

## **STREAM INVENTORY REPORT**

### **UNNAMED USAL CREEK TRIBUTARY (HOTEL GULCH)**

#### INTRODUCTION

A stream inventory was conducted during the summer of 1995 on an unnamed tributary to Usal Creek, locally known and hereafter referred to as Hotel Gulch. The inventory was conducted in two parts: habitat inventory and biological inventory. The objective of the habitat inventory was to document the habitat available to anadromous salmonids in Hotel Gulch. The objective of the biological inventory was to document the presence and distribution of juvenile salmonid species. There is no known record of adult spawning surveys having been conducted on Hotel Gulch.

The objective of this report is to document the current habitat conditions, and recommend options for the potential enhancement of habitat for chinook salmon, coho salmon and steelhead trout. Recommendations for habitat improvement activities are based upon target habitat values suitable for salmonids in California's north coast streams.

#### WATERSHED OVERVIEW

Hotel Gulch is tributary to Usal Creek, tributary to the Pacific Ocean, located in Mendocino County, California (Figure 1). Hotel Gulch's legal description at the confluence with Usal Creek is T23N R18W S22. Its location is 39°50'05" north latitude and 123°50'33" west longitude. Hotel Gulch is an ephemeral stream according to the USGS Hales Grove 7.5 minute quadrangle. Hotel Gulch drains a watershed of approximately 1.2 square miles. Summer base runoff is approximately 0.2 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the mouth. Elevations range from about 20 feet at the mouth of the creek to 1400 feet in the headwater areas. Redwood and Douglas fir forest dominates the watershed. The watershed is partly located within Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, the balance being privately owned, and is managed for timber production and recreation. Vehicle access exists via Usal Road from State Route 1.

#### METHODS

The habitat inventory conducted in Hotel Gulch follows the methodology presented in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual* (Flosi and Reynolds, 1991 rev. 1994). The California Conservation Corps (CCC) Technical Advisors and Watershed Stewards Project/AmeriCorps (WSP/AmeriCorps) members that conducted the inventory were trained in standardized habitat inventory methods by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). Hotel Gulch personnel were trained in May, 1995, by Gary Flosi. This inventory was conducted by a two-person team.

## SAMPLING STRATEGY

The inventory uses a method that samples approximately 10% of the habitat units within the survey reach (Hopelain, 1994). All habitat units included in the survey are classified according to habitat type and their lengths are measured. All pool units are measured for maximum depth. Habitat unit types encountered for the first time are further measured for all the parameters and characteristics on the field form. Additionally, from the ten habitat units on each field form page, one is randomly selected for complete measurement.

## HABITAT INVENTORY COMPONENTS

A standardized habitat inventory form has been developed for use in California stream surveys and can be found in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*. This form was used in Hotel Gulch to record measurements and observations. There are nine components to the inventory form.

### 1. Flow:

Flow is measured in cubic feet per second (cfs) at the bottom of the stream survey reach using standard flow measuring equipment, if available. In some cases flows are estimated.

### 2. Channel Type:

Channel typing is conducted according to the classification system developed and revised by David Rosgen (1985 rev. 1994). This methodology is described in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*. Channel typing is conducted simultaneously with habitat typing and follows a standard form to record measurements and observations. There are five measured parameters used to determine channel type: 1) water slope gradient, 2) entrenchment, 3) width/depth ratio, 4) substrate composition, and 5) sinuosity.

### 3. Temperatures:

Both water and air temperatures are measured and recorded at every tenth habitat unit. The time of the measurement is also recorded. Both temperatures are taken in degrees Fahrenheit at the middle of the habitat unit and within one foot of the water surface.

