

REDWOOD COAST LAND CONSERVANCY

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

COOKS BEACH READY TO WEATHER WINTER STORMS



Photos: Irene Leidner

The tranquil nature of Cooks Beach changes dramatically during winter storms.

RCLC volunteers are working quickly to finish a few more trail improvements at Cooks Beach/ Bonham Trail before the rainy season starts. Redwood posts and split rails, shaped from driftwood logs on the beach, are being used to form safety railings at both the upper and lower bluff edges. Permanent railings and posts, crafted by Kentucky John of local fame, have recently been cemented in place on the steps, setting off their fine craftsmanship and making them much safer.

When winter storms hit the coast, Bourns Gulch Creek collects runoff from a very large area (almost up to Old Stage Road) and becomes a powerful surging flow of water that tosses pieces of wood

about like corks and scours the bluff. To reduce damage to the bluff, the final section of the massive redwood log, which caused such havoc during last year's storms, has been cut into slabs and hauled up the slope. Several other logs have also been cut into smaller pieces to allow the creek to push them away from the bluff so that wood debris will be carried by out to sea by the tide rather than being trapped behind the logs and further eroding the sandy bluff.

Everyone is waiting to see how the trail improvements and new cement steps weather their first winter. Once the rainy season has passed, volunteers will finish trail improvements and place a sculptured driftwood bench at the overlook to the beach. Project Manager Irene

Leidner hopes to celebrate the completion of the Cooks Beach public access project with a grand opening late next spring.

Linda Locklin, the Coastal Commission's Coastal Access Program Manager, writes that "it is very exciting to read of the substantial progress that RCLC has made to develop this accessway. The level of care and attention to detail will make this one of the most unique coastal access sites—anywhere!

Cook's Beach is located two miles north of Gualala. To reach the bluff overlooking the beach, turn off Highway One at Old Coast Highway across from Glennen Drive and travel to the north end of the road.

VIEWING PLATFORM PLANNED FOR ST. ORRES PROJECT

St. Orres Cove is an invitingly scenic beach. The only problem is how to reach it. After considering several alternatives by conducting professional surveys, geologic and engineering studies, it was reluctantly determined that

it was too hazardous to build a public trail all the way to the beach. Representatives from the Coastal Conservancy, Mendocino County Planning Dept. and CalTrans met with RCLC project volunteers and consultants in January 2008 to confirm outlines of a plan to design the public access project as a trail paralleling Highway One, culminating in one or two viewing platforms with benches and appropriate signage of the local marine ecology.

Although the trail has been mapped, final placement of the platforms can't be planned until it is determined that they will not disturb an endangered plant, *Calystegia purpurata*, commonly known as the morning glory. At question is whether the morning glory plants found at the site are actually the endangered *saxifolia* subspecies which must be protected. RCLC's botanist Jon Thompson has been attempting without success to locate an independent expert to confirm his identification. Sometimes the smallest things can create the greatest delays!



View from proposed platform along the trail to St. Orres Cove.



Calystegia purpurata saxifolia

Photo: Irene Leidner

Photo: © Doreen L. Smith

GUALALA BLUFF TRAIL AWAITS REVIEW

Completion of the Gualala Bluff Trail remains on hold, awaiting the Coastal Commission review of property owner Mr. Bower's application to build a 400-foot retention system along the bluff face behind Surf Super. In April 2008, the Coastal Commission ruled that there were substantial issues with Mr. Bower's application and commenced a "de novo" staff review of his proposal, which essentially means that the staff is conducting its own evaluations rather than relying on the studies submitted by Mr. Bower. No hearing date has been set yet for the staff to report its findings.

Mr. Bower was required to replace the 108-foot retaining wall behind the market which failed in 2006 and tore away part of the trail easement. He decided instead to submit the more extensive proposal to armor the bluff, a practice which is, by policy, strongly discouraged by the Coastal Commission.

Although the central section of the trail has not been completed, it is easy and pleasant to walk the full extent of the trail from Trink's to Bones, and many local residents and visitors enjoy the walk and the ever-changing views along the Gualala River Estuary.

Visitors walking along the southern end of the Gualala Bluff Trail cross the bridge built by RCLC to provide access to this section of the bluff.



Photo: Leigh Mueller

HEARN GULCH HEADLANDS PROJECT IS COMPLETE

In 2001, the RCLC Board looked at a barren rutted bluff top and envisioned a restored headlands and beach access that would provide visitors with a special place to enjoy the beauty of our coastline. The Coastal Conservancy provided the funds to acquire the headlands. RCLC donors, the Conservancy and the Mendocino County Community Foundation provided funds for planning, consultant studies, appraisals, fencing, grading equipment, and gravel.

Headed by RCLC project manager David Scholz, RCLC volunteers worked with consultants to develop plans for restoration and trail access, conducted the necessary surveys to meet County permit requirements, and provided the hundreds of hours of labor required to build the trails and parking area.

Thanks to that vision, hard work and perseverance, local residents and visitors can now enjoy the headlands, one of only a few public access points along the southern Mendocino County coast.

Hearn Gulch Headlands is located off Highway One just north of Iverson Road. You can park at the pullout and walk along the trail to the headlands or take the trail down to the beach.



The secluded cove nestled between steep bluffs at the northern end of Hearn Gulch offers a sheltered pocket beach to visitors who now find it easier to walk the trail from the bluff down to the beach.



Wildflowers have reclaimed headlands once denuded and covered with deep ruts caused by vehicles driving out to the bluff's edge. Bollards and chains along the highway now provide a safe parking area while protecting the restored areas along the bluffs.

Redwood Coast Land Conservancy

Local residents devote their time and expertise to help RCLC protect our coast.

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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.

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Photo: Leigh Mueller

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Your support of Redwood Coast Land Conservancy is playing an important role in the preservation of our magnificent coastline. Although everyone can enjoy the ocean views as we drive along our part of the coast, very few places have been set aside for visitors to walk along the bluffs and beaches.

In Mendocino County there are no coastline County Parks or State Beaches south of Schooner Gulch, and none are planned. With encouragement and funding from the State Coastal Conservancy, RCLC has stepped forward to preserve four special places which capture different aspects of our scenic coast.

Thanks to the support of our RCLC donors and many thousands of RCLC volunteer hours, local residents and visitors can now enjoy the scenic spots highlighted in this newsletter.

Opportunities to preserve such unique scenic spots are increasingly rare. We know we must move quickly. The RCLC Board is considering several potential new projects. As we undertake these projects, we will continue to rely on the support of our contributors and volunteers to help RCLC set aside other special places along our coast for our community to enjoy now and in the future.



Photo © Bill Perry



REDWOOD COAST
LAND CONSERVANCY

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