

DISTRICT AWARDED \$1.5 MILLION IN STIMULUS FUNDING TO IMPROVE SALMON HABITAT IN BODEGA, CA

Bodega, CA – Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD) has been awarded \$1.54 Million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for the *Save our Salmon (SOS) – Salmon Creek Habitat Rehabilitation Project*. The SOS project is a collaborative vision of the RCD and Prunuske Chatham, Inc to improve instream habitat, create local jobs, and support water supply sustainability for the town of Bodega.

“This project demonstrates the power of partnership,” said Lisa Hulette, Executive Director for the Gold Ridge RCD. “In the Salmon Creek Watershed, where farming and fisheries interests have been at odds for many years, environmental conservation groups, the agricultural community and local organizations have joined together to collaborate on a project that restores critical salmon habitat, develops sustainable community infrastructure and creates jobs.”

Salmon Creek is located within the Bodega Hydrologic Unit (HU) in the California Central Coast Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU). In addition to now hosting a fledgling coho population, Salmon Creek is part of the Sonoma Coast State Marine Conservation Area, a State Marine Protected Area (MPA) (California Marine Life Protection Initiative 2007). In the face of climate change and a sharp regional decline in salmon populations over the past two years, the stakes for keeping the newly re-introduced coho going and the steelhead returning are very high. Salmon Creek watershed is becoming regionally renowned for its forward-thinking, collaborative, non-regulatory driven restoration program, and is often cited as a model for other watershed efforts.

The NOAA funding will allow project partners and landowners to move forward with multiple restoration approaches on two critical rearing reaches for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout by installing rain catchment tanks to increase instream summer flows, planting native vegetation, and implementing other stream-related restoration activities to improve fisheries habitat.

“This project is one part of a long-term watershed vision held by many groups and individuals – to bring the salmon back to Salmon Creek. We are thrilled that all the hard work that has been put into developing the vision, the project, and the community connections is being recognized by our federal agencies. There is a real opportunity here to make a difference for Salmon Creek watershed, for our neighbors in the town Bodega and for the fish, and we are excited to be in this partnership with Gold Ridge RCD,” said Lauren Hammack, lead scientist for Prunuske Chatham, Inc.

Established in 1941, Gold Ridge RCD been a leader in promoting stewardship of the natural resource in western Sonoma County for the past 63 years. Since its establishment, the RCD has been providing educational, technical, and funding support to landowners in western Sonoma County watersheds. The RCD has been awarded the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) 2009 Environmental Achievement Award. Similarly, the Gold Ridge RCD is the recipient of the 2008 National Association of Conservation District’s (NACD) award for Successful Collaborative Partnerships for the entire Pacific Region.

Prunuske Chatham Inc., (PCI) will be performing community facilitation, construction management, final field design and specifications as needed, and parts of the construction associated with the SOS program. PCI is an environmental design, planning, and construction firm with a strong focus on finding ways for people to live and work well as responsible participants of their local ecosystems. PCI’s staff

includes scientists, planners, civil engineers and landscape architects who specialize in natural systems, and construction crews skilled in ecological rehabilitation. Based in Sonoma County, PCI has been practicing environmental planning and restoration in Northern California since 1986.

For more information about the Gold Ridge RCD, visit: <http://www.goldridgercd.org>.

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