

To: NCRWGCB Staff 5/10/2001

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Thirty years at the mouth of Jacoby Creek.

A good deal of change had already occurred to the small watershed known as Jacoby Creek by the time I began my residence in a duck hunting shack at the mouth of the Creek in 1970. Most of the wetlands to the east of the cabin had been "reclaimed" for over eighty years and the creek's channel had been confined by berms to decrease the likelihood of winter floods invading the newly claimed marshland. This channeling has dramatically reduced the delta and estuary of Jacoby Creek and gives cause to the high speed and increased volume of flow at peak runoff.

Living four feet from a raging winter torrent, I have had the opportunity to witness the intensity of the episodic flow and the associated materials carried to the bay. I believe Jacoby Creek has delivered an inordinate amount of silt to Humboldt Bay since logging began in the valley in the mid 1860s. I can not say that there is more or less sediment being carried at this time but I can attest to the fact that even moderate rains turn the creek brown in a very short period of time.

I think the most telling factor identifying deteriorating condition in this watershed is the increased frequency of floods with rainfall amounts that would not have had similar effects in the drainage 10-15 years ago. I believe that the soils have been impacted and compacted to the point that the system that would historically recharge the aquifer is in disrepair. Water that would normally get broken up by the hillside cover and then slowly be delivered to the soil is now being swept along to the mouth carrying increased sediment load in the process.

Another telling point is the successful invasion of plants that are slightly salt tolerant but not true salt marsh inhabitants. For the past five years I've noticed a rise in legumes, umbels, and grasses that I had not recorded in my first series of plant records near the shack in the early 1970s. I believe this is likely caused by the yearly deposition of silts building up the level of the stream corridor margins to the point that they are infrequently inundated by the normal tide cycles.

All of these point to deteriorating conditions in this watershed and should lend credence to the need for 303 d listing for this impaired waterway.

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