

News Release



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Contact: Steve Capps
(916) 651-8750

Mendocino's Big River Now Part of State Parks

MENDOCINO – A coalition of state, federal and private interests joined forces to acquire 7,334 acres of land along the Big River in Mendocino County – encompassing the longest undeveloped, unprotected estuary in Northern California – to become the newest addition to the California State Park System.

The acquisition by State Parks was officially recognized at a dedication ceremony Saturday, Sept. 28, at Big River Beach, east of the Big River Bridge immediately south of the village of Mendocino.

The \$25.6-million acquisition was accomplished with about \$16.1 million in state funds, including money from Proposition 12, the parks bond act approved by voters in 2000; about \$7.3 million in private donations secured by Mendocino Land Trust, Inc., a local non-profit organization; and about \$2.2 million in federal funds, including \$1 million in transportation funds administered by the California Department of Transportation. The seller was the Hawthorne Timber Company.

"We at State Parks are thankful to all the groups and individuals that worked so hard to make this a reality," said Ruth Coleman, Acting Director of California State Parks. "We want to thank Governor Gray Davis for making purchase of this property a priority in his administration."

Ms. Coleman on Saturday announced that the new state includes \$1 million to begin work at Big River. "This \$1 million will help us begin the work of restoring portions of the estuary, decommissioning logging roads, establishing recreational trails and constructing public restrooms," she said.

"You will see some of this work begin almost immediately and continue over the next five years," she said.

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The Big River property is adjacent to Mendocino Headlands and Mendocino Woodlands state parks, one-half mile south of the town of Mendocino.

Transfer of the Big River property to the public domain creates 60,000 acres of connected wildlife habitat, more than 50 miles of connected public trails, and protects more than 1,500 acres of coastal wetlands.

The property includes 50 miles of the Big River and its tributaries, encompassing prime salmon and steelhead trout spawning areas. The area supports more than 130 species of birds, as well as 27 endangered, threatened, or species of special concern.

Future development of the Big River property as a part of the California State Parks System is still in the planning stage. The property, however, already has been opened by State Parks to hikers, bikers and other visitors.

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