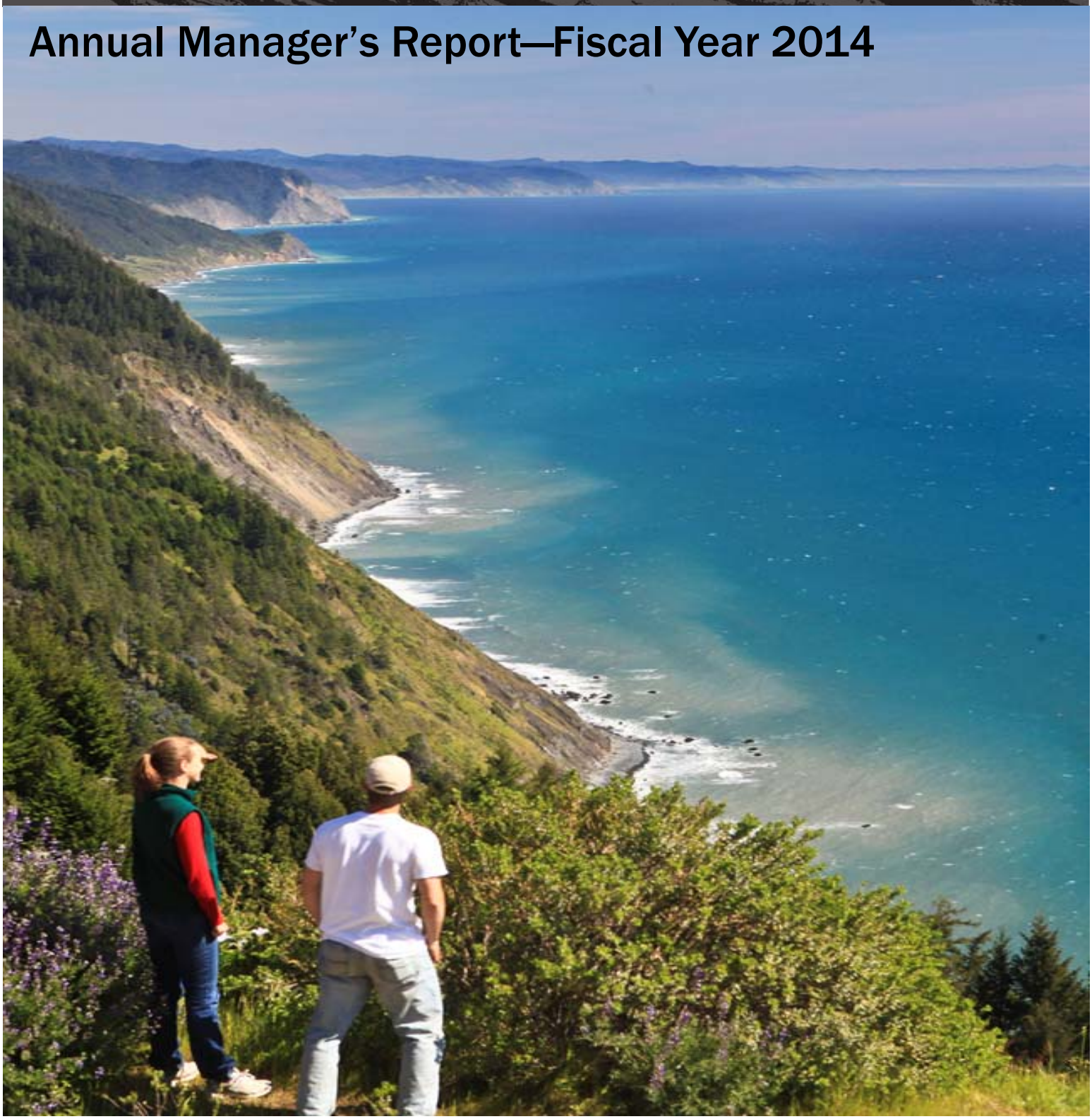
NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

California

King Range

National Conservation Area

Annual Manager's Report—Fiscal Year 2014



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1 King Range Profile

Designating Authority

Designating Authority:	Public Law 91-476
Date of Designation:	October 21, 1970
Other legislation:	Public Law 109-362, Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act (2006)

Acreage

Total Acres in Unit	56,167
BLM Acres	56,167
Other Federal Acres	0
State and Private Acres*	6,320

*State and Private acres are not part of the total of the unit acres

The King Range NCA is comprised of 56,167 acres of public and private lands, and extends along 35 miles of coastline between the mouth of the Mattole River and Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. In the King Range NCA approximately 56,167 acres of public lands and 6,320 acres of private lands lie within the congressionally designated NCA boundary. An additional 1,800 +/- acres of public lands are contiguous to the NCA, but outside the boundary; these lands are managed as part of the King Range.

