STREAM INVENTORY REPORT

McWhinney Creek

INTRODUCTION

A stream inventory was conducted during the summer of 1994 on McWhinney Creek to assess habitat conditions for anadromous salmonids. 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 McWhinney Creek. The objective of the biological inventory was to document the salmonid species present and their distribution. After analysis of the information and data gathered, stream restoration and enhancement recommendations are presented.

There is no known record of adult spawning surveys having been conducted on McWhinney Creek. The objective of this report is to document the current habitat conditions, and recommend options for the potential enhancement of habitat for coho salmon and steelhead trout.

WATERSHED OVERVIEW

McWhinney Creek is tributary to North Fork Elk River, a tributary to the Elk River, a tributary to Humboldt Bay, which drains to the Pacific Ocean. It is located in Humboldt County, California. McWhinney Creek's legal description at the confluence with North Fork Elk River is T04N R01E S33. Its location is 40.6931 degrees north latitude and 124.0644 degrees west longitude. McWhinney Creek is a first order stream and has approximately 1.2 miles of blue line stream according to the USGS McWhinney Creek 7.5 minute quadrangle. McWhinney Creek drains a watershed of approximately 1.3 square miles. Summer base runoff is ≤0.1 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the mouth. Elevations range from about 200 feet at the mouth of the creek to 900 feet in the headwater areas. Redwood forest dominates the watershed. The watershed is privately owned and is managed for timber production. Access is via a locked gate on the Wrigley Road.

METHODS

The habitat inventory conducted in McWhinney Creek follows the methodology presented in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual* (Flosi and Reynolds, 1991 rev. 1994). The California Conservation Corps (CCC) Technical Advisors that conducted the inventory were trained in standardized habitat inventory methods by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). McWhinney Creek personnel were trained in June, 1994, by Gary Flosi and Scott Downie. This inventory was conducted by a two-person team.

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 McWhinney 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. Flows should also be measured or estimated at major tributary confluences.

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 each tenth unit typed. 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". McWhinney 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. Unit measurements included mean length, mean width, mean depth, and maximum depth. 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 McWhinney 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).

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 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 McWhinney 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 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 is estimated using handheld spherical densiometers and is a measure of the water surface shaded during periods of high sun. In McWhinney Creek, an estimate of the percentage of the habitat unit covered by canopy was made from the center of each unit. The area of canopy was further analyzed to estimate its percentages of coniferous or deciduous trees, and the results recorded.

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 McWhinney Creek, the dominant composition type and the dominant vegetation type of both the right and left banks 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. Biological inventory is conducted using one or more of three basic methods: 1) stream bank observation, 2) underwater observation, 3) electrofishing. These sampling techniques are discussed in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*.

Biological inventory was conducted in McWhinney Creek to document the fish species composition and distribution. Two sites were electrofished in McWhinney Creek using a Smith Root Model 12 electrofisher. Each site was end-blocked with nets to contain the fish within the

sample reach. Fish from each site were counted by species, measured, and returned to the stream.

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 McWhinney 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

The habitat inventory of June 17, 1994 was conducted by Craig Mesman and Charles Bartolotta (CCC). The total length of the stream surveyed was 601 feet.

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

McWhinney Creek is an F6 channel type for the entire 601 feet of stream reach surveyed. F6 channels are entrenched meandering riffle/pool channels on low gradients with high width/depth ratio. They have predominantly silt/clay substrates.

Water temperatures ranged from 53 to 54 degrees Fahrenheit. Air temperatures ranged from 58 to 59 degrees Fahrenheit.

Table 1 summarizes the Level II riffle, flatwater, and pool habitat types. By percent occurrence, pools made up 55%, riffles 20%, and flatwater 15% (Graph 1). Pool habitat types made up 65% of the total survey length, riffles 14%, and flatwater 13% (Graph 2).

Nine Level IV habitat types were identified. The data are summarized in Table 2. The most frequent habitat types by percent occurrence were mid-channel pools, 35%; riffles, 20%; and step runs, 10% (Graph 3). By percent total length, mid-channel pools made up 49%, low gradient riffles 14%, and dry units 8%.

Eleven pools were identified (Table 3). Main channel pools were most often encountered at 82% and comprised 89% of the total length of pools (Graph 4).

Table 4 is a summary of maximum pool depths by pool habitat types. Depth is an indicator of pool quality. Seven of the 11 pools (64%) had a depth of two feet or greater (Graph 5).

The depth of cobble embeddedness was estimated at pool tail-outs. Of the 11 pool tail-outs measured, two had a value of 2 (18%); four had a value of 3 (36%); and five had a value of 4 (45%). On this scale, a value of one is the best for fisheries (Graph 6).

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 the highest shelter rating at 56. Flatwater habitats followed with a rating of 3 (Table 1). Of the pool types, the scour pools had the highest mean shelter rating at 80, and main channel pools rated 51 (Table 3).

