



REDWOOD COAST LAND CONSERVANCY

Dedicated to protection of open spaces and natural resources from the Navarro to the Russian rivers

HEARN GULCH PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

If you have driven by or visited Hearn Gulch lately, you will have noticed many signs of work in progress. In the few short weeks since RCLC received the final go-ahead to make improvements, the trail to the beach has been widened and a new trail to the edge of the

headland has been dug. Bollards and chains have been installed to define the parking area and several signposts have also been placed.

Local contractor Ken Spacek carved the main headland trail and the upper portion of the beach trail with his mini-Bobcat. Then he and RCLC project coordinator David Scholz spread 17 cubic yards of brown shale along the trails. RCLC volunteers George Anderson, Ray Jackman and George Marshall spread several cubic yards of small six-inch rocks along lower portions of the beach trail to help control erosion.

Work on the trails and signs will continue, as weather permits, through the spring, when RCLC plans to start work on improving the last section of the beach trail, a steep sixty-foot slope down to the beach.

Mendocino County, the California Coastal Commission and CalTrans have worked together with RCLC to provide improved public access at Hearn Gulch while

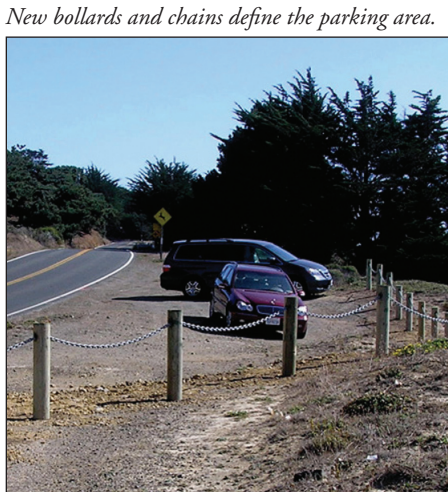


George Anderson and George Marshall place a post marking the end of the headlands trail.

protecting sensitive habitat from unnecessary disturbance. Much of the native vegetation on the bluff has already started to recover now that vehicles no longer have access to the headlands.

RCLC would like to thank the Coastal Conservancy, CalTrans, Mendocino Community Foundation, and the many RCLC contributors who have provided funds for this project.

Hearn Gulch is located on Highway One between Iverson Road and Schooner Gulch.



New bollards and chains define the parking area.

Contractor Ken Spacek and his Bobcat prepare the trails for shale.



Photos: David Scholz

GUALALA BLUFF TRAIL PROJECT ON HOLD

The Gualala Bluff Trail is once again on hold as landowner John Bower's proposal to build an extensive retaining wall along the bluff is under review.

RCLC was dismayed to learn at a recent hearing that building the wall may delay completion of the trail for as long as two or three years.

Building this segment of the trail had been on hold since February 2005, when Mr. Bower filed a lawsuit contesting the validity of the trail easement. This past spring, after RCLC and the Coastal Commission successfully defended the easement's validity, RCLC volunteers were finally able to begin work on the trail

across the north part of the parking area behind the Surf Super building complex.

Now, further work on the trail has been halted until the retaining wall issue is settled. Mr. Bower is required to replace the retaining wall behind Surf Super, which failed in February 2006 because of poor maintenance and tore away part of the trail easement. Instead of just replacing the 105-foot retaining wall that failed, Mr. Bower has submitted a permit application to build a much longer wall which will extend 390 feet along the full length of the bluff. The longer retaining wall is part of Mr. Bower's long-term plans for adding

buildings and more parking on the bluff top.

On November 19th, Mr. Bower's application for the wall received initial approval by Mendocino County. Local environmental groups, who are questioning the necessity for such a large retaining wall and the lack of a full environmental review for a project of this scale, are planning to appeal the decision.

Although the trail is not yet completed, visitors can walk the length of the trail, which extends along the bluff from the north end of Seacliff Center to the south end of Oceansong.

The proposed wall would extend 390 feet along bluff face behind Surf Super buildings. Mr. Bower hopes to be able to move the Gualala Bluff Trail easement further west after the wall is built so that he will have more space for new development and parking.

Representation of wall drawn by civil engineer Francis Drouillard based on specifications provided by engineering firm Rau and Associates. Photo by Craig Tooley.



WORK BEGINS ON COOKS BEACH/BONHAM TRAIL PROJECT

by Project Coordinator Irene Leidner

With all the appropriate permits in place, work has begun at Cooks Beach and the Bonham Trail. Eleven volunteers from the local neighborhood, Anchor Bay, and The Sea Ranch have cheerfully provided the tools, manpower and enthusiasm to help develop this lovely trail and scenic overview.

