

## Mad River Bluffs Introduction

The Mad River Bluffs natural area is 74 acres of coastal dunes, estuarine, wetland, forest and grassland habitats saved from housing development in 2001 when the California Coastal Conservancy generously purchased the site and turned it over to the McKinleyville Land Trust for preservation and public access. It offers spectacular views of the Mad River and Pacific Ocean and contains many species of native plants and trees, offering visitors the experience of a unique native coastal forest. Notable in the property are the native coastal pines along with large Sitka spruce trees that represent the southernmost distribution of the locally declining Sitka spruce range. These exceptionally large trees offer unique habitats for several types of fungus and ferns, and were noted for their use in Native American basketry.

The funds for purchase and management plan development came from Prop. 12, the "Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000." The management plan was prepared by Sabra Steinberg, a past president of MLT. In 2007, the MLT received approximately \$250,000 from the California River Parkways Grant Program (Proposition 50) to build a trail from the bluff to the river, and improve trails and signage.

Thanks to the grant from the California River Parkways Grant Program, the McKinleyville Land Trust was able to partner with the Redwood Community Action Agency to improve about 6,500 feet of trail, construct four overlooks above the Mad River, build a new staircase down to the river bank, and create and enhance signage.

Trail improvements, performed in 2010-2011, were done in partnership with the California Conservation Corps, under the direction of Kevin Wright of Redwood Community Action Agency. In addition to the upgraded trails and the staircase leading to the Mad River, the crews created a gravel parking area at the foot of Ocean Drive and Hiller Road and decommissioned several informal trails dissecting the native coastal pine forest. Several interpretive signs have been erected throughout the property, as well as two picnic tables, trash cans, and doggie pot stations. The Baduwat Trail, which runs from the parking area at Ocean Drive to the adjacent Hiller Park property, has been made ADA accessible and leads to a stunning overlook above the Mad River.