

PRAIRIE CREEK, HUMBOLDT COUNTY

Date of Survey: 1 June 1972

Surveyors: Harry Nethery and Dan Murphy

Stream Section: From the confluence with Redwood Creek to a point $4\frac{1}{4}$ miles upstream.

Tributary to: Redwood Creek

Mouth Location: R1E, TUN, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 34.

Ownership: Private

Accessibility: U.S. Highway 101 parallels the section of Prairie Creek that was surveyed. Section lies between Orick and Prairie Creek State Park.

Source of Data: U.S.G.S. topographical maps and personal observation.

Drainage Description

Topography: The creek **lies** in a wide, flat-bottomed basin that becomes increasingly wider toward the mouth. Steep hills parallel the basin on both sides. Prairie Creek drains approximately 25 square miles.

Vegetation: The first three miles of Prairie Creek **runs** through meadows used **primarily** for grazing. The first mile has willows and alders lining the channel with nettles, bull thistle and berries making up the undergrowth. Miles two and three **run** almost entirely through open meadow with annual grasses making up the **bulk** of the vegetation. **Mile** four has alders, willows, nettles, berries, ginger and a few scattered redwoods lining the channel. The entire $4\frac{1}{4}$ mile section exhibits filamentous green algae in the stream.

Condition: The entire $4\frac{1}{4}$ miles exhibits severe erosion problems in the form of bank slipouts. Log **jams** are minimal, but fallen alders present many potential sites. At time of survey the stream was turbid. **No** explanation for this could be **found**.

Stream Conditions

Gradient: The increase in gradient is 12 feet **per** mile for the first three miles. The last mile has **an** increase of 65 feet.

Flow: Approximately 7 cfs.

Altitude: The altitude at the mouth **is** 30 feet above sea level. The altitude at the origin of Prairie Creek is 750 feet.

Depth: The average depth is approximately four inches.

Width: The average width is approximately **18** feet.

Pool-riffle ratio: No data taken.

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Shape of Stream: Pools are relatively shallow, but comprise the majority of the stream. Riffles are caused by large rocks rather than gravel. Undercut banks are infrequent, but shelter is provided by overhanging trees and scattered logs. The stream bottom is composed of rocks, gravel, sand and silt; with silt being the most common, especially in the first two miles. The stream was turbid on the day this survey was taken.

Temperature: The air temperature (taken at 11:00 a.m.) was 61° F. The water temperature was 56° F at a point two miles upstream from the mouth. At a point four miles upstream from the mouth it was 54° F.

Spawning Conditions

Quantity: Approximately 40 percent of the upper two miles exhibited suitable spawning gravel. No suitable spawning areas were observed in the lower two miles of the section surveyed.

Quality: Good spawning gravel is found in the upper two miles of the section surveyed. Siltation is not a problem in this section.

Habitat Suitability

Shelter: Shelter is present in the form of overhanging trees, logs, and debris, but it is not abundant. Approximately 40 percent of the upper mile is shaded, while the shading of the lower three miles is minimal.

Fish Food: Caddis Fly larvae were abundant. No other larvae were observed. Water Striders were also abundant.

Fish

Size and Species: Salmonidae fry were observed along the entire four mile section. No fingerlings or adults were observed. The manager at Prairie Creek Fish Hatchery said that in all probability the fry observed were Coastal Cutthroats.

Stream Obstructions - refer to last page.

Recommendations - no recommendations are made at this time.

Summary

1. Although bank slipouts are a problem on Prairie Creek, it is assumed that it is the natural moving of the channel which is causing this problem.
2. No serious log jams exist at present.

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