

Willow Creek Watershed Plan Survey Results

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Compiled by Michele Luna, Executive Director

Raw data as of February 11, 2004

I. Land Use: Recreation and Public Access

- Hiking
 - Yes
 - A loop trail sounds good, but don't make a recreation area.
 - Most definitely. Need more trails to eliminate scarring due to people making own trails.
 - A trail linking Coleman Valley Road (Ocean Song) with Willow Creek.
 - Keep the area as "wild" as possible. Don't make the area another "recreation" area.
 - Create hiking trail wrapping around perimeter of watershed to form giant loop. Make entire watershed accessible only by hiking trails.
- Biking
 - Yes (3X)
 - No (2X)
 - Use the model of trail use cooperation that exists in Annadel (horses, bikes, hiking)
 - Do not let this become another Annadel! (Ditto – or Armstrong/Austin)
 - Must monitor Sudden Oak Death (SOD) progression. Limit foot and bike traffic in infected areas – pathogens transfer also through soil.
 - What is meant? Mountain Bikes on trail? NO.
 - Trail markers to keep people on trails and reduce cross-cutting trails – hiking, biking & equestrian.
- Equestrian
 - We need continued equestrian trails and more places to enter the watershed and park trailers.
 - Equestrian trails cause compaction of soil – also pathogens like SOD can be spread by water and soil on hoofs.
 - Limited equestrian use.
 - No parking lots for horse trailers – ride in.
 - Equestrian uses limited to stable lands – lower watershed.
 - Trail markers to keep people on trails and reduce cross-cutting trails – hiking, biking & equestrian.
 - No equestrian use
 - No- too impacting – won't work.
 - Limit horses.
 - Use the model of trail use cooperation that exists in Annadel (horses, bikes, hiking)
 - Do not let this become another Annadel! (Ditto – or Armstrong/Austin)

- Birding
 - Yes
 - Review Louisiana Pacific and MRC bio resource elements and NSO no take certificates contained in all past THP's. Also Chris Wood (Darrel S. contact) from Audubon has lots of past data.
 - OK
- Fishing
 - No fishing of any kind.
 - Yearly data/stream surveys should be done to see if fish runs are improving.
 - No
- Camping
 - Yes
 - Wilderness walk-in camping only (Yes)
 - Camping should be limited to existing park campsites only! Too high of risk of fire danger!
 - No more campgrounds, despite pressure to accommodate more people.
 - Keep Pomo Campground as hike-in camp once County road is eliminated. Over-use of this area is due to easy road access. Uncontrolled population growth will only increase the degradation in the future. Create trail through valley to campground.
 - More camping sites.
- Other
 - Allow dogs on leash (Yes – 2X)
 - All recreational uses – low impact, low intensity – leave viable patches for entire suite of wildlife and plant communities.
 - Let the natural resources recover undisturbed by cars and people.
 - Limit "active" recreation – YES!
 - Butterfly and dragonfly watching.
 - No dogs – (Ditto).
 - Star gazing.
 - No ATVs (Ditto X3).
 - Suitable, intact, large areas set aside for wildlife use with no human intervention (Ditto).
 - Both car and foot access.
 - Would like the property located about 1 mile east of the Poindexter Ranch along Willow Creek Road and the creek to become State Park land. A beautiful site with not much commercial value. To lose this area would be terrible for future generations.

2. Land Use: Agriculture

- Timber management
 - Manage for old-growth.
 - Treat conifer forest as a reserve (YES X2).
 - Develop long-term plan for converting all historic haul roads back to native habitat. Consider thin and release program for hardwood areas. Replant with fir and redwoods. No herbicides.

Land Use: Agriculture: Timber Management (continued)

- Much of the forested area massively over-dense leading to poor forest health and reduced habitat values. Land must be managed to direct succession toward climax associations, which are most stable will necessarily require timber harvest. (editor note: not sure what this means?)
 - What do you mean by “poor forest health”? The forest knows how to manage itself without our help.
- Grazing
 - Find some way to keep the cows and cattle out of the creek and its major tributaries (present fences are not working).
 - Remove cows, introduce elk.
 - Keep the cows.
 - Grazing is a useful tool for fuel management and shifting species composition. Requires active control.
 - Reintroduce native grasslands.
 - Develop plan for re-introducing native grasslands to replace over-grazed areas. Can fire ecology be applied?
 - Limited grazing is OK.
- Other Land Uses: Agriculture
 - Native plant nursery – yes.
 - Discontinue State Park’s shooting range – lead abatement.

3. Land Use: Transportation

- County road
 - Remove 2nd bridge and cut the County road.
 - Replace 2nd bridge with a causeway (YES).
 - Use County road only for wildland fire suppression and resource maintenance. Discontinue public right-of-way to vehicle traffic.
 - Nix all car use (except park use) on upper road!
 - Summer bridge at bridge #2.
 - No through road.
 - Keep access restricted! Phase out bridge.
 - Don’t ever pave through to Occidental.
 - Keep a road to ensure public access.
 - Get cars off the upper road (Ditto).
 - Phase out County road. Turn watershed into natural reserve, accessible only by hiking paths. Allow bike use on road in the short-term. Keep city trash out and animals in. Terminate road at 1st bridge.
 - Get rid of 2nd bridge. Close the road from 2nd to 3rd bridge. Buy out lease of people living there.
- Private roads
 - Offer expertise and assistance.
- Parking
 - Keep the area as wild as possible, limit campgrounds, limit parking, limit cars.
 - No more cars - (YES X2).
 - Limit roads, provide loop hiking trail.
 - Keep road primitive.

Land Use: Transportation

- Other
 - Limit the growing amount of traffic by not developing recreational uses.

