

Towards a Healthy Wildland Watershed: Willow Creek Watershed Management Plan



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Willow Creek Watershed Management Plan

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Figure 1: Watershed Map

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Willow Creek Watershed Management Plan* has been developed in response to public and agency concern for the future of the watershed. Partners in the project include two major landowners, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR or State Parks) and Mendocino Redwoods Company (MRC), Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods (Stewards)¹, Prunuske Chatham, Inc. (PCI), Trout Unlimited (TU), LandPaths, and members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The project began in 2001 when initial funding was awarded by the Sonoma County Water Agency by way of a Proposition 13 grant from the State Water Resources Control Board. Additional funding was also secured from the Russian River Watershed Council, the City of Santa Rosa, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Sonoma County Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The *Willow Creek Watershed Management Plan* is a living document that will grow and change as further planning occurs and funding is obtained. Many specific land use issues have been raised during the watershed plan's public input process, some of which will be directed to State Parks to address through their general plan process. The draft of the *General Plan for Sonoma Coast State Beach*, including the Willow Creek Unit, can be found at www.parks.ca.gov/generalplans.²

The *Willow Creek Watershed Management Plan* is organized into five chapters, including the introduction, vision and goals for watershed health and function, watershed history, watershed diagnosis, and watershed enhancement projects, as well as a bibliography and two appendices containing summaries of the public meetings. The completed watershed plan is available online on the Stewards' website at www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org/willowcreek.htm. The plan will also be available on the Russian River Interactive Information System (RRIIS).

Chapter 1 describes the watershed and discusses the purpose of the *Willow Creek Watershed Management Plan*, plan development, stakeholders, and the TAC. Chapter 2 includes the community vision identified during the public outreach process for the next 2-5 years, after 10 years, and after 50 years and a discussion of specific goals for the watershed, including wildlife habitat improvement, erosion and sediment control, vegetation management, and recreation. The history and past and current land uses in the watershed are summarized in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides a diagnosis of the areas of environmental concern in the watershed, including landscape and habitat alterations, altered sediment production and transport, fisheries decline, and limitations to restoration potential. Chapter 5 discusses watershed enhancement projects, including priority projects, ongoing resource preservation activities, and adaptive watershed restoration projects.

¹ Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods is a nonprofit cooperating association that works in partnership with State Parks by supporting docent and volunteer programs. Stewards is a leader in providing public information, education, and outreach to visitors in the Russian River area. Stewards also acted as fiscal agent for development of this plan and oversaw the work of PCI, a private restoration consultant.

² Click on "General Plans In Progress," then click on "Sonoma Coast State Beach," or type in www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=22591 directly.



Figure 2: Willow Creek Unit of the Sonoma Coast State Beach

Figure 3: 1877 Historical Atlas of Sonoma County Map 3
(Source: Thompson 1877)



Figure 4: 1877 Historical Atlas of Sonoma County Map 7
(Source: Thompson 1877)