The first task was to dig the existing trail down four inches and widen it to four feet. The "platform", a 20 x 20 foot area at the top of the bluff, was also excavated (all this by shovel and hoe!) and leveled until the trail and the bluff top area were ready for weed cloth and brown shale. Although we had wheelbarrows and strong backs willing to haul 7 1/2 cubic yards of shale, a local cat operator, Mike Taylor, was hired to help distribute and compact it, so that we have a smooth and professional looking trail from the beach to the bluff top.

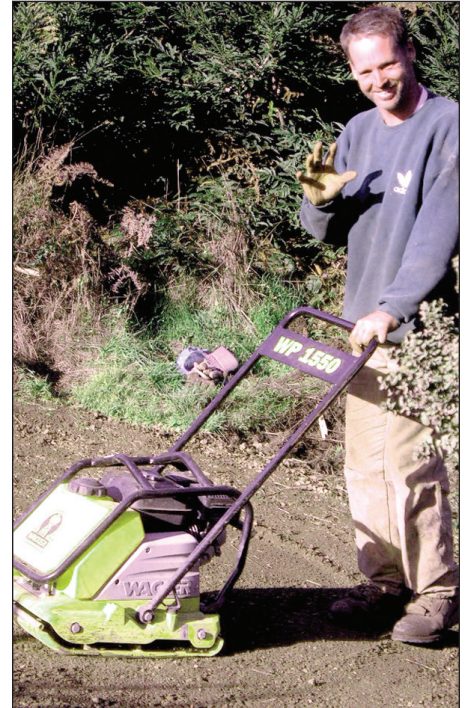
John Moelter prepares the viewing platform for shale.



Photos: Irene Leidner



Larry Nelson, Ray Comeau, Ken Reynoldson, Bill Davy, and Ray Jackman widen the trail to the beach.



Mike Taylor uses a compactor to tamp down shale.

As word has spread about Cooks Beach, its popularity has grown. One day I saw six surfers, eight observers still on the bluff, and another eight or so people on the beach! I am grateful and thankful that most visitors, local and tourists, appreciate this beautiful area and clean up after themselves and their pets. Local residents who monitor the beach and trail each week report few problems, outside of an occasional dead seal or dead birds on the beach.

If you haven't visited Cooks in a while, or maybe never have, stop by and check it out for yourself. Hours are dawn to dusk.

Cooks Beach is on Old Redwood Highway just north of Gualala.

A bench is being ordered to provide a resting spot so that those who don't have the time or are not able to walk to the beach can enjoy the magnificent view. The next phase will be to complete the trail down to the beach and work with the contractor to construct steps to the beach.

VIEWING PLATFORM PLANNED FOR ST. ORRES PROJECT

by Project Coordinator Irene Leidner

Access to St. Orres beach continues to be one of the most difficult challenges not only for RCLC, but for the Coastal Conservancy, CalTrans, and our local geologist Mike Lane as well. The upper part of the trail poses no problem for improvement, but the lower part has eroded to such a degree that only the most limber may reach the beach itself.

Mike has suggested, and RCLC agrees, that attempting to widen the current trail is not feasible, due to the steep slope and insufficient bedrock. The construction of a cantilevered walkway, even

if financially feasible, also poses problems because of the steep slope. The possibility of rockfalls and even more importantly, the issue of maintaining such a trail or walkway in such a sloping area presents little hope for beach access at this time.

Because this is such a beautiful cove, and there are no other places along Highway One between Iverson Road and Cooks Beach to pull off the road and enjoy the view, the RCLC Board has decided

to develop and maintain a trail from the parking pullout just south of the St. Orres beach, across to the current trail and down to a spot where a platform will be constructed. Interpretive signs about the unique geologic formations, the flora and fauna along the creek, and the tidal effects in the cove will be placed on the platform, along with benches where visitors may sit and admire the view, away from traffic on Highway One.

Once the platform is engineered, permits issued, and contractors and volunteers aligned, RCLC can—finally—begin to improve this trail. After the platform is built, the possibility of accessing the beach by means of steps from the platform will be studied, engineered if possible, and then the project can complete its initial purpose. We remain optimistic; coastal access is a priority for California, and we believe St. Orres to be a unique access point.

St. Orres Cove is across from St. Orres restaurant north of Gualala.

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RCLC is a member of the National Land Trust Alliance, California Council of Land Trusts, and the Redwood Coast Chamber of Commerce.



Photo: Leigh Mueller

Platform will provide views of St. Orres Cove.