Contact Information

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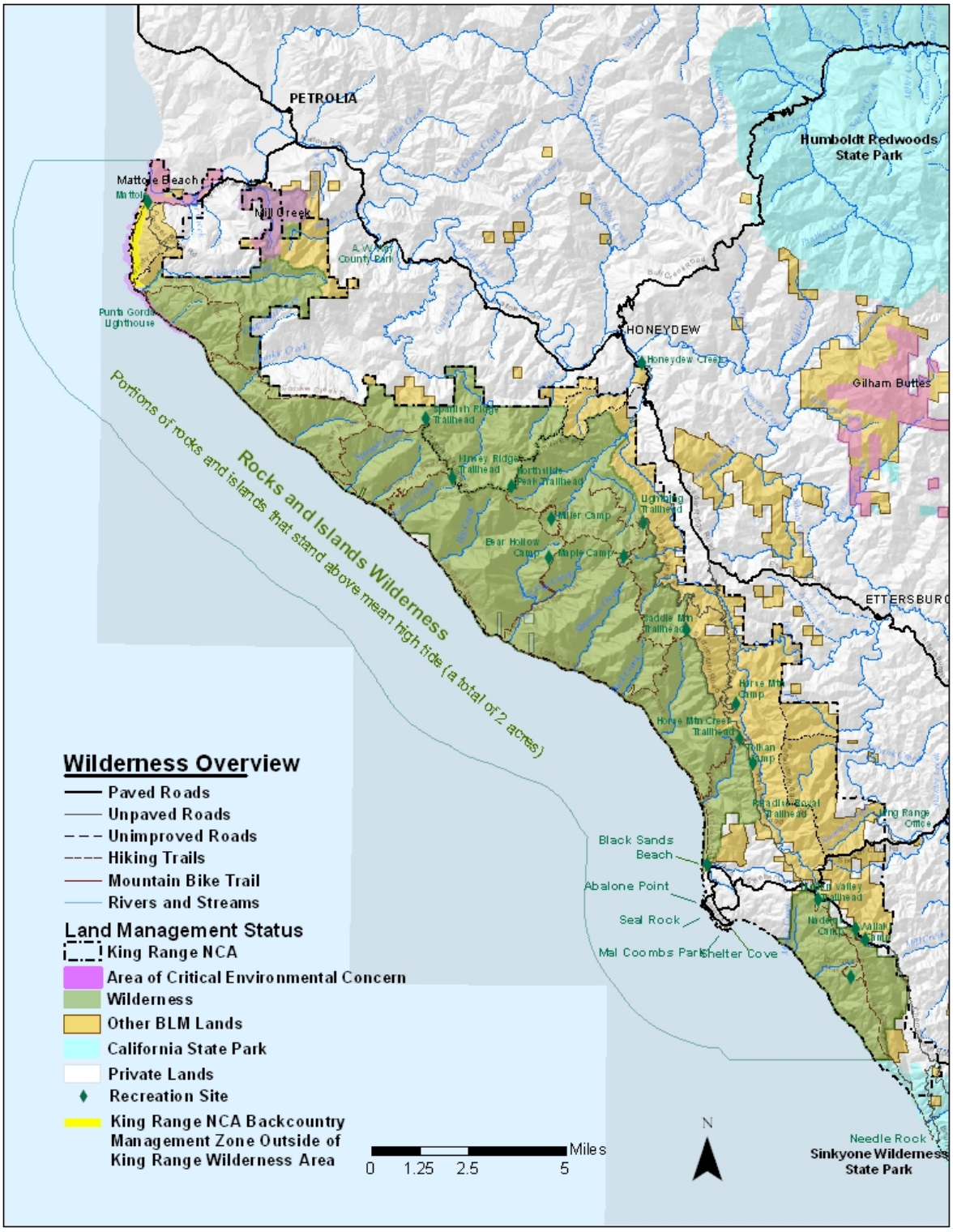
Field Office Name	Arcata
District Office Name	Northern California
State Office Name	California

