

# STREAM INVENTORY REPORT

## Little Valley Creek

### WATERSHED OVERVIEW

Little Valley Creek is a tributary to Pudding Creek (Figure 1). Elevations range from 100 feet at the mouth of the creek to 500 feet in the headwater areas. Little Valley Creek's legal description at the confluence with Pudding Creek is T18N R17W S01. Its location is 39°27'31"N. latitude and 123°43'03"W. longitude according to the USGS Fort Bragg 7.5 minute quadrangle. Little Valley Creek drains a watershed of approximately 3,645 acres.

### HABITAT INVENTORY RESULTS

The habitat inventory of September 28 through September 29, 1994, was conducted by Warren S. Mitchell. Survey length in Little Valley Creek was 6,118 feet (1.2 miles, 1.9 km) (Table 1).

Flow was not measured.

Little Valley Creek consists of one reach: E5 channel type.

Table 1 summarizes the Level II riffle, flatwater and pool habitat types. By percent occurrence riffles comprised 7%, flatwater 28% and pools 53% of the habitat types (Graph 1). By percent total length, riffles comprised 1%, flatwater 19% and pools 62% (Graph 2).

Nine Level IV habitat types were identified and are summarized in Table 2. The most frequently occurring habitat types were mid-channel pools, 35%, runs, 21%, and dry units, 11% (Graph 3). The most prevalent habitat types by percent total length were mid-channel pools at 40%, dry units at 17%, and runs at 14% (Table 2).

Table 3 summarizes main channel, scour and backwater pools, which are Level III pool habitat types. Main channel pools were most often encountered at 65% occurrence and comprised 63% of the total length of pools.

Table 4 is a summary of maximum pool depths by Level IV pool habitat types. In third order streams, pools with depths of three feet (0.91 m) or greater are considered optimal for fish habitat. In Little Valley Creek, 16 of the 43 pools (37%) had a depth of three feet or greater (Graph 4).

The depth of cobble embeddedness was estimated at pool tail-outs. Of the pool tail-outs measured, 0% had a value of 1, 2% had a value of 2, 10% had a value of 3 and 88% had a value of 4 (Graph 5).

Of the Level II habitat types, pools had the highest mean shelter rating at 43 (Table 1). Of the Level III pool habitat types, scour pools had the highest mean shelter rating at 46 (Table 3).

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Of the 43 pools, 14% were formed by large woody debris (LWD): 5% by logs and 9% by root wads (calculated from Table 4).

Table 6 summarizes dominant substrate by Level IV habitat types. Of the low gradient riffles fully measured, 67% had gravel as the dominant substrate (Graph 6).

Mean percent closed canopy was 85%: 67% coniferous trees and 18% deciduous trees. Mean percent open canopy was 15% (Graph 7, calculated from Table 7).

Table 7 summarizes the mean percent substrate/vegetation types found along the banks of the stream. Mean percent right bank vegetated was 76.1% while mean percent left bank vegetated was 74.2%. Brush was the dominant bank vegetation type in 50% of the units fully measured. The dominant substrate composing the structure of the stream banks was sand/silt/clay found in 100% of the units fully measured.

## DISCUSSION

The information gathered in the process of habitat typing will provide Georgia-Pacific with baseline data on the current condition of this creek and the available habitat for salmonids. These data can be used to identify components of the habitat which are in need of enhancement so appropriate conditions for Little Valley Creek can be obtained over time.

### **Level II habitat types by percent occurrence and length**

Flatwater habitat types comprised a moderate percentage of the units by both percent occurrence and length at 28% and 19% respectively (Table 1 and Graph 1). These unit types usually do not provide optimal spawning or rearing habitat for salmonids. Riffle habitat units comprised a low percentage of the stream by both percent occurrence and length at 7% and 1% respectively. Pools, however, comprised a much higher percentage by both percent occurrence and length at 53% and 62% respectively. Riffles usually provide good spawning habitat while pools provide important rearing habitat. In addition, Mundie (1969) reported that invertebrate food production is maximized in riffles while pools provide an optimum feeding environment for coho salmon. In fact, the most productive streams are those consisting of a pool to riffle ratio of approximately one to one (Ruggles 1966).