4. Natural Resources: Biological

- Flora
 - Scotch Broom removal, propagate native species.
 - Remove invasives.
 - Entire watershed should be managed to re-establish natural (or historic) fire regimes, while protecting adjacent uses.
 - Project should take care to avoid damage to listed species populations of native plants and all native flora as well.
 - Prepare a map showing the watershed's original vegetation.
- Fauna
 - Need adequate, intact habitat patches and buffers to allow large fauna (especially bear and mountain lion to live here).
 - Reintroduce elk (for native grazing) and beaver (for natural stream channel formation).

Natural Resources: Biological

- Steelhead and coho
 - No fishing.
 - Enhance Aug, Sept., Oct. flow of side trib. i.e. Pomo... Ridge top pond, 3-10 acre flow or recycle 400 watt pump, 6 gpm,
 - Set population goal numbers for steelhead and coho for 2020.
 - Make Willow Creek at state "Coho Refugia" and manage as a wild resource to help seed other Russian River watersheds with hatch boxes.
- Other Species of Concern
 - Preserve all native species of plants and animals.
 - Don't forget uplands.
 - Western pond turtle.
 - Fire is a historic part of this system – it needs to continue and be planned for/managed to the benefit of watershed and biologic components.

5. Natural Resources: Geological

- Erosion
 - Reduce.
- Sedimentation
 - If levees were repaired between #2 - #3 bridges, I suspect the old channel would take over and allow flows under bridge #2. Increased level would allow cutting of stream bed around #3 bridge.
- Other
 - Geologic interpretive and education trail.

6. Natural Resources: Hydrological

- Wetlands
 - Just because “free money” might be available to build a new road from #2 to #3 (bridges) the public will still be paying for it. Also, the cost of occasional dredging would be insignificant in comparison to the new road.
 - Make wetlands a priority.
- Riparian corridor
 - Enhance as much as possible for native flora and fauna.
- Water quality
 - Long-term monitoring.
 - Develop long term-monitoring and reporting project.

7. Cultural Resources

- Pre-historic
 - Native American kiosk and interpretive center.
 - Oh, yes and a gift shop.
- Historic
 - Create a Pomo/Miwok demonstration village with help from local native Americans (such as Pt. Reyes).
 - Save Brown/Mann Ranch as historical point of interest.

8. Education and Outreach: School Programs

- Environmental Ed – YES
- Possibly a native American exhibit for school as exists at Pt. Reyes – very valuable.

9. Education and Outreach: Volunteerism and Monitoring

- Encourage lots of these citizen participation activities - spreads the good word.
- Outreach for volunteers with training programs for them.
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10. Vision: Next 2-5 years

- Remove culverts, replace with box culvert for fish passage.
- Start solving upper watershed sediment issues one step at a time.
- It may be a good idea to form one organization to coordinate and planning and management of Willow Creek only and to work with State Parks when they take over to coordinate volunteers, consultants etc.
- Make a wet crossing at second bridge like the dry creek cutoff road in Middletown. (Do it Now)!
- Remove bridges, remove invasive species, replant native trees and shrubs.
- Plant native plants.
- Manage invasive plants.
- Introduce beaver to help control the Alder forest and re-form a stream channel.
- Get to a stable stream grade and sediment transport system.
- Use a rating or grading system – A+ to F to show progress.
- Design a trail system to manage bike/hiking/horses.
- No more campgrounds.

11. Vision: Next 10 years

- Restore the native fish populations.
- Manage invasive species.
- Keep as wild as possible; limited infrastructure for recreation.
- Keep as wild as possible; don't develop for recreation/camping.
- Trail staging areas.
- Eliminate road use by cars (public).
- Get rid of road.
- Inter-connected trails to coast and inland.
- ORV area of the park.
- Coastal retreat, education center, conference center.

12. Vision: Next 50 years

- Manage for coho, old-growth and recreation.
- Manage invasive species.
- Don't develop road or recreation areas.
- Whole watershed is nature reserve left uncontaminated by humans.
- A balance between pure reserve areas (no access), recreation areas (easy access), educational areas (native American and natural history exhibits).
- As development pressures in the county destroys wildlife habitat, Willow Creek will become an oasis.
- Manage as a natural area to become a balanced ecosystem as it might have been before native Californians were displaced – a loop trail through the property for hikers would be OK – grazing animals might be deer and elk, no cattle.
- Identify and take steps toward identifying and moving toward a self-sustaining system where natural processes trump recreational uses.

Meeting Evaluation:

- What did you like about the meeting?
 - Chatham presentation was great! The photos clearly explained the problems of sedimentation, fill-in, and erosion and what causes that.
 - Informative, smoothly and allowed for input. Well prepared meeting.
 - Thanks for holding the meeting locally.
- What could be improved and how?
 - Meeting very well done, more time for post-its would be good.
 - I would have preferred to have more time spent on study reports and proposal options.
 - More presentation from Chatham

- What would you like to see at the next meeting?
 - I want maps that show the potentially significant tributaries for salmon rearing. Are they all up stream from 3rd bridge?
 - More time to discuss the feasibility study.
 - More vision pictorials.
 - Show on map the MRC lots – don't just speculate. This must be known.
 - I'd like to see a presentation analyzing environmental aspects: soils, geography, slopes, vegetation, wildlife, problems...as well as historical and cultural aspects of the watershed.
 - Tell us how to get involved.
 - More good speakers.

Next Steps:

- Summary of public input to be done by Michele Luna by 2/15/04.
- Table of Contents to be done by PCI by 2/15/03.
- Both above docs will be on the Stewards website.
- Survey comments in by May 1st
 - Website: www.stewardsofthecoastandredwoods.org/willowcreek.htm
 - Office number: (707) 865-0180
- Draft plan – Fall 2004
- Next Public meeting – Fall 2004
- Final Watershed plan – November 2004.