### 4. Habitat Type:

Habitat typing uses the 24 habitat classification types defined by McCain and others (1988). Habitat units are numbered sequentially and assigned a type identification number selected from a standard list of 24 habitat types. Dewatered units are labeled "dry". Hotel Gulch habitat typing used standard basin level measurement criteria. These parameters require that the minimum length of a described habitat unit must be equal to or greater than the stream's mean wetted width. Channel dimensions were measured using hip chains, range finders, tape measures, and stadia rods. All units were measured for mean length; additionally, the first occurrence of each

unit type and a randomly selected 10% subset of all units were sampled for all features on the sampling form (*Sampling Levels for Fish Habitat Inventory*, Hopelain, 1995). Pool tail crest depth at each pool unit was measured in the thalweg. All measurements were in feet to the nearest tenth.

#### 5. Embeddedness:

The depth of embeddedness of the cobbles in pool tail-out reaches is measured by the percent of the cobble that is surrounded or buried by fine sediment. In Hotel Gulch, embeddedness was ocularly estimated. The values were recorded using the following ranges: 0 - 25% (value 1), 26 - 50% (value 2), 51 - 75% (value 3), 76 - 100% (value 4). Additionally, a rating of "not suitable" (NS) was assigned to tail-outs deemed unsuited for spawning due to inappropriate substrate particle size, having a bedrock tail-out, or other considerations.

#### 6. Shelter Rating:

Instream shelter is composed of those elements within a stream channel that provide salmonids protection from predation, reduce water velocities so fish can rest and conserve energy, and allow separation of territorial units to reduce density related competition. The shelter rating is calculated for each fully-described habitat unit by multiplying shelter value and percent cover. Using an overhead view, a quantitative estimate of the percentage of the habitat unit covered is made. All cover is then classified according to a list of nine cover types. In Hotel Gulch, a standard qualitative shelter value of 0 (none), 1 (low), 2 (medium), or 3 (high) was assigned according to the complexity of the cover. Thus, shelter ratings can range from 0-300 and are expressed as mean values by habitat types within a stream.

#### 7. Substrate Composition:

Substrate composition ranges from silt/clay sized particles to boulders and bedrock elements. In all fully-described habitat units, dominant and sub-dominant substrate elements were ocularly estimated using a list of seven size classes and recorded as a one and two respectively.

#### 8. Canopy:

Stream canopy density was estimated using modified handheld spherical densiometers as described in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*, 1994. Canopy density relates to the amount of stream shaded from the sun. In Hotel Gulch, an estimate of the percentage of the habitat unit covered by canopy was made from the center of approximately every third unit in addition to every fully-described unit, giving an approximate 30% sub-sample. In addition, the area of canopy was estimated ocularly into percentages of coniferous or deciduous trees.

#### 9. Bank Composition and Vegetation:

Bank composition elements range from bedrock to bare soil. However, the stream banks are

usually covered with grass, brush, or trees. These factors influence the ability of stream banks to withstand winter flows. In Hotel Gulch, the dominant composition type (options 1-4) and the dominant vegetation type (options 5-9) of both the right and left banks for each fully-described unit were selected from the habitat inventory form. Additionally, the percent of each bank covered by vegetation was estimated and recorded.

## BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY

Biological sampling during stream inventory is used to determine fish species and their distribution in the stream. In Hotel Gulch fish presence was observed from the stream banks, and four sites were electrofished using one Smith-Root Model 12 electrofisher. These sampling techniques are discussed in the *California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual*.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data from the habitat inventory form are entered into Habitat, a dBASE 4.2 data entry program developed by Tim Curtis, Inland Fisheries Division, California Department of Fish and Game. This program processes and summarizes the data, and produces the following six tables:

- Riffle, flatwater, and pool habitat types
- Habitat types and measured parameters
- Pool types
- Maximum pool depths by habitat types
- Dominant substrates by habitat types

Mean percent shelter by habitat typesGraphics are produced from the tables using Lotus 1,2,3. Graphics developed for Hotel Gulch include:

- Riffle, flatwater, pool habitats by percent occurrence
- Riffle, flatwater, pool habitats by total length
- Total habitat types by percent occurrence
- Pool types by percent occurrence
- Total pools by maximum depths
- Embeddedness
- Pool cover by cover type
- Dominant substrate in low gradient riffles
- Percent canopy
- Bank composition by composition type
- Bank vegetation by vegetation type

## HABITAT INVENTORY RESULTS

\* ALL TABLES AND GRAPHS ARE LOCATED AT THE END OF THE REPORT \*

The habitat inventory of July 11 and 12, 1995, was conducted by Kyle Young (WSP/AmeriCorps) and Craig Mesman (CCC). The total length of the stream surveyed was 6,970 feet with an additional 160 feet of side channel.

