

SMITH RIVER WATERSHED LANDS

# Hurdygurdy Creek



SMITH RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA  
SIX RIVERS NATIONAL FOREST  
DEL NORTE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



*A Proposed Appropriation from the  
Land and Water Conservation Fund  
Fiscal Year 2008*

**FACT SHEET**  
**Land and Water Conservation Fund, FY 2008**

**Agency:** USDA Forest Service

**State:** California

**Unit:** Region 5, Six Rivers National Forest  
Smith River National Recreation Area

**Project:** Smith River Watershed Lands - Hurdygurdy, Siskiyou Fork, and Little Jones tracts

**Total Project:** 5,370 Acres

**Amount Requested:** \$4,000,000

**Ownership:** Agnew Timber Company, LLC

**Outstanding Values:** Salmon, recreation, Wild and Scenic River

**Congressional District:** CA-01 Representative: Mike Thompson  
Senators: Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein

**Description:** The Smith River, on California's north coast, is the state's only major undammed river system. This spectacular River flows through redwood and Douglas fir forests, supporting the State's healthiest wild runs of coho and Chinook salmon, steelhead, and coastal cutthroat trout. Over seventy-five percent of the Smith River watershed lies within the Smith River National Recreation Area.

An outstanding unprecedented opportunity exists to acquire a total of 5,360 acres of the Hurdygurdy, Little Jones, and Siskiyou Fork watersheds currently owned by the Agnew Corporation of Washington. Upon completion of this acquisition, these watersheds will become a protected part of the Smith River National Recreation Area.

Hurdygurdy Creek and the Siskiyou Fork serve as habitat refugia for wild salmon, steelhead, and coastal cutthroat trout. Hurdygurdy Creek is known for providing high quality spawning habitat for coho and chinook salmon. Little Jones is a very unique in having a resident coastal cutthroat trout population that is isolated by a formidable natural migration barrier at its confluence with the Middle Fork Smith River. Little Jones Creek and its cutthroat have been the focus of intensive long-term fisheries research for the past decade. In addition to their inherent refugia values, these watersheds provide very stable flows of cold, clean water to the main forks of the Smith River – especially important to

salmonids residing in the main stems during the late summer and early fall. Protection of these watersheds will further secure the future of California's finest wild river system.

The Smith River is one of the crown jewels of the National Wild and Scenic River System. The proposed acquisition is entirely within the boundary of the 450 square mile Smith River NRA and is surrounded by public lands, including the Siskiyou Wilderness, which is less than three miles to the east.

**Benefits:** Acquisition of these properties for inclusion in the Smith River NRA will secure the largest private in holdings within the NRA -- and it will enable the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and its watershed partners to sensitively manage these lands for protection of fisheries, ecological diversity, recreation opportunities, and sustained productivity of natural resources.

Management of these properties as part of the Smith River NRA will ensure that their important tributaries will continue to support healthy runs of coho and Chinook salmon, steelhead, and coastal cutthroat trout. At a time when declining salmon populations have become a crisis issue for communities throughout the western United States, the management of these available lands as part of the NRA will provide significant additional opportunity for the Smith River to be managed as a demonstration watershed or refugia for native fish and other aquatic species.

**Urgency:** The owners are actively seeking a buyer for these lands. Because much of the most marketable timber has been harvested over the last 40 years, total timber value is at the lower end of its price cycle. A decade of additional growth and intensive timber management may increase the cost of any future purchase and will diminish the fishery and biodiversity values of this property.

**Land Use and Recreation:** Timber harvest has occurred throughout much of these watersheds during the last forty years. As a result, the vegetation and forest within span a broad range of ages and stages of development. Roads exist in these drainages that can be accessed from Highway 199 to County and developed Forest roads; providing excellent access and opportunities for fishing, hunting, backcountry camping and recreation, mountain biking, and viewing wildlife and the diverse plant communities.

**Importance of Management by the Forest Service:** The Six Rivers Land and Resource Management Plan addresses the need for significant land acquisition for recreation and ecosystem protection within the National Recreation Area boundary, and acquisition of this property is identified as a very high priority (as indicated in the Forest Land Adjustment Strategy, Appendix O of the Plan). This strategy provides direction to: **1) acquire lands within wilderness, 2) adjacent to wild and scenic river corridors, 3) that enhance biodiversity and habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species of fish, wildlife, and plants, and 4) consolidate ownership and improve management efficiency.** Acquisition of these lands meets criteria 2-4 above.

**SUPPORTERS:**

There is strong public concern over development in areas that adversely affect critical ecosystems. The Six Rivers Land and Resource Management Plan addresses the need for significant land acquisition for recreation and ecosystem protection within the National Recreation Area boundary, and acquisition of this property is identified as a very high priority (as indicated in the Forest Land Adjustment Strategy, Appendix O of the Plan).

Support for acquiring these lands by the Forest Service comes from the Smith River Alliance, Resources Legacy Fund Foundation, California Trout, California Sport fishing Protection Alliance, California Wilderness Coalition, Friends of the River, Friends of Del Norte, National Marine Fisheries Service, North Coast Environmental Center, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Pearson Building Supplies, Northern California Council of the Federation of Fly fishers, Save- the- Redwoods League, Trout Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the World Wildlife Fund.