

# The Long Reach of the Sea

During high tides, ocean water surges through the river mouth and flows upstream for 8.5 miles, mixing with the fresh water from its tributaries. The result is an estuary, a salty blend of nutrients from both land and sea.

Estuaries are considered to be among the most productive marine systems, supporting thousands of organisms in their underwater eelgrass meadows and mudflats. They are often referred to as the “ocean’s

nurseries” because many species of large seagoing fish lay eggs and other animals rear young in estuaries.

The Big River Estuary is one of Northern California’s longest and most undeveloped. It is home to Dungeness and shore crab, river otter, beaver, harbor seals, and over 22 fish species including coho salmon, steelhead, Pacific halibut, Pacific herring, and seven species of surfperch.

**Since becoming part of Mendocino Headlands State Park, teams of volunteers and employees work tirelessly to research and restore the habitats of this valley.**



Photo Credit: Mendocino Land Trust

In the summer volunteers in snorkel gear count fish in the river.



Photo Credit: Mendocino Land Trust

Volunteers remove invasive species such as Jubata Grass, Scotch Broom, and English Ivy.



Photo Credit: California State Parks

Repairing the Haul Road restores the river bank, creates a stable roadbed, and helps eliminate silt that can smother salmon spawning habitat.



Photo Credit: Mendocino Land Trust

School groups replant native species to replace invasive plants, stabilize stream banks and restore native habitat.

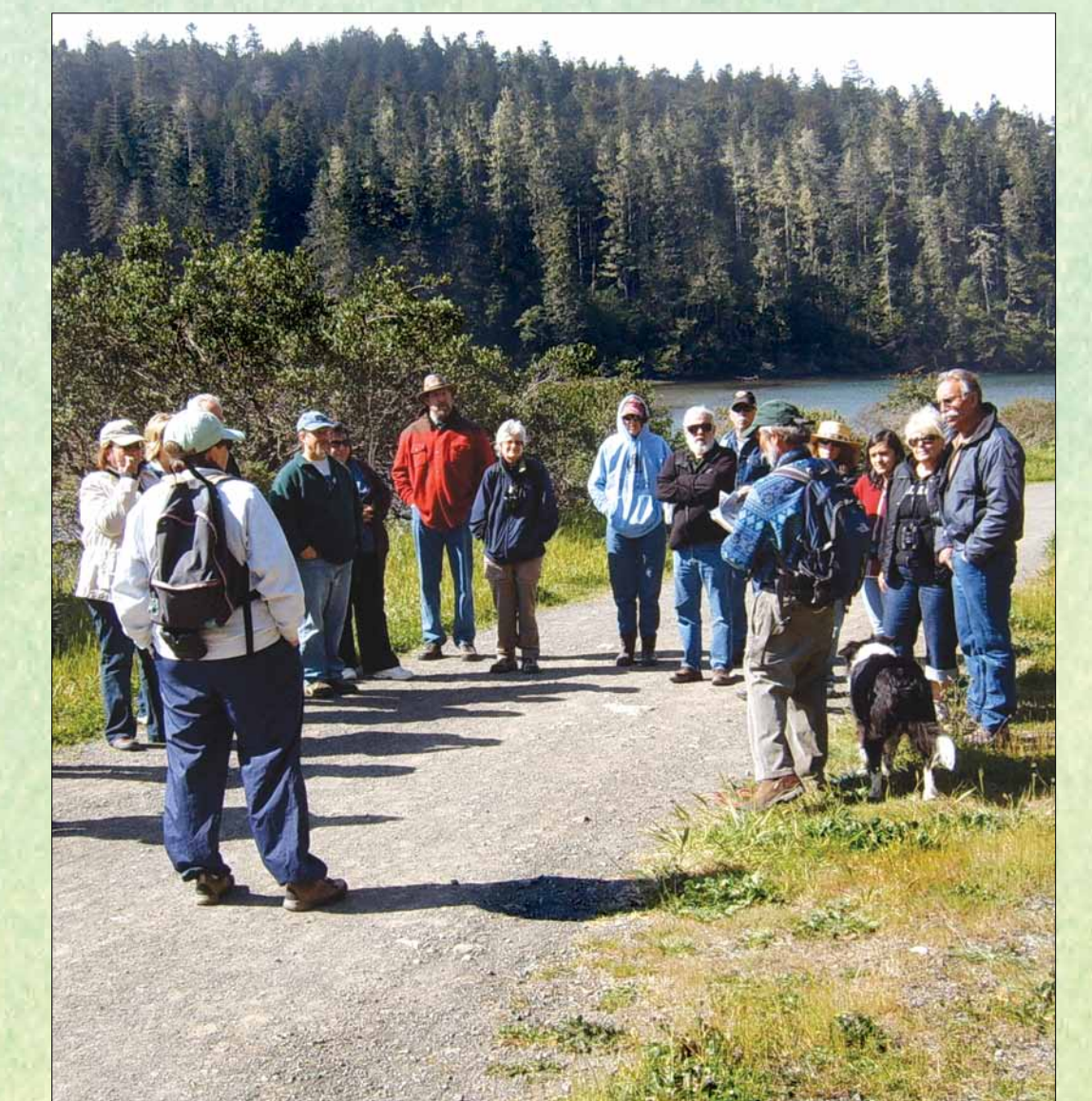


Photo Credit: Kate Lee

Volunteers are being trained to lead walks to inform the public about Big River’s habitats.