Flow was measured at the bottom of the survey reach with a Marsh-McBirney Model 2000 flowmeter at 0.2 cfs on August 3, 1995.

Hotel Gulch is a C4 channel type for the first 913 feet of stream reach surveyed, an F4 for the next 3,406 feet, a C4 for the next 418 feet, and an F4 for the remaining 2,197 feet. C4 channels are low-gradient, meandering, riffle/pool alluvial channels with broad, well-developed floodplains and gravel-dominant substrates. F4 channels are entrenched, meandering, riffle/pool channels on low gradients with high width/depth ratios and gravel-dominant substrates.

Water temperatures ranged from 54 to 56 degrees Fahrenheit. Air temperatures ranged from 59 to 73 degrees Fahrenheit.

Table 1 summarizes the Level II riffle, flatwater, and pool habitat types. Based on frequency of **occurrence** there were 39% riffle units, 32% pool units, and 28% flatwater units (Graph 1). Based on total **length** of Level II habitat types there were 43% riffle units, 35% flatwater units, and 21% pool units (Graph 2).

Sixteen Level IV habitat types were identified (Table 2). The most frequent habitat types by percent **occurrence** were low-gradient riffles, 36%; runs, 17%; and mid-channel pools, 14% (Graph 3). Based on percent total **length**, low-gradient riffles made up 39%, step runs 22%, and runs 12%.

A total of 116 pools were identified (Table 3). Main channel pools were most frequently encountered at 49% and comprised 57% of the total length of all pools (Graph 4).

Table 4 is a summary of maximum pool depths by pool habitat types. Depth is an indicator of pool quality. Six of the 116 pools (5%) had a depth of two feet or greater (Graph 5).

The depth of cobble embeddedness was estimated at pool tail-outs. Of the 108 pool tail-outs measured, 6 had a value of 1 (5.6%); 48 had a value of 2 (44.4%); 53 had a value of 3 (49.1%); and 1 had a value of 4 (0.9%) (Graph 6). On this scale, a value of 1 indicates the highest quality of spawning substrate.

A shelter rating was calculated for each habitat unit and expressed as a mean value for each habitat type within the survey using a scale of 0-300. Pool habitat types had a mean shelter rating of 34, and flatwater habitats had a mean shelter rating of 17 (Table 1). Of the pool types, the scour pools had the highest mean shelter rating at 41. Main channel pools had a mean shelter rating of 34 (Table 3).

Table 5 summarizes mean percent cover by habitat type. Large woody debris is the dominant

cover type in Hotel Gulch. Graph 7 describes the pool cover in Hotel Gulch.

Table 6 summarizes the dominant substrate by habitat type. Gravel was the dominant substrate observed in 9 of the 17 low gradient riffles measured (53%). Small cobble was the next most frequently observed dominant substrate type and occurred in 35% of the low gradient riffles (Graph 8).

The mean percent canopy density for the stream reach surveyed was 97%. The mean percentages of deciduous and coniferous trees were 50% each. Graph 9 describes the canopy in Hotel Gulch.

For the stream reach surveyed, the mean percent right bank vegetated was 76%. The mean percent left bank vegetated was 81%. The dominant elements composing the structure of the stream banks consisted of 0% bedrock, 2% boulder, 84% cobble/gravel, and 14% sand/silt/clay (Graph 10). Grass was the dominant vegetation type observed in 63% of the units surveyed. Additionally, 13% of the units surveyed had deciduous trees as the dominant vegetation type, and 21% had coniferous trees as the dominant vegetation, including down trees, logs, and root wads (Graph 11).

## BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY RESULTS

Four sites were electrofished on August 14, 1995, in Hotel Gulch. The sites were sampled by Craig Mesman (CCC) and Heidi Hickethier (WSP/AmeriCorps).

The first site sampled included habitat units 23-28, a series of pools, riffles, and runs approximately 142 feet from the confluence with Usal Creek. This site had an approximate area of 710 sq ft. The site yielded five 0+ steelhead, eight 1+ steelhead, and four Pacific giant salamanders.

The second site included habitat units 67-71, a series of pools and riffles located approximately 1,556 feet above the creek mouth. This site had a length of 176 feet. The site yielded four 0+ steelhead, seven 1+ steelhead, one sculpin, and one Pacific giant salamander.

The third site sampled included habitat units 205-213, a series of pools, riffles, and runs located approximately 4,567 feet above the creek mouth. The site had an area of 615 sq ft. The site yielded four 1+ steelhead and one Pacific giant salamander.

The fourth site sampled included habitat units 232-237, a series of pools, riffles, and runs located approximately 5,002 feet above the creek mouth. The site had an area of 814 sq ft. The site yielded two 1+ steelhead, four Pacific giant salamanders, and one tailed frog.

## DISCUSSION

Hotel Gulch is a C4 channel type for the first 913 feet of stream surveyed, an F4 for the next 3,406 feet, a C4 for the next 418 feet, and an F4 for the remaining 2,197 feet. The suitability of

C4 channel types for fish habitat improvement structures is as follows: good for bank-placed boulders and log cover; and fair for low-stage weirs, single and opposing wing deflectors, and channel constrictors. F4 channels are considered: good for bank-placed boulders; fair for low-stage weirs, single and opposing wing deflectors, channel constrictors, and log cover; and poor for medium-stage weirs and boulder clusters.

The water temperatures recorded on the survey days July 11 and 12, 1995, ranged from 54 to 56 degrees Fahrenheit. Air temperatures ranged from 59 to 73 degrees Fahrenheit. This is a good water temperature range for salmonids. To make any further conclusions, temperatures would need to be monitored throughout the warm summer months, and more extensive biological sampling would need to be conducted.

Flatwater habitat types comprised 35% of the total **length** of this survey, riffles 43%, and pools 21%. The pools are relatively shallow, with only 6 of the 116 (5%) pools having a maximum depth greater than 2 feet. In general, pool enhancement projects are considered when primary pools comprise less than 40% of the length of total stream habitat. In first and second order streams, a primary pool is defined to have a maximum depth of at least two feet, occupy at least half the width of the low flow channel, and be as long as the low flow channel width. Installing structures that will increase or deepen pool habitat is recommended.

Fifty-four of the 108 pool tail-outs measured had embeddedness ratings of 3 or 4. Only 6 had a 1 rating. Cobble embeddedness measured to be 25% or less, a rating of 1, is considered to indicate good quality spawning substrate for salmon and steelhead. In Hotel Gulch, sediment sources should be mapped and rated according to their potential sediment yields, and control measures should be taken.

The mean shelter rating for pools was low with a rating of 34. The shelter rating in the flatwater habitats was lower at 17. A pool shelter rating of approximately 100 is desirable. The relatively small amount of cover that now exists is being provided primarily by large woody debris in all habitat types. Additionally, small woody debris and boulders contribute a small amount. Log and root wad cover structures in the pool and flatwater habitats are needed to improve both summer and winter salmonid habitat. Log cover structure provides rearing fry with protection from predation, rest from water velocity, and also divides territorial units to reduce density related competition.

Fifteen of the 17 low gradient riffles measured had gravel or small cobble as the dominant substrate. This is generally considered good for spawning salmonids.

The mean percent canopy density for the stream was 97%. This is a high percentage of canopy. In general, revegetation projects are considered when canopy density is less than 80%.

The percentage of right and left bank covered with vegetation was high at 76% and 81%, respectively.

