

## DRAFT-2

Great Redwood Trail (GRT)

7-6-2023

### Vision for the GRT from Dos Rios to Alder Point

The section of the old Northern Pacific Railway, now the Great Redwood Trail, through the Eel River Canyon between Dos Rios and Alderpoint, is a highly sensitive cultural and ecological zone, approximately 47 river miles in length. It is a Federally recognized Wild and Scenic Corridor and the home of many species, terrestrial and aquatic, cultural and medicinal, including state and federally listed threatened, endangered, and species of special concern. Several Tribal communities have inhabited this region for thousands of years and there are many historic encampment sites, sacred sites, and artifacts, located near and along the GRT corridor. Due to the importance of these ecological and cultural treasures, special consideration needs to be given to this region of the Eel River and its tributaries.

This section of the GRT transects the remotest parts of Mendocino County and the landowners have valid concerns regarding, trespassing, theft, vandalism, poaching of wildlife, dumping of refuse, and the potential of wildfire. Visitor safety is also a grave concern. Although, for the unaware or unprepared visitor, bear and cougar encounters are possible, the biggest threats to trail visitors is personal injury (broken arms, legs, lacerations, burns, etc.) and rattlesnake bite. Due to the remoteness of this area, it could take two hours, or more, for medical personnel to reach an injured hiker.

These landowner, Tribal, ecological, and visitor safety concerns need to be addressed in a way that satisfies and unifies all stakeholders, while providing a safe and unique experience for trail visitors. The best protection is having a knowledgeable human presence on the trail and knowing who and how many visitors are on the trail at any given time. With this in mind, we have a vision, or proposal, for this section of the GRT – Dos Rios to Alderpoint.

### Vision/Proposal

(1) Dos Rios to Alderpoint will be access by permit only (amount and method TBD)

This should not impact day use on either end of the designated trail area. A check-in/check-out location can be created at an existing place in Alderpoint. The old railyard at Dos Rios (GPS coord. 39/717478, -123.353076) could have a docent cabin build, as well as a campground and day-use river access.

North of the Dos Rios station to approximately one-half mile south of the Alderpoint train trestle (GPS coord. 40.139053, -123.601532) is designated permit only. River rafters will be a

consideration as there has been no permit process for rafting the Eel River. At this location there could be a sign-in/out (date and time) kiosk for trail visitors. Having purchased their permit, either online or at a Dos Rios/Alderpoint station, the permit number would go into a register along with group names, date, and time of entry/exit. This would help keep track of those leaving the permit area as well as those still within the permit area.

#### (2) Group Guides and/or Docents

Groups will be accompanied/overseen by a knowledgeable guide, or Trail Docents (in tunnel shelters?) each with a section of trail to oversee. Either guides or docents will be equipped with satellite-phones. Guides and docents can be supported through the permit fees. Having guides, preferably Native youth, knowledgeable in Native culture, native plants, and local history would add to the unique experience for visitors as well as be eyes-on-the-ground for protecting property, cultural sites, and providing emergency first aid if needed.

#### (3) Designated camping sites (near tunnels when possible).

Having designated camp sites will help to keep groups together and easier to monitor. Properly located as to not disturb Native cultural sites, river rafter could also utilize these campsites, reducing land disturbance, destruction/defacement of cultural sites, possibility of fire (in season), and trespass/poaching on private property.

Bear resistant refuse and recycling bins (hard to stop a bear, but not racoons, opossums, etc.). Garbage dumping by river users has been on the increase in the past few years. Having well-constructed refuse and recycling bins along the path, as well as the presence of guides and docents, can help to minimize garbage being left along the trail.

#### (4) Emergency Preparedness

Emergency medical kits and a Satellite-phone in tunnels or designated locations. These locations could also be shelter for trail docents. Having satellite phones available will aid in communication medical needs, incidents of vandalism to property and/or Native cultural sites, poaching, and other needs as they arise. Also, having guides and docents trained in emergency first aid and CPR would be a benefit to both trail visitors and first responders alike.

#### (5) Possible additions to the trail experience given proper landowner and Tribal permissions.

Having Native guides on the trail would open up the potential for a cultural revival among the Tribal communities, as well as helping to preserve and protect cultural sites and artifacts. If there

were a couple of cultural sites, or areas of native plants (cultural and medicinal) located near the path, accessible by a designated side trail, educational aspects could be an added attraction for trail visitors. It could also stimulate in Tribal youth to learn their cultural history, language, and heritage. This would also give unaware trail visitors an education into why indigenous culture and knowledge is important for having a healthy relationship with the land. Having non-native people introduced to land care in this setting would help inform them about critical challenges we face regarding climate, loss of biodiversity, ecological destruction, and responsible land use. This is where having a presence is the best protection, while giving a valuable and needed experience to non-native people (and out-of-town tribal members).

### In Summary

This is an opportunity for Tribal members to have an upfront role and contribution to the development of the GRT and the protection and preservation of their traditional lands and cultural heritage. Additionally, it is an opportunity for long term co-management of this section of the GRT if Tribal communities take proactive steps to get involved in the development of the trail from the beginning. Knowledgeable Tribal people can become involved in the locating of cultural sites, artifacts, native, and medicinal plants important to their cultural roots. This is an opportunity to get the youth involved in learning their cultural heritage, language, customs, and relationship to the land. It is an economic opportunity in that, with the acceptance of our vision/proposal, Native people could do much of the environmental and cultural assessment, help locate and design campgrounds that do not negatively impact cultural or sacred sites, and the guide and docent positions would be paid.

Although not directly involved with Tribal cultural protection, the removal of box cars and other metal debris from the river can provide another opportunity. The steel, once removed for the river, can be used to create metal art structures along the GRT further enhancing the unique experience of visiting this portion of the trail. Old track rails can be used for support material in building stream crossings and other structural needs along the trail, as well as in art pieces. When feasible the rails can be removed from the site as salvage steel for use elsewhere. This could be a source of some income to landowners, including Tribal lands. With Tribal participation in co-management, the location of art forms, campsites, and other features along the trail could be jointly decided as to protect any cultural sites and/or artifacts.

With the acceptance of our vision/proposal, Tribal concerns, concerns for the ecology and biological diversity, and landowner concerns from theft, trespass, poaching, and wildfire would be properly addressed. Visitors to this wild and scenic piece of Mendocino County would have a safe, unique, and memorable, educational, experience that will last through their lives.

The best protection is a knowledgeable human presence on the land. We hope you support and contribute to our vision/proposal and become positively engaged in this process. I

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