STREAM INVENTORY REPORT

**Rock Creek**

INTRODUCTION

A stream inventory was conducted during the summer of 1996 on Rock 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 Rock 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 Rock 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

Rock Creek is tributary to Bell Springs Creek, tributary to the Mainstem Eel River, located in Mendocino County, California. Rock Creek's legal description at the confluence with Bell Springs Creek is T24N R15W S10. Its location is 39°56'22" N. latitude and 123°31'09" W. longitude. Rock Creek is a first order stream and has approximately 2.0 miles of blue line stream according to the USGS Bell Springs 7.5 minute quadrangle. Rock Creek drains a watershed of approximately 5.6 square miles. Summer base flow is approximately 0.1 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the mouth, but over ten cfs is not unusual during winter storms. Elevations range from about 1,050 feet at the mouth of the creek to 3,600 feet in the headwater areas. Mixed conifer forest dominates the watershed. The watershed is privately owned and is managed for rangeland and dispersed recreation. Vehicle access exists via the Alderpoint Road from Garberville to Bell Springs Road. Drive south on Bell Springs Road to a dirt road to the east, just south of Camel Rock. Follow the dirt road to the mouth of Rock Creek. Contact the landowner for access permission and for more explicit directions to Rock Creek.

METHODS

The habitat inventory conducted in Rock 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 (PCFWWRA) members that conducted the inventory were trained in standardized habitat inventory methods by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). Rock 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 Rock 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:

Water and air temperatures are measured and recorded at 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". Rock 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 Rock 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" (value 5) 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 Rock 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 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 densiometers as described in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*, 1994. Canopy density relates to the amount of stream shaded from the sun. In Rock 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-

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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 Rock 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 the inventory is used to determine fish species and distribution in the stream. In Rock 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 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, DFG. 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 Rock Creek

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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 September 12, 1996, was conducted by Greg Mullins and Frank Humphrey (PCFWWRA). The total length of the stream surveyed was 532 feet with no additional feet of side channel.

Flow was estimated to be 0.1 cfs during the survey period.

Rock Creek is an B1 channel type for the entire 532 feet of stream reach surveyed. B1 channels are moderate gradient, moderately entrenched, riffle dominated channels with stable banks and bedrock-dominant substrates.

Water temperatures taken during the survey period ranged from 59 to 62 degrees Fahrenheit. Air temperatures ranged from 65 to 69 degrees Fahrenheit.

Table 1 summarizes the Level II riffle, flatwater, and pool habitat types. Based on frequency of **occurrence** there were 38% pool units, 31% flatwater units, 15% riffle units, and 15% dry units (Graph 1). Based on total **length** of Level II habitat types there were 56% flatwater units, 32% pool units, 6% dry units, and 5% riffle units (Graph 2).

Seven Level IV habitat types were identified (Table 2). The most frequent habitat types by percent **occurrence** were step runs, 31%; mid-channel pools, 23%; and dry units, 15% (Graph 3). Based on percent total **length**, step runs made up 56%, mid-channel pools 15%, and step pools 15%.

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A total of five pools were identified (Table 3).  Main channel pools were most frequently encountered at 80% and comprised 91% of the total length of all pools (Graph 4).

Table 4 summarizes maximum pool depths by pool habitat types.  Pool quality for salmonids increases with depth.  All of the pools (100%) had a depth of two feet or greater (Graph 5).

The depth of cobble embeddedness was estimated at pool tail-outs.  Of the five pool tail-outs measured, one had a value of 1 (20%);  one had a value of 2 (20%);  three had a value of 3 (60%);  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.  Flatwater habitat types had a mean shelter rating of 20, and pool habitats had a mean shelter rating of 17 (Table 1).  Of the pool types, the backwater pools had the highest mean shelter rating at 40.  Main channel pools had a mean shelter rating of 5 (Table 3).

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

Table 6 summarizes the dominant substrate by habitat type.  Bedrock was the dominant substrate observed in all of the low gradient riffles measured (100%) (Graph 8).

The mean percent canopy density for the stream reach surveyed was 33%.  The mean percentages of deciduous and coniferous trees were 88% and 12%, respectively (Graph 9).

For the stream reach surveyed, the mean percent right bank vegetated was 7%.  The mean percent left bank vegetated was 9%.  The dominant elements composing the structure of the stream banks consisted of 75% bedrock, and 25% boulder (Graph 10).  Grass was the dominant vegetation type observed in 67% of the units surveyed (Graph 11).


BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY RESULTS

Young-of-the-tear (YOY) salmonids were observed by the surveyors throughout the Rock Creek stream inventory on September 12, 1996.


GRAVEL SAMPLING RESULTS

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No gravel samples were taken on Rock Creek.

DISCUSSION
Rock Creek is a B1 channel type for the entire 532 feet of stream surveyed. 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 water temperatures recorded on the survey day September 12, 1996, ranged from 59° to 62° F. Air temperatures ranged from 65° to 69° F. This is a good water temperature range for salmonids. Rock Creek seems to have temperatures favorable to 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 56% of the total **length** of this survey, riffles 5%, dry units 6%, and pools 32%. The pools are relatively deep, with all of the (100%) 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. The LDA's in the system are retaining needed gravel. Any necessary modifications to them should be done with the intent of metering the gravel out to downstream reaches that will trap the gravel for future spawning use. Therefore, gravel retention features may need to be developed prior to any LDA modification.

Three of the five pool tail-outs measured had embeddedness ratings of 3 or 4. Only one 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. In Rock 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 17. The shelter rating in the flatwater habitats was slightly better at 20. 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

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from predation, rest from water velocity, and also divides territorial units to reduce density related competition.

All of the low gradient riffles had bedrock as the dominant substrate. This is generally considered poor for spawning salmonids.

The mean percent canopy density for the stream was 33%. This is a relatively low percentage of canopy. In general, re-vegetation projects are considered when canopy density is less than 80%.

The percentage of right and left bank covered with vegetation was low at 7% and 9%, 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) Rock Creek should be managed as an anadromous, natural production stream.

2) Due to the high gradient of the stream, access for migrating salmonids is an ongoing potential problem. Good water temperature and flow regimes exist in the stream and it offers good conditions for rearing fish. Fish passage should be monitored and improved where possible.

3) 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.

4) Increase the canopy on Rock Creek by planting willow, alder, and Douglas fir along the stream where shade canopy is not at acceptable levels. The reaches above this survey section should be inventoried and treated as well, since the water flowing here is effected from upstream. In many cases, planting will need to be coordinated to follow bank stabilization or upslope erosion control projects.

5) 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.

6) The limited water temperature data available suggest that maximum temperatures are within the acceptable range for juvenile salmonids. To establish more complete and meaningful temperature regime information, 24-hour monitoring during the July and

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August temperature extreme period should be performed for 3 to 5 years.

7)      Spawning gravel on Rock Creek is limited to relatively few reaches. Projects should be designed at suitable sites to trap and sort spawning gravel in order to expand redd site distribution in the stream.

PROBLEM SITES AND LANDMARKS

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

0'              Begin survey at confluence with Bell Springs Creek.  Channel type is a B1 for the 532' of stream surveyed.

532'            Vertical drop in elevation of 13' at top of unit.  End of anadromy.  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.

<u>LEVEL III and LEVEL IV HABITAT TYPE KEY</u>

| 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 |