Budget

Total Fiscal Year 2014 Budget	$1,448,980
Subactivity 1711	$1,333,278
Other Subactivities' Contributions	$118,299
Other Funding	$0

Map of King Range National Conservation Area



Managing Partners

The King Range National Conservation Area does not currently have established partnerships to assist with the management of the unit.

Staffing

The King Range Project Office is located in the Whitethorn Junction area on the Shelter Cove Road along the major southern access route into the King Range. This is the main visitor contact point and operations center for KRNCA management.
The site consists of the Project Office and Visitor Center, fire station and maintenance shop, a public water system meeting Safe Drinking Water Act requirements, utilities and infrastructure including a 75 Kw emergency electrical generation capacity, materials storage and handling areas, and two historic barns. Due to the remote location a large degree of self-sufficiency is required of KR Project Office staff; all staff performs regular functional roles in the maintenance and operation of the facility.
The project office is duty station for 10 permanent employees:

King Range Manager, GS-0340-13
Public Contact Representative, GS-0962-06
Senior Outdoor Recreation Planner, GS-0023-11
ORP/Interpretive Specialist, GS-0023-11
Park Ranger (Wilderness), GS-0025-09
Senior Law Enforcement Officer, GS-1801-11
Engineering Equipment Operator, WG-5716-10
Maintenance Worker (vacant), WG-4749-08
Supervisory Range Tech (Fire), GS-0455-08
Lead Range Tech (Fire), GS-0455-06

The project office employs 3 seasonal Range Techs (Fire), GS-0455-03/04 (grade varies), to staff Engine 3233 during fire season. The project office has employed from 1 to 3 seasonal park rangers, GS-0025-03/04/05 (grade varies), dependent upon funding, to assist wilderness monitoring, patrol, and trail maintenance, and to lead a summer youth employment program (Nick's Interns, see below).

Due to funding shortfalls in FY 2014 no seasonal park rangers were hired to support wilderness management. One park ranger was hired with youth funding to lead the Nick's Interns summer youth employment program.

The Arcata Field Office supports King Range NCA management with extensive involvement of 23 permanent and 3 seasonal staff including Field Manager, Administrative Officer, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, Supervisory Law Enforcement Officer, Archaeologist, Geologist, Fisheries and Wildlife Biologists, Botanist/Range Conservationist, Fire Management Scientist, Civil Engineer, Realty Specialist, and seasonal Biological Technicians, among others, encompassing grades from GS-04 to GS-14. Percent of time

spent supporting King Range management ranges from as little as 5% up to 37%, and averages 20% as a whole for Arcata Field Office staff.

The King Range NCA budget in FY 2014 did not cover any labor for Arcata Field Office staff.

2 Planning and NEPA

Status of the Resource Management Plan

The Record of Decision for the King Range National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement was signed May 11, 2005.

Status of Activity Plans

The Decision Record for the King Range Wilderness & Rocks and Islands Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) was signed March 9, 2012. This is the first Wilderness Management Plan completed for BLM California.

The single largest WMP action is to establish visitor carrying capacities and implement a system to manage overnight visitor load in the King Range Wilderness. This system would, for the first time, limit overnight use in the King Range Wilderness by limiting the number of persons entering the wilderness to 60 persons per day. To implement this system a new individual Special Recreation Permit (SRP) requirement for overnight use in the King Range Wilderness is proposed. Concurrent with the individual SRP requirement, the BLM would enact a new fee schedule for overnight wilderness users. Currently no fee or management allocation exists for individual overnight use of the King Range Wilderness.

As authorized by Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA 2004), and directed by BLM Regulation (43 CFR 2930,) King Range staff prepared a Business Plan describing the proposal and presented it for public comment. The public comment period opened on August 2, 2013 and was extended twice, on September 9 until October 9 due to public interest, and again on October 9 until October 31 due to the government shutdown. A digital copy of the plan was posted on the Arcata Field Office/King Range website for public downloading, hardcopies of the plan were available at the King Range Project Office and Arcata Field Office, notices of plan availability were posted at all King Range facilities, and in the gateway communities of Redway, Garberville, Petrolia, Honeydew, Shelter Cove, and Whitethorn.

