



# FRIENDS OF THE EEL RIVER

*Working for the recovery of our Wild & Scenic River, its fisheries and communities.*

For Immediate Release

July 12, 2023

## **Grant Funding for Habitat Improvement Projects Approved by Humboldt County Supervisors**

On July 11 the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors authorized \$543,000 in grant funding to 12 applicants for sediment-reduction projects in key salmon habitats. The Board also decided to, at a future meeting, allocate remaining funds to public works to complete additional high priority sediment reduction projects. This allocation is the final round for the Cannabis Mitigation and Remediation Grant Program established by the County as part of a 2019 settlement agreement with Friends of the Eel River.

In addition to establishing the grant fund, the settlement required the County to prioritize enforcement actions on the most egregious violators and the most environmentally harmful sites. It included stipulations for improved communication with wildlife agency staff, increased transparency with annual reporting requirements, and allocation of an initial \$500,000 to public works to complete prioritized sediment reduction projects on County-maintained roads.

“We are proud of the over \$1,446,000 this program designated to improve critical fish habitat, but it was a hard-fought win,” said Alicia Hamann, Executive Director for Friends of the Eel River. “Over the last four years, our efforts to ensure the County complied with the settlement agreement were necessarily persistent. When the County failed to evaluate proposals for round 2 on the required timeline we had to file a notice of breach. Ultimately we decided it was in the fishes’ best interest to allocate the remaining funds to public works to see the quickest habitat improvements.”

Projects funded in this round include replacing undersized or failed culverts, decommissioning improper stream crossings, storm-proofing crossings to withstand 100-year floods, and other projects which will improve and protect water quality.

“Water diversions and fertilizer runoff from cannabis cultivation are certainly harmful, but in the Eel watershed by far the greatest impacts to salmon and steelhead are from sediment, much of it from poorly maintained roads and crappy culverts,” said Scott Greacen, Friends of the Eel River’s Conservation Director. “Humboldt County’s history of laissez-faire policy left us with a mountain of problems to address. The investments in the future of our fisheries we’ve been able to make with this grant program are a good start, but it’s incumbent on County leaders to keep the momentum going.”

For landowners still seeking funding for sediment reduction projects on their properties, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has on-going cannabis restoration grant funding through

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their Qualified Cultivator Funding Opportunity. Individuals must partner with a qualified applicant such as a municipality, Tribe, or nonprofit. Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/CDFW-Cannabis-Grants>

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