### **Pool Depth**

According to Flosi and Reynolds (1994), a stream with at least 50% of its total habitat comprised of primary pools is generally desirable. Primary pools are at least two feet deep in first and second order streams and at least three feet deep in third order streams. The information from Graph 4 on maximum depth in pools was used to determine percent of primary pools. Little Valley Creek, a third order stream, is comprised mainly of shallow pools with 37% of the pools having a maximum depth of three feet or greater.

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### **Instream Shelter**

Instream shelter ratings are derived from two measurements: instream shelter complexity and instream shelter percent cover. The first is a value rating which provides a relative measure of the quality and composition of the shelter, and the second is a measure of the area of a habitat unit covered by shelter. The various types of instream shelter include LWD, small woody debris, boulders, root wads, terrestrial vegetation, aquatic vegetation, bedrock ledges and undercut banks. Of the Level II habitat types, pools had the highest shelter rating at 43. Of the Level III habitat types, scour pools had the highest shelter rating at 46. These values are low as shelter values of 80 or higher are considered optimal for good rearing habitat (Flosi and Reynolds 1994).

### **Large Woody Debris**

The presence of large woody debris in streams is a significant component of fish habitat. Woody debris creates areas of low flow, providing a refuge for fish during periods of high flow (Robison and Beschta, 1990). Woody debris also provides cover for fish, lowering the risk of predation. The percent of pools formed by LWD in Little Valley Creek was 14%. Whether these numbers are high or low, relative to the needs of salmonids is difficult to ascertain since the optimum amount of woody debris in streams has not been specified (Robison and Beschta 1990). However, based on data from Georgia-Pacific's 1995 Aquatic Vertebrate Study, the only coho found in the Ten Mile River Basin were in stream reaches where approximately 50% of pools were formed by large woody debris. Those reaches that did not support coho had a significantly lower percentage of pools formed by large woody debris (Ambrose et al, 1996). This suggests that a low percentage of LWD formed pools could adversely affect juvenile coho populations (C.S. Shirvel 1990).

The above LWD analysis pertains only to pools formed by logs or root wads as described in Flosi and Reynolds (1994): lateral scour pool-log enhanced, lateral scour pool-rootwad enhanced, backwater pool-log formed, and backwater pool-rootwad formed. Other pools containing LWD as a component were not included in the calculation. For example, plunge pools may be formed by boulders, bedrock or LWD, but are not described as such by habitat unit types. Therefore, the LWD formed pool calculation is limited to four pool types and does not quantify the amount of LWD in Little Valley Creek.

### **Canopy**

There are two important benefits of canopy cover in coastal streams. Canopy keeps stream temperatures cool as well as providing nutrients in the form of leaf litter and organic material (Bilby 1988). This leaf litter, organic material, and their associated nutrients are utilized as a food source by benthic macroinvertebrates (aquatic insects). The macroinvertebrates, in turn, are major food sources for most fish species in forested areas (Gregory et al., 1987). Mean percent canopy cover for the Little Valley Creek was 85%. This is relatively high since a canopy cover of 80% or higher is considered optimum (Flosi and Reynolds, 1994).

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Coniferous trees occupied a larger portion of the canopy than did deciduous trees. Deciduous trees comprised only 18% of the canopy. The significance of this is that wood from alders and most other deciduous species deteriorates more rapidly than wood from coniferous species (Sedell, *et al.* 1988). Therefore, more LWD would be available in the future for fish cover and LWD formed pools in this creek and others dominated by coniferous species.

## **Embeddedness**

High embeddedness values (silt levels), such as those found in Little Valley Creek, have been associated with many negative impacts to salmonids. These negative impacts can be observed in important environmental components of salmonid habitat, such as pool habitats, dissolved oxygen levels and water temperatures.

The impact high silt levels have on pool habitat is that they fill in and eventually eliminate pools. As already mentioned, pools provide important habitat for rearing salmonids.

High silt levels also impact oxygen levels in the water. They do so by reducing water circulation within the substrate, thus lowering the oxygen levels needed by salmonid eggs (Sandercock, 1991). This can hinder the survival of the eggs deposited in redds, as well as the survival of juvenile salmonids.