Postcards notifying interested parties of the proposal and availability of the Business Plan for public comment were sent to 695 individuals and groups. A letter and Business Plan flyer was sent to 53 outdoor retailers in California, Nevada, and Oregon. Presentations were given to the Northwest California Resource Advisory Committee and the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors. The Business Plan received wide coverage on local and regional print, radio, TV, and on-line media.

In total, 295 comments were received on the Business Plan. The King Range staff is currently analyzing public comments and drafting a final Business Plan that includes alternative permit and fee options for presentation to the California Recreation Resource Advisory Committee for consideration, approval, and implementation. King Range staff

have briefed the California State Director on the plan process, public involvement, and proposed alternatives.

Status of the RMP Implementation Strategy

The King Range NCA RMP Implementation Plan was completed in 2008. Key elements of the strategy are:

Establish carrying a capacity and implement a use allocation and permit system for overnight use in the King Range Wilderness. This element is currently in the process of being implemented, see above.

Design and construct the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail System. This element is currently in the process of being implemented. Three phases of this element have been completed. A fourteen mile loop trail was completed in 2008 and a 5 acre MTB-specific terrain park was constructed in 2010, both have been open to the public since completion. Construction of an additional 10 mile trail segment was also initiated in 2010. This segment was completed on the weekend of National Public Land Day, September 26-28, 2014, with a major volunteer trail building event that engaged the many partners who have supported this effort since the beginning with tireless volunteer labor and fund-raising efforts; the International Mountain Bicycling Association, the Redwood Coast Mountain Bike Association, the California Conservation Corps, and numerous local volunteers.

Construct low-gradient trails for greater access into the King Range Wilderness. Construction of the Hidden Valley Nature Trail is on-going, involving the efforts of community volunteers, Nick's Interns, and American Conservation Experience crews.

Maintain healthy, productive grasslands to encourage native species abundance and diversity, and to develop a landscape resistant to damage associated with large scale, high intensity fires by allowing for the natural dynamic effects of fire to occur on the ecosystem. See Prosper Ridge Prairie Plan, below.

Youth programs, mentoring and career development for rural, Southern Humboldt youth. King Range staff and the Nick's intern program successfully completed its 11th year of employing and mentoring local high school students, serving over 187 students since 2004.

King Range staff partner with the Lost Coast Interpretive Association (LCIA) and Southern Humboldt Youth Alive! (YA!) to provide Youth Alive! Outdoor Adventures (YA! OA) programs that offer mountain biking, backpacking, tidepooling, and other outdoor activities for local youth ages 11-19.

Key National Environmental Policy Act Actions and/or Project Authorizations

The Prosper Ridge Prairie Plan Environmental Assessment was prepared by Arcata FO and King Range staff in 2013. This plan proposes to treat 800 acres of coastal prairie that is rapidly being encroached upon by Douglas fir and other woody vegetation with a combination of mechanical means (cutting and piling, mastication, mechanical pulling),

pile burning, broadcast burning, seeding and planting plugs of locally sourced and propagated native perennial bunchgrasses. The objective of the plan is to promote ecological processes that would recover and maintain the extent of coastal prairie, an increasingly rare and fragmented plant community in California.

Public scoping identified both significant support for and opposition to the project. Numerous field trips, discussions with individuals, demonstrations, and public input strengthened the plan and EA. The draft plan was available to the public for comment from June 21 to August 9, 2013. The Decision Record was signed January 6, 2014, one appeal was filed January 23, 2014, and the appeal was dismissed on March 18, 2014. Implementation began with a small mechanical pulling project in late-March, with the enthusiastic participation of former plan opponents.