Young-of-the-year salmonids were observed through habitat unit 280, approximately 5,912 feet

above the confluence with Usal Creek.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Hotel Gulch should be managed as an anadromous, natural production stream.
- 2) Where feasible, design and engineer pool enhancement structures to increase the number of pools. This must be done where the banks are stable or in conjunction with stream bank armor to prevent erosion.
- 3) Increase woody cover in the pools and flatwater habitat units. Adding high quality complexity with woody cover is desirable and in some areas the material is locally available.
- 4) Active and potential sediment sources related to the road system need to be identified, mapped, and treated according to their potential for sediment yield to the stream and its tributaries.
- 5) To establish more complete and meaningful temperature regime information, 24-hour monitoring during the July and August temperature extreme period should be performed for 3 to 5 years.

## PROBLEM SITES AND LANDMARKS

The following landmarks and possible problem sites were noted. All distances are approximate and taken from the beginning of the survey reach.

- 0' Begin survey at confluence with Usal Creek. Channel type is C4.
- 880' Left bank tributary. Estimated flow <0.1 cfs. Not accessible to anadromous fish (NAF).
- 913' Channel type changes to F4.
- 1006' Corrugated metal pipe arch culvert 6' high x 8' wide x 20' long under Usal Road.
- 1083' Left bank seep.
- 2456' Log debris accumulation (LDA) 8' high x 30' wide x 16' long retaining gravel 8' deep at base. Not a barrier.
- 2622' LDA 8' high x 25' wide x 35' long retaining gravel 8' deep at base.
- 4028' Dry right bank tributary.



4040' Left bank tributary. Estimated one-third of combined flow. NAF.

4335' Channel type changes to C4.

4753' Channel type changes to F4.

5473' Dry right bank tributary.

5849' LDA 10' high x 20' wide x 16' long retaining gravel 8' deep at base. Possible barrier.

5912' Last noted observation of fish presence.

5994' LDA 10' high x 30' wide x 18' long retaining gravel 10' deep at base. Possible barrier.

6012' Right bank seep.

6413' LDA 6' high x 20' wide x 6' long. 6' jump with wood blocking jump. Possible barrier.

6970' LDA 10' high x 30' wide x 20' long retaining gravel 10' deep at base. Probable barrier.  
End of survey due to diminished habitat.

## REFERENCES

- Flosi, G., and F. Reynolds. 1994. California salmonid stream habitat restoration manual, 2nd edition. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California.
- Hopelain, J. 1995. Sampling levels for fish habitat inventory, unpublished manuscript. California Department of Fish and Game, Inland Fisheries Division, Sacramento, California.

### **LEVEL III and LEVEL IV HABITAT TYPE KEY**

HABITAT TYPE	LETTER	NUMBER
<b>RIFFLE</b>		
Low Gradient Riffle	[LGR]	1.1
High Gradient Riffle	[HGR]	1.2
<b>CASCADE</b>		
Cascade	[CAS]	2.1
Bedrock Sheet	[BRS]	2.2
<b>FLATWATER</b>		
Pocket Water	[POW]	3.1
Glide	[GLD]	3.2
Run	[RUN]	3.3
Step Run	[SRN]	3.4
Edgewater	[EDW]	3.5
<b>MAIN CHANNEL POOLS</b>		
Trench Pool	[TRP]	4.1
Mid-Channel Pool	[MCP]	4.2
Channel Confluence Pool	[CCP]	4.3
Step Pool	[STP]	4.4
<b>SCOUR POOLS</b>		
Corner Pool	[CRP]	5.1
Lateral Scour Pool - Log Enhanced	[LSL]	5.2
Lateral Scour Pool - Root Wad Enhanced	[LSR]	5.3
Lateral Scour Pool - Bedrock Formed	[LSBk]	5.4
Lateral Scour Pool - Boulder Formed	[LSBo]	5.5
Plunge Pool	[PLP]	5.6
<b>BACKWATER POOLS</b>		
Secondary Channel Pool	[SCP]	6.1
Backwater Pool - Boulder Formed	[BPB]	6.2
Backwater Pool - Root Wad Formed	[BPR]	6.3
Backwater Pool - Log Formed	[BPL]	6.4
Dammed Pool	[DPL]	6.5