



‘O Rew Redwoods Gateway Renewed Vision for the Former Orick Mill Site

Tribal Ownership and Co-Stewardship

The shared vision for this special place within Yurok ancestral lands has remained consistent among all project partners since 2013: together we are restoring the ecological integrity of a critical segment of Prairie Creek and creating a southern recreational and interpretive gateway to Redwood National & State Parks and Yurok traditional lands for visitors and local communities. The Yurok Tribe, Redwood National and State Parks, and Save the Redwoods League have worked in close collaboration on every aspect of the project to plan for, design, and implement restoration and public access at ‘O Rew, the former Orick Mill Site also previously known as Mill Site A. Our partnership has evolved and so, too, has our plan for future ownership and long-term stewardship of the site. Consistent with and contingent upon the essential project outcomes described below, Save the Redwoods League intends to transfer the full property in fee to the Yurok Tribe in tandem with mechanisms for permanent protection and co-stewardship with Redwood National and State Parks.

As partners, Save the Redwoods League, the Yurok Tribe, and Redwood National and State Parks agree on several guiding principles and essential project outcomes as we pursue the plan for Tribal ownership and co-stewardship:

- The Yurok peoples have cared for this land since time immemorial
- The Yurok Tribe has been instrumental in implementing Prairie Creek restoration activities, and is uniquely positioned to effectively steward both the habitat and the human experience through repatriation of this ancestral territory
- Public access to the site and connectivity to the broader regional public trail system shall be provided and maintained in perpetuity for visitors to Redwood National and State Parks, local communities and Tribal members
- The property shall be permanently conserved, with ongoing restoration stewardship consistent with project funding partner requirements and the missions of the Yurok Tribe, Redwood National and State Parks, and Save the Redwoods League, and with only limited development for amenities that enhance visitor and Yurok Tribe experiences - namely, an active Yurok village site, a potential visitor and cultural center with integrated retail and food offerings, and modest staff housing
- The partners shall develop and enter into legally binding agreements prior to conveyance of the property to the Tribe as necessary to uphold our shared principles and ensure the outcomes described herein

Project Background & Context

In 2013 Save the Redwoods League purchased the 125-acre Orick Mill Site property with the intent to restore and develop the site for recreational access. It is located immediately adjacent to Highway 101 and conservation land owned by Redwood National Park, links two of the world's largest remaining old-growth redwood groves, has the salmon stronghold Prairie Creek running through it, and connects with a robust trail network in the Parks. The original plan was to transfer the improved property to the National Park Service for management as part of Redwood National and State Parks.

The Trails Gateway and Restoration project currently underway will be completed under Save the Redwoods League ownership, prior to property transfer to the Yurok Tribe in 2026. The stretch of Prairie Creek that runs through the site offers the last downstream opportunity to restore ecological function and provide critical juvenile salmonid rearing habitat. Restoration efforts will enhance 0.9 miles of the creek and restore 18 acres of riparian and wetland floodplains. Revegetation will minimize invasive plant species and establish sustainable native plant communities and wildlife habitat. These restoration efforts are complemented by extensive ongoing restoration work in the greater Prairie Creek watershed through the Redwoods Rising partnership. The project will also establish the site as a new redwood destination for visitors and local communities alike, featuring Yurok cultural elements, redwood forest interpretive exhibits, an array of visitor-serving amenities, and California Coastal Trail connection to the regional trail system.

The project is being implemented by an expansive group of partners, including Save the Redwoods League, the Yurok Tribe, California Trout, the National Park Service, California State Parks, and local professional firms as well as critical funding partners at California State Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, and NOAA Restoration Center. The Yurok Tribe Construction Corporation and Fisheries Department are leading restoration construction onsite, which will be ongoing through 2025.

Prior to construction, the Yurok Tribe was an instrumental partner in the planning and design of all elements of the project. The Yurok Tribe Fisheries Department has participated on the restoration planning team since its inception, providing technical expertise and Traditional Ecological Knowledge that informed the direction of the design. Likewise, Yurok Tribe Cultural Resources staff have participated in public access and interpretation planning since 2013, lending essential Yurok perspectives and priorities to the design.

This is but one project that the Yurok Tribe, Redwood National and State Parks, and Save the Redwoods League are deeply engaged on together. This increasingly diverse and effective partnership across Yurok ancestral lands provides a strong foundation for 'O Rew conveyance to the Tribe. The exciting opportunity to pursue a new model for redwoods conservation and recreation is the culmination of many years of relationship building and collaboration, signifying a standing commitment to continue to work together in earnest for many more years.