3 Year's Projects and Accomplishments

General Accomplishments

The Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail System, and the King Range & Rocks and Islands Wilderness were the focus of significant events and accomplishments for 2014

Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail System, Completion of Phase III: The Pacific Rim Trail

Early in 2014 the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) and Redwood Coast Mountain Bike Association (RCMBA) approached King Range staff with the idea of a volunteer "small army" approach to completing the final 1 ½ miles of trail needed to connect with the Paradise Royale loop. The concept of a large number of volunteers constructing trail for a focused weekend had been utilized successfully by other IMBA-affiliate clubs in the Lake Tahoe region and, collectively, King Range staff, IMBA, and RCMBA all agreed to try to pull off a "small army" event on the weekend of National Public Lands Day.

Flyer for the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail construction

The third phase of development of the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail System, the addition of a 10 mile connector trail to the original 14 mile loop, has been in progress since route-finding commenced in 2009, construction began in 2010 and lasted through 2011 when project funding was exhausted, despite directed trail-building funding of $600,000 from BLM and the in-kind contribution of $224,000 worth of trail-building labor from the California Conservation Corps.

The phase III segment, known as the **Pacific Rim Trail**, lies along a densely forested and previously un-roaded part of the west slope of Paradise Ridge, unlike the Paradise Royale the majority of which was constructed on decommissioned road beds, a shaded fuel break, and short segments of abandoned logging skid trails. Challenged by the dense forest and rugged topography establishing a route took a full year of scouting and serial bushwhacking with extensive GPS and GIS analysis; trail corridor clearing by King Range Fire crew and the CCC, and a combination of machine-built and hand-built construction teams completed all but 1 ½ miles of trail but rapidly exhausted project and contributed funding. Thus the project sat for two years as funding sources had dried up.

The trail remaining to be constructed, at 1 ½ miles and approximately 20 switchbacks on 50-80% slopes, absolutely required a machine-built effort by a mini-excavator and Sweco trail dozer team. A small amount of one-time funding ($10,000) was available in 2014 with which to fund a machine-build effort. A fund-raising effort by local mountain bike enthusiasts raised another $3,500. With a volunteer commitment and a small bit of funding a plan was hatched: a machine-building team composed of IMBA's Trail Solutions Specialist and the King Range's equipment operator would operate a rented mini-excavator and BLM's Sweco trail dozer to construct the 20 switchbacks in the three weeks before the NPLD weekend event, scratching out a rough trail as they walked the equipment between switchbacks; the "small army" of NPLD volunteers would hand-finish and fine tune the roughed-in trail over the weekend of September 26, 27, and 28.

Equipment was mobilized and the machines were moving dirt and making trail at the end of the second week of September. Supported logistically and operationally by King Range and Arcata Field Office staff the team worked diligently through the weeks and weekends leading up to the NPLD event, using all available daylight, and headlamps, to finally make the connection to the Paradise Royale at dusk on Friday the 26th, just in time for the mobilization of the small army the next morning.

Organizing the small army was accomplished by the RCMBA/IMBA/BLM team. Redwood Coast organized the publicity and outreach, and developed a promotional video and event website for information and registering volunteers, as well as committing to hosting the Saturday night barbecue, and beer. IMBA "original" Michael Kelly coordinated with IMBA staff and affiliated clubs around California to recruit volunteers from afar. BLM staff adapted the Incident Command System (ICS) to produce an Incident Action Plan to organize and manage the event. The volunteer draw was sweetened by a local pro MTB racer who organized a raffle of $1,000, $500, and $250 gift certificates from three local bike shops; all volunteers signing up for the small army became eligible for the drawing. Free camping for all volunteers was provided at the King Range NCA's Tolkan

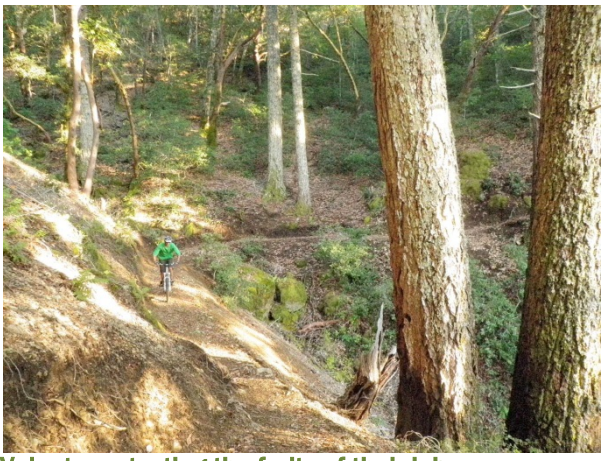
Campground. Also the site of the Tolkan MTB Terrain Park, Tolkan Campground became the command center, and barbecue and party central for the weekend-long event.