Table 5 summarizes mean percent cover by habitat type. Large woody debris is the dominant cover type in McWhinney Creek. Graph 7 describes the pool cover in McWhinney Creek.

Table 6 summarizes the dominant substrate by habitat type. Silt was the dominant substrate observed in three of the four low gradient riffles (75%). Small cobble was the next most frequently observed dominant substrate type and occurred in 25% of the low gradient riffles (Graph 8).

Six percent of the survey reach lacked shade canopy. Of the 94% of the stream covered with canopy, 24% was composed of deciduous trees, and 76% was composed of coniferous trees. Graph 9 describes the canopy in McWhinney Creek.

Table 2 summarizes the mean percentage of the right and left stream banks covered with vegetation by habitat type. For the stream reach surveyed, the mean percent right bank vegetated was 68%. The mean percent left bank vegetated was 74%. The dominant elements composing the structure of the stream banks consisted of 90% sand/silt/clay, 8% cobble/gravel, and 3% bedrock (Graph 10). Brush was the dominant vegetation type observed in 38% of the units surveyed. Additionally, 5% of the units surveyed had deciduous trees as the dominant vegetation type and 30% had coniferous trees as the dominant vegetation, including down trees, logs, and root wads (Graph 11).

BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY RESULTS

Two sites were electrofished on June 27, 1994 in McWhinney Creek. The units were sampled by Chris Coyle and Craig Mesman (CCC). All measurements are fork lengths unless noted otherwise.

The first site sampled was Habitat Unit #006, a plunge pool approximately 97 feet from the confluence with North Fork Elk River. This site had an area of 200 square feet and a volume of 300 cubic feet. The unit yielded one steelhead 114 mm long and three coho between 54 and 57 mm.

The second site sampled included Habitat Units #012 and #013, two mid-channel pools located approximately 240 feet above the creek mouth. This site had an area of 870 square feet and a volume of 1,225 cubic feet. The site yielded one steelhead 192 mm long and one coastal cutthroat trout 167 mm long.

DISCUSSION

McWhinney Creek is an F6 channel type for the entire stream reach surveyed. The F6 channel type is considered good for bank-placed boulders; fair for low-stage weirs, boulder clusters: single and opposing wing deflectors; and log cover.

The water temperatures recorded on the survey day June 17, 1994 ranged from 53 to 54 degree Fahrenheit. Air temperatures ranged from 58 to 59 degrees Fahrenheit. This is an excellent water temperature range 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 13% of the total length of this survey, riffles 14%, and pools 65%. The pools are relatively deep, with seven of the 11 pools having a maximum depth greater than two feet. In coastal coho and steelhead streams, it is generally desirable to have primary pools comprise approximately 50% of total 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.

Nine of the 11 pool tail-outs measured had embeddedness ratings of 3 or 4. None had an embeddedness rating of 1. Cobble embeddedness measured to be 25% or less, a rating of 1, is considered best for the needs of salmon and steelhead. In McWhinney Creek, sediment sources should be mapped and rated according to their potential sediment yields, and control measures taken.

The mean shelter rating for pools was moderate with a rating of 56. The shelter rating in the flatwater habitats was much lower at 3. A pool shelter rating of approximately 100 is desirable. The moderate amount of cover that now exists is being provided primarily by large woody debris

in all habitat types. Additionally, small woody debris and undercut banks 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.

Three of the four low gradient riffles had silt as the dominant substrate. This is generally considered unsuitable for spawning salmonids.

The mean percent canopy for the stream was 94%. This is a very high percentage of canopy, since 80 percent is generally considered optimum in these north coast streams.

The percentage of right and left bank covered with vegetation was moderate at 68% and 74%, respectively. In areas of stream bank erosion or where bank vegetation is at unacceptable levels, planting endemic species of coniferous and deciduous trees, in conjunction with bank stabilization, is recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) McWhinney Creek should be managed as an anadromous, natural production stream.

2) Active and potential sediment sources related to the road system need to be identified, mapped, and treated according to their potential for sediment yield to the stream and its tributaries.

3) Increase woody cover in the pools and flatwater habitat units. Adding high quality complexity with woody cover is desirable and in some areas the material is at hand.

4) Spawning gravel on McWhinney Creek are 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.

5) There are several log debris accumulations present on McWhinney 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.

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PROBLEM SITES AND LANDMARKS

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

Position (ft):	Comments:
0'	Start of survey at the confluence with North Fork Elk River. Channel type is A6.
156'	Log debris accumulation (LDA) measures 7' high x 15' wide x 12' long. Flow is sub-surface through the LDA.
380'	LDA measures 6' high x 12' wide x 95' long.
601'	End of survey. Remaining channel consists of silt, debris, and residual pools with sub-surface flow.

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LEVEL III and LEVEL IV HABITAT TYPE KEY

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