

## **Eel River Recovery Project Hosts July 15 Fish Watching Field Trip to Hearst/Emandal**

The Eel River Recovery Project (ERRP) will be hosting a field trip on Saturday July 15 to the main Eel River at Hearst and Emandal to observe and enumerate the non-native Sacramento pikeminnow. The field trip is part of the Willits Goes Wild series and will be lead by fish biologist Pat Higgins, who is also the ERRP Managing Director. Attendees should bring swim attire and river shoes, but masks and snorkels will be provided.

The pikeminnow was introduced into the Eel River circa 1979 from Clear Lake or Cache Creek, likely as an accidental release of juveniles that were being used for bass bait in Lake Pillsbury. The species flourished in the lake and spread throughout the Eel River basin within 15 years. Their population increased exponentially to the detriment of native fishes that they ate or displaced. More recent studies by ERRP suggest a diminished pikeminnow population owing to otter predation (See [EelRiverRecovery.org](http://EelRiverRecovery.org) for reports). On June 29-30 a team of highly trained ERRP volunteer divers conducted a census on 12 miles of the South Fork Eel River from Rattlesnake Creek to Standish Hickey State Park to collect trend data. The total number of pikeminnow over 4 inches in length decreased from 1414 in 2016 to 1143 in 2017. ERRP wants to get a permit in the future from State and federal agencies to harvest large pikeminnow using spear guns to control their predation and ultimately their population in the Eel River.

The July 15 dives to see pikeminnow will be at two levels. Those wishing to learn to ID pikeminnow and to take a short swim will take the Willits Goes Wild van back to the White Bridge at Hearst. Those wishing to be part of a team to count large adult pikeminnow between Emandal to the White Bridge will join Pat Higgins and help collect data.

The field trip will depart from the Willits Hub (630 S Main Street) at 9:30 AM. Those coming along should pack a lunch and remember to bring a towel and some sunscreen. Call Robin Leler about transport planning and car-pooling or Pat Higgins for details about fish dive census at 223-7200.



**Emily Maloney, an Americorp volunteer working with BLM, during the SF Eel River view pikeminnow June 29-30, 2017 ERRP pikeminnow survey. No wetsuits will be needed at Emandal on July 15.**



Pikeminnow photographed in swift cascade environment during ERRP 2017 survey. 6/29/17.