By mid-week IMBA and RCMBA volunteers with IAP roles began arriving and were quickly mobilized into supporting the machine-build team. By Thursday night small army volunteers began trickling in and were put to work on Friday morning. Come Saturday morning the small army was more than 60 volunteers, all briefed at 9:00am and on their bikes and riding the 4 miles to the staging area by 9:30am. Picking up their tools at the staging area they set to work on the new trail and labored enthusiastically well past the planned 4:30pm quitting time to get that last little bit of fine-tuning completed before heading back to Tolkan campground in time for the barbecue and party at 6:30. Come Sunday morning the process was repeated. By mid-Sunday afternoon 1 ½ miles of trail were hand-finished and fine-tuned and much of the small army was testing their work on their mountain bikes. A truly fantastic collaboration by BLM, RCMBA, IMBA, countless local MTB enthusiasts and dedicated and tireless work by all involved made it possible; we added another 10 miles of world-class trail to an already world-class trail system, now 24 miles of world class, awesomely scenic, and sustainable, trails with something for every rider.

The Sweco trail dozer building trail between switchbacks

A “squad” from the “small army” fine-tuning a switchback

Volunteers take a break from hand-finishing a switchback



Volunteers tasting the fruits of their labors

At the end of the day, the Pacific Rim Trail is aptly named.

Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail System Bridges:

Deferred maintenance funding was provided to construct two bridges on the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail System in the two locations where the trail crosses the South Fork of Bear Creek. The primary purpose of the bridges was to protect critical habitat for Chinook, Coho, and Steelhead, three federally-listed species with documented spawning redds in and around the trail's creek crossings. Although rocky portages were constructed to facilitate mountain bikers carrying their bikes across the creek, multiple years of operational experience with the trail system had shown that many riders could not resist the challenge of riding across the gravels when possible during low water periods, putting eggs and fry at risk.

The bridges will also allow year-around use of the trail system, particularly during clear weather breaks in the November to May rainy season, when the normally loose trail surface soils of the dry season are compacted by rain, become damp and tacky, and are referred to as "hero dirt" to mountain bikers for its superior traction. Without the bridges, rainy season access has been sharply limited due to extended periods of high water in South Fork Bear Creek, making creek crossings hazardous, if not impossible.

A contract was awarded to McCullough Construction of McKinleyville, CA, who had prior experience in construction of the pre-fabricated fiberglass bridges specified for this application. A unique teaming agreement with McCullough, BLM and the California Conservation Corps (CCC), who had agreed to donate $28,000 of crew labor to transport the bridge components over the mountain bike trail from trailhead locations, enabled the project to be implemented in a very cost-effective manner and with minimal disturbance from heavy equipment and materials transport over the existing mountain bike trail. Construction began August 18, and despite CCC's heavy commitment to provide crews to staff the many wildfires around northern California at the time, a CCC crew transported thousands of bridge components, weighing up to 100 pounds each, 1 mile from the trailhead staging areas, on foot, over a ten day period to stage the bridge materials at the project sites, keeping all components sorted and properly segregated.

Once bridge components were staged on site(s), bridge assembly proceeded at an urgent pace, the completion the bridges having become a key factor for the access of the "small army" of trail-building volunteers to the NPLD project site. Working overtime, through the weekend before NPLD, and battling an early-season rainstorm McCullough Construction crews completed the last and most critical bridge and demobilized their equipment from the site on the Friday afternoon of the NPLD event.

Truly, a convergence of synergistic events expanding, and improving access to the Paradise Royale MBT Trail System transpired in 2014.

Bridges over the South Fork Bear Creek protect spawning gravels and dramatically improve all-year access for mountain bikers, hikers, and equestrians.

