. Graph 9 describes the canopy in Cox Creek.

For the stream reach surveyed, the mean percent right bank vegetated was 33%. The mean percent left bank vegetated was 36%. The dominant elements composing the structure of the stream banks consisted of 38.8% bedrock, 48.8% boulder, 8.8% cobble/gravel, and 1.3% sand/silt/clay (Graph 10). Brush was the dominant vegetation type observed in 36% of the units surveyed. Additionally, 30% of the units surveyed had deciduous trees as the dominant vegetation type, including down trees, logs, and root wads (Graph 11).

BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY RESULTS

Young-of-the-year (YOY) salmonids were observed from the stream banks by Greg Mullins and Frank Humphrey (PCFWWRA) throughout the survey of July 17 and 18, 1996.

GRAVEL SAMPLING RESULTS

No gravel samples were taken on Cox Creek.

DISCUSSION

Cox Creek is a B2 channel type for the first 5,346 feet of stream surveyed and a B1 for the remaining 3,419 feet. The suitability of B1 channel types for fish habitat improvement structures is excellent for bank-placed boulders and bank cover; good for log cover; and poor for low-stage weirs, single and opposing wing-deflectors, and boulder clusters. The suitability of B2 channel types is excellent for low- and medium-stage weirs, single- and opposing wing-deflectors, and bank cover.

The water temperatures recorded on the survey days July 17 and 18, 1995, ranged from 55 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit. Air temperatures ranged from 59 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit. This is a

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warm water temperature range for salmonids. Temperatures above 68° F, if sustained, are near the threshold stress level for salmonids. This appears to be the case here, and Cox Creek seems to have temperatures that are considered marginal for salmonids.

To make any further conclusions, temperatures would need to be monitored throughout the warm summer months, and more extensive biological sampling would need to be conducted.

Flatwater habitat types comprised 52% of the total **length** of this survey, riffles 26%, and pools 20%. The pools are relatively deep, with 40 of the 58 (69%) pools having a maximum depth greater than 2 feet. In general, pool enhancement projects are considered when primary pools comprise less than 40% of the length of total stream habitat. In first and second order streams, a primary pool is defined to have a maximum depth of at least two feet, occupy at least half the width of the low flow channel, and be as long as the low flow channel width. Installing structures that will increase or deepen pool habitat is recommended for locations where their installation will not be threatened by high stream energy, or where their installation will not conflict with the modification of the numerous log debris accumulations (LDA's) in the stream.

Forty of the 58 pool tail-outs measured had embeddedness ratings of 3 or 4. None had a 1 rating. Cobble embeddedness measured to be 25% or less, a rating of 1, is considered to indicate good quality spawning substrate for salmon and steelhead. Cox Creek sediment sources should be mapped and rated according to their potential sediment yields, and control measures should be taken.

The mean shelter rating for pools was low with a rating of 74. The shelter rating in the flatwater habitats was slightly lower at 62. A pool shelter rating of approximately 100 is desirable.

The relatively small amount of cover that now exists is being provided primarily by boulders in all habitat types. Additionally, Bedrock ledges contribute a small amount. Log and root wad cover structures in the pool and flatwater habitats are needed to improve both summer and winter salmonid habitat. Log cover structure provides rearing fry with protection from predation, rest from water velocity, and also divides territorial units to reduce density related competition.

Eight of the nine low gradient riffles had large cobble or boulders as the dominant substrate. This is generally considered unsuitable for spawning salmonids.

The mean percent canopy density for the stream was 71%. This is a relatively good percentage of canopy. In general, re-

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vegetation projects are considered when canopy density is less than 80%.

