

Mill B Log Deck Removal – Floodplain Restoration Executive Summary

A portion of log deck at the former Simpson Mill B site was removed to allow the re-connection of Prairie Creek flood waters to floodplain. Three acres of floodplain had been filled with 10 to 15 feet of material in order to expand the log deck at the Mill B site. The project was done as mitigation for widening a portion of Davison rd. The CalTrans ISTE program funded the project in an effort to provide alternative routing for bicycles on the 200 rd, linking Prairie Creek State Park to the old off highway bridge across from Berry Glen.

The floodplain restoration focused on the three acres to the southeast of the Mill. Another three acre deck had been constructed in the lower portion of Davison Creek, a small tributary to Prairie Creek, but was retained for use as a fill site and subsequent facility / parking lot construction. Several small stream crossings were removed to reduce future sediment input to the channel above the parking lot.

The restoration strategy sought to completely remove the deck fill (locally quarried soil and rock) uncovering the alluvial floodplain soil. Due to years of compaction and pumping, the imported rocky fill had worked into the softer floodplain sediments, requiring excavation beyond the original flood plain elevation. Once the heavy equipment phase of the excavation was complete, an intensive effort was made to remove remnant rock from the exhumed soil surface. Native duff, from adjacent forests, was brought in (by hand) spread across the freshly exposed soil with the intent of providing inoculation of native microbes and fungi. Large pieces of wood were scattered about as “legacy structure”, but during the first high water event, ended up rafting downstream.

Natural re-vegetation and re-occupation of fish and wildlife occurred quickly at the site. Several species of fish (coho, chinook and cut throat) were found using the re-established wetland / stream connection, along with beaver, elk and water fowl. In addition to the native species, several invasive species have taken up residence. Foresight for having a remediation plan had not occurred, leaving the already over taxed invasive program at a loss (not liking the sound of that sentence).....

Over the years, various types of development along Prairie Creek have constructed barriers to prevent high water events from accessing the flood plain. This is now one of the few locations where the creek can get out of its banks and provide slower water for over-wintering fish to safely hide during flood events. Local fishery biologists are suggesting that this is one of the limiting factors for the current critical habitat conditions in Prairie Creek.