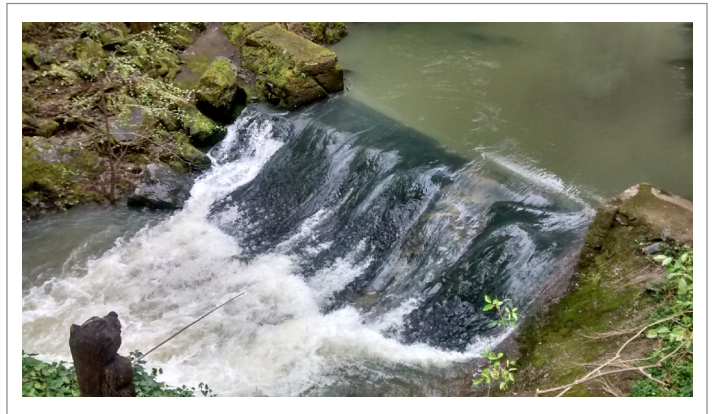


Mill Creek Dam Fish Passage Project

Mill Creek is a major tributary to the Russian River and harbors some of the best habitat for coho salmon and steelhead trout in the watershed. Fish access to Mill Creek and its tributaries was severely impeded for many decades by a large flashboard dam, which the National Marine Fisheries Service identified as “the highest priority barrier within the Russian River [coho] population for remediation.” The dam blocked access to approximately 11.2 miles of habitat (62% of the anadromous stream) in the Mill Creek watershed. Moreover, the portions of Mill Creek above the dam offer some of the best rearing habitat in the Russian River watershed and consistently remain wet, whereas much of the reach below the dam goes dry during the summer months, especially during drought years.



Located, literally, in the backyard of several residential properties—and with many site constraints—the project required years of planning and negotiations with local property owners. Trout Unlimited first applied for funding (for project design) from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Restoration Center in 2013. The project is designed to restore passage over and around the dam through construction of a roughened ramp and low-gradient side channel. Prunuske Chatham, Inc. (PCI) was the project designer and builder.

Construction was completed in October 2016. The project was implemented by Trout Unlimited and PCI with funding from the NOAA Restoration Center’s Community-based Restoration Program, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Fisheries Restoration Grant Program (FRGP), and the Sonoma County Water Agency. Pre- and post-project monitoring is being conducted by UC Cooperative Extension and California Sea Grant.