The percentage of right and left bank covered with vegetation was low at 33% and 36%, respectively. In areas of stream bank erosion or where bank vegetation is not at acceptable levels, planting endemic species of coniferous and deciduous trees, in conjunction with bank stabilization, is recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Cox Creek should be managed as an anadromous, natural production stream.
- 2) The limited water temperature data available suggest that maximum temperatures are above the desired range for juvenile salmonids. To establish more complete and meaningful temperature regime information, 24-hour monitoring during the July and August temperature extreme period should be performed for 3 to 5 years.
- 3) Where feasible, design and engineer pool enhancement structures to increase the number of pools. This must be done where the banks are stable or in conjunction with stream bank armor to prevent erosion.
- 4) Increase woody cover in the pools and flatwater habitat units. Most of the existing cover is from boulders. Adding high quality complexity with woody cover is desirable and in some areas the material is locally available.
- 5) Inventory and map sources of stream bank erosion and prioritize them according to present and potential sediment yield. Identified sites, like the site at 1470', should then be treated to reduce the amount of fine sediments entering the stream.
- 6) There are several log debris accumulations present on Cox Creek that are retaining large quantities of fine sediment. The modification of these debris accumulations is desirable, but must be done carefully, over time, to avoid excessive sediment loading in downstream reaches.

PROBLEM SITES AND LANDMARKS

The following landmarks and possible problem sites were noted. All distances are approximate and measured from the beginning of

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the survey reach.

0'Begin survey at confluence with North Fork Eel River.
Channel type is a B2 for the first 5346' of stream surveyed.

45'Young-of-the-year (YOY) salmonids observed by surveyors.

1167'Spring enters stream from left bank (LB).

1210'Spring enters from LB.

1338'YOY and 1+ salmonids observed by surveyors.

1338'Channel gradient drops nine feet. Large debris accumulation (LDA) is plugging stream channel and retaining sediment. A possible barrier to migrating salmonids.

1470'LDA in stream channel. Channel is completely blocked - 13' vertical drop in water elevation. Probable fish barrier.

1708'One YOY salmonid observed. Several larger trout, 6 to 10 inches, were also seen.

1910'Spring enters from LB.

3895'Spring enters from right bank (RB).

5346'Channel type changes from B2 to B1 for the remaining 3419' of stream surveyed.

5742'Small tributary enters from LB. Temperature is 53°F. Too steep for salmonids.

5983'Spring enters from LB.

8765'Survey has reached the confluence with Tub Creek. Stream flow is almost non-existent. End of survey.

References

Flosi, G., and F. Reynolds. 1994. California salmonid stream habitat restoration manual, 2nd edition. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California.

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Hopelain, J. 1995. Sampling levels for fish habitat inventory, unpublished manuscript. California Department of Fish and Game, Inland Fisheries Division, Sacramento, California.

Valentine, B. 1995. Stream substrate quality for salmonids: guidelines for sampling, processing, and analysis, unpublished manuscript. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Santa Rosa, California.

LEVEL III and LEVEL IV HABITAT TYPE KEY

HABITAT TYPE	LETTER	NUMBER
RIFFLE		
Low Gradient Riffle	[LGR]	1.1
High Gradient Riffle	[HGR]	1.2
CASCADE		
Cascade	[CAS]	2.1
Bedrock Sheet	[BRS]	2.2
FLATWATER		
Pocket Water	[POW]	3.1
Glide	[GLD]	3.2
Run	[RUN]	3.3
Step Run	[SRN]	3.4
Edgewater	[EDW]	3.5
MAIN CHANNEL POOLS		
Trench Pool	[TRP]	4.1
Mid-Channel Pool	[MCP]	4.2
Channel Confluence Pool	[CCP]	4.3
Step Pool	[STP]	4.4
SCOUR POOLS		
Corner Pool	[CRP]	5.1
Lateral Scour Pool - Log Enhanced	[LSL]	5.2
Lateral Scour Pool - Root Wad Enhanced	[LSR]	5.3
Lateral Scour Pool - Bedrock Formed	[LSBk]	5.4
Lateral Scour Pool - Boulder Formed	[LSBo]	5.5
Plunge Pool	[PLP]	5.6
BACKWATER POOLS		
Secondary Channel Pool	[SCP]	6.1
Backwater Pool - Boulder Formed	[BPB]	6.2
Backwater Pool - Root Wad Formed	[BPR]	6.3
Backwater Pool - Log Formed	[BPL]	6.4
Dammed Pool	[DPL]	6.5