**Outlet Creek Summer Monitoring Ending – Field Trip September 30**

The Friends of Outlet Creek (FOC) funded extensive monitoring of Outlet Creek and its tributaries during the summer of 2017. Fisheries scientists Pat Higgins is coordinating the watershed wide effort that has led to the placement of 22 water temperature gauges and will result in an over-all aquatic habitat conditions report to be released later in fall. On Saturday, September 30 there will be a meeting at the Willits Hub from 10 AM to noon and then the group will visit sites where temperature probes will be retrieved during the afternoon.

Water temperature data have been collected at about a dozen sites historically in the Outlet Creek watershed, which includes all the streams above the city of Willits. Gauges were placed this year at two places in Baechtel Creek, three places in Broaddus Creek and two in Willits Creek. Many other major tributaries have little historic data, so the 2017 monitoring constitutes baseline monitoring, whereas trends can be assessed at sites with previous records. Cherry Creek is a large tributary of lower Outlet Creek joining it from the north, and four gauges were placed in that stream in cooperation with local land owners to collect baseline data. Long Valley Creek and Sherwood Creek also have two water temperature gauges each in different reaches that will be retrieved soon. The main channel of Outlet Creek, from its inception below Willits to its confluence with the Eel River at Eight Mile Bridge on Highway 162 has water quality and stream health that is variable, and five temperature gauges were placed in various reaches.

The Eel River Recovery Project (ERRP) is now a tenant at the Willits Hub and is a cooperator in this project. Although ERRP has done extensive water temperature monitoring of the Eel River since 2012, only eight Outlet Creek locations have been monitored previously. Major conclusions of previous ERRP reports are that streams that are flow depleted tend to warm and that some streams and river reaches that formerly flowed year around now seasonally dry up or disconnect. Stream conditions are also documented photographically at each location, and spring and fall photos can record desiccation. Annual ERRP temperature reports include maps of stream reaches that went dry.

The FOC project involves more than a dozen land owners that are cooperating in monitoring stream reaches on their property. Scientifically valid data collected in cooperation with local residents provides an assessment of aquatic conditions that can be help build community trust. If problems are apparent, then ERRP helps provide information on how they can be remediated. An example of this is the regenerative cannabis farming education program that ERRP will be featuring at the Hub. FOC has also recently won a Rose Foundation grant that will involve Willits schools in stream monitoring.

The meeting Saturday morning September 30 will be at the Willits Hub at 630 S. Main Street two blocks north of Highway 20. Coffee, bagels and fresh fruit will be served beginning at 9:30 AM and the morning discussions will extend from 10 AM to noon. In addition to planning equipment retrieval and setting a time line for reporting results, school outreach and other potential ERRP Willits activities in fall and winter will be discussed. For more information, call Pat Higgins at (707) 223-7200.

Land owner Kelly Harris and fish scientist Pat Higgins on Sherwood Creek where a water temperature gauge was placed. 8/13/17.