Water temperature is impacted by high silt levels in several ways. Hagans et al (1986) reported the following impacts to water temperatures: 1) the loss of a reflective bottom; 2) darker sediment (as opposed to clean gravels) storing heat from direct solar radiation which is then transferred to the water column; and 3) a reduction in the flow of water through the substrate interstitial spaces thereby exposing more of the water column to direct solar radiation.

Another means by which water temperatures are increased is through the widening of stream channels: over time, high silt levels increase the substrate surface level of the creek, resulting in a wider, shallower stream channel (Flosi and Reynolds, 1994). In shallow streams more surface area is exposed to the sun relative to the volume of water, leading to an increase in solar heating which in turn leads to higher water temperatures.

Substrates embedded with silt in varying degrees were given corresponding values as follows: 0-25%= value 1, 26 - 50% = value 2, 51 - 75% = value 3 and 76 - 100% = value 4. According to Flosi and Reynolds (1994), creeks with embeddedness values of two or higher are considered to have poor quality fish habitat. In Little Valley Creek, 100% of the pool tail-outs measured had embeddedness values of two or more.

It is important to consider, however, that the above embeddedness values were obtained in the summer during low flow conditions. In winter and spring, flows are usually higher due to the rainy season and the lowered evapotranspiration of the trees. This higher flow can carry away some of the previously deposited silt to sites further downstream. Therefore, embeddedness values may fluctuate throughout the year along different sections of the stream.

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### Substrate

In Little Valley Creek, 17% of the low gradient riffles had gravel as the dominant substrate. The relatively low concentration of gravel in riffles indicates there is insufficient amount of substrate available as potential spawning habitat in this creek.

Overall, Little Valley Creek appears to have a relatively high canopy. However, this stream also appears to have insufficient spawning substrate, low shelter values and high embeddedness values.

Georgia-Pacific recognizes that there are areas of Little Valley Creek in need of enhancement, and where feasible will attempt to restore those areas over time as part of its long term management plan. The company will also attempt to facilitate a healthy environment for salmonids in this creek through sound management practices.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Little Valley Creek should be managed as an anadromous, natural production watershed.
- 2) Where feasible, design and engineer pool enhancement structures to increase the number/depth (or both) of pools. This must be done where the banks are stable or in conjunction with stream bank armor to prevent erosion.
- 3) Shelter values throughout Little Valley Creek could be increased by addition of large logs and root wads, boulder clusters, log and boulder weirs and log and boulder deflectors. These need to be placed carefully to prevent washing out in high flows. The Stream Habitat Restoration Manual, by Flosi and Reynolds, 1994, provides detailed descriptions for restoration efforts.
- 4) Increase the canopy in Little Valley Creek by planting willow, alder, redwood and Douglas-fir along the watercourses where shade canopies are not at acceptable levels. Planting efforts need to be coordinated to follow bank stabilization or upslope erosion control projects. A proportion of trees already present along the river should also be allowed to grow and left to maintain a functional over story canopy.
- 5) Log debris accumulations retaining large quantities of fine sediment should be modified if necessary, over time, to avoid excessive sediment loading in downstream reaches.
- 6) Sources of stream bank erosion should be mapped and prioritized according to present and potential sediment yield. Identified sites should then be treated to reduce the amount of fine sediment entering the stream. In addition, sediment sources related to road systems need to be identified, mapped and treated according to their potential for sediment yield to the watershed.

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- 7) Spawning gravel in this creek was limited. Projects should be designed at suitable sites to trap spawning gravel in order to increase spawning habitat throughout the stream.

### COMMENTS AND LANDMARKS

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

Position  
(ft):

Comments:

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124	Bridge crossing.
323	Silt/clay: franciscan melange packed.
536	Old dam site.
1029	Dry tributary on right bank.
2004	12" diameter tree collapsed from right bank over pool tail, retaining small woody debris (SWD)
3121	Redwood (two foot diameter) collapsed from right bank.
3427	Redwood tree collapsed into creek from right bank.
4014	Right bank tributary. Alluvial gravels form the pool tail crest.
4365	Deciduous canopy comes from the scattered willow along the banks.
5038	2+ steelhead observed.
6118	End of survey. Small puddle in unit contains approximately 18 fish - all stickleback. Unit stays dry for at least 800', no suitable habitat due to substrate composition and channel morphology

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