King Range & Rocks and Islands Wilderness

Wilderness 50th Anniversary Celebrations

King Range staff organized and participated in seven separate Wilderness 50th Anniversary community events. BLM staff provided wilderness information and opportunities to the public, including a Wilderness 50th Art Show at Umpqua Bank in Arcata, CA. Capping off the Wilderness 50th Anniversary Celebration, the King Range staff helped plan and implement, and BLM co-sponsored, the first annual Shelter Cove Plein Air Art Festival with the Shelter Cove Arts and Recreation Foundation. Forty Four artists participated producing over one hundred pieces of art featuring both the King Range and Rocks and Islands

Wilderness, and the California Coastal National Monument. All pieces were publically displayed at the festival and a public auction.

Wilderness 50th Art show in Arcata, CA

Plein Air Art Festival, Shelter Cove, CA

Wilderness Volunteers

Wilderness Volunteers (WV) returned to the King Range for a week long volunteer service project (April 20-26). This year's project included coastal prairie restoration by removing Douglas-fir trees invading the prairies on Oat Ridge, and marine debris cleanup along Black Sands Beach section of the Lost Coast Trail. Twelve volunteers represented WV on this year's project. Together we worked on Oat Ridge for four days and one day along Black Sands Beach.

Wilderness Volunteers Accomplishments:

- Oat Ridge Coastal Prairie Restoration
    - 20 Acres Treated
    - 2,600 trees removed <4" diameter
    - 430 trees removed 4" to 8" diameter
    - 20 trees removed > 8" diameter
- 90 lbs of marine debris removed from Black Sands Beach
- 600 volunteer service hours donated from WV

In preparation for the Wilderness Volunteers project twelve volunteers from the Gateway Mountain Center hauled drinking water to the dry camp on the Oat Ridge worksite on April 16, 2014 for future use by the Wilderness Volunteers working on the conifer treatment project. The Gateway Mountain Center volunteers hauled 52 gallons of water to the site.

Wilderness Volunteers on Oat Ridge.

Wilderness Volunteers Basecamp Breakfast.

Gateway Mountain Center volunteers take a lunch break at the Oat Ridge worksite.

NLCS Youth Corps

An American Conservation Experience (ACE) crew spent a total of 2,842 hours consisting of 16 individuals performing trail maintenance on wilderness trails in the King Range. They brushed and cleared heavy vegetation along 3.5 miles of trail, and cleared fallen trees on an additional 9 miles of trail. ACE also built rock steps for a stream crossing on the Hidden Valley Interpretive Trail.

Before and after, King Crest Trail cleared of heavy vegetation along King Peak Loop

An ACE crew member works on rock steps for a stream crossing on the Hidden Valley Trail

Additional Work Accomplished by King Range staff and volunteers in the King Range Wilderness:

- 116 Fire rings destroyed
- 36 Fire rings contained
- 110 toilet paper piles buried
- 47 feces buried
- 7 shelters destroyed
- 228 pounds of visitor trash removed from the wilderness
- 2 miles of trail was brushed and 5.2 miles of trail cleared of fallen trees by BLM staff and volunteers

Two volunteer wilderness rangers maintained trails and improved naturalness in the King Range Wilderness. Their service greatly improved the wilderness experiences for many visitors and provided services the small King Range staff wouldn't otherwise be able to provide.

One load of the 228 pounds of visitor trash removed from the King Range wilderness

King Range Native Perennial Bunchgrass Project

BLM has been working with Mattole Restoration Council (MRC) to inventory and map, collect local seed and propagate plugs to enhance the native, perennial component of existing grasslands and remediate disturbed grassland sites with native perennial bunchgrasses since 2008. In FY 2014, MRC planted 23,517 native grass plugs, equivalent to 47 native grass colonies of 500 plants each, on Paradise Ridge in the King Range NCA. Six different species were planted this year including purple needlegrass (Stipa pulchra), California melic (*Melica californica*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria macranta*), Pacific hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa* ssp*. holciformis*), and California oatgrass (*Danthonia Californica*). Further, seed of California mountain brome (*Bromus californica*) and blue wild rye (*Elymus glaucus*), which are colonizer species, are collected and seed increased and are available to sow following fire, or heavy equipment disturbance, for example.

Left: November 2014 plug planting. Right: Hugh McGee, MRC, showcasing successful 2013 reproductive plantings of purple needlegrass.

Invasive, Non-Native Plants

BLM has been working with MRC in the King Range to inventory, patrol, prevent, treat, eradicate, and monitor for invasive, non-native plants that threaten at risk healthy, functioning waterways, open and productive grasslands, and coastal dune ecosytems. Forested systems are intact and uninvaded at this time. For 2014, primary invasive, non-

native plant target species include Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) surveillance, and 6,000 acres of manual inspection and re-treatment of Cape ivy (*Delairea odorata*) gopher weed (*Euphorbia lathyris*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), French broom (*Genista monspessulana*), tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobeae*), pampas grass (*Cortaderia jubata/selloana*), malta starthistle (*Centaurea melitensis*), and European beachgrass (*Ammophila arenaria*) was completed. Our coordinated partnership has led to two early detection rapid response eradication successes including complete eradication of yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) adjacent to the Mattole Estuary, and a new infestation of European beachgrass at Mattole Beach. MRC leverages treatment efforts through use of Nick's interns, Americorps, and other highschool and community volunteer programs. BLM and MRC are both active members of the Humboldt County Weed Management Area and coordinates treatment efforts and priorities for control across the greater, county-wide region.

MRC directed Nick's interns pulling tansy ragwort in the area of HJ Ridge.

Prosper Ridge Prairie Restoration

In 2014 the BLM began implementation of the Prosper Ridge Prairie Plan, a comprehensive plan for removing woody vegetation including coyote brush and Douglas-fir that is encroaching on historic coastal prairies.

Through a cooperative partnership with the Mattole Restoration Council (MRC) the BLM was able to treat over 120 acres using both personnel and equipment to remove brush and small diameter firs from coastal prairies around Strawberry Rock and Windy Point. The material that was removed has been piled into burn piles to be burned in 2015.

The Prosper Ridge Prairie Plan was developed by an interdisciplinary group of resource specialists

working extensively with community members to develop a plan that met a complex set of restoration goals, while alleviating concerns over the use of fire a restoration tool.

Coastal, perennial grasslands are a valuable ecosystem type that has been in decline since the 1950's largely as a result of statewide fire suppression policies, and to a lesser extent, overall reduced levels of livestock grazing. Conservation of native, perennial bunchgrass species communities is a priority for this project, and locally collected and propagated native plant materials are used to enhance native species composition as ground is disturbed during the recovery process.

Baker Creek Stream Improvement Project: Working in partnership with Sanctuary Forest, the Mattole Salmon Group and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the BLM completed a third year of project implementation. The project's objectives were borne out of the recognition that summer streamflows in the Mattole River are becoming an increasingly limiting factor for salmon and steelhead production. Community-led efforts to address residential water withdrawals have been effective at reducing the demands on summer water supplies, but cannot address the many issues that threaten water supplies and fish health in the watershed. In response, the Baker Creek project aims to increase groundwater storage by leveraging the geomorphic conditions found in the upper watershed. By adding large woody debris, BLM and its cooperators hope to raise adjacent water tables while simultaneously improving instream fish habitat. A network of monitoring wells was installed to help project proponents assess the effectiveness of the efforts.

Observing the performance of log weirs designed to raise the adjacent water table and provide fish habitat in Baker Creek.

Other Accomplishments by King Range Project Office Staff:

Wilderness:

- 2,221 individual Wilderness Permits issued, 6,040 persons under permit, spent 20,948 visitor days in the King Range Wilderness.
- 16 commercial SRPs issued, 14 organized group SRPs issued, total 628 persons under permit, spent 2,804 visitor days.
- Total King Range Wilderness permitted visitation: 6,668 persons, 23,752 visitor-days
- Wilderness Acres Monitored: 30,000 acres
- Wilderness Trails Maintained: 19 miles
- Mountain Bike Trails Maintained: 14 miles

Special Recreation Permits

- 2 Commercial Shuttle Permits
- 2 Fund-raising events at Mal Coombs Park, 5 site rentals (birthday parties, weddings, memorials)
- 18 Commercial Outfitters/Wilderness Adventure/Educational Outfitters
- 20 Organized Group SRPs

King Range Office Visitation

- King Range Project Office Visitors: 1,869 walk-in visitors, 1,426 telephone inquiries
- 511 Bear canisters rented, 438 King Range Maps sold

Current Areas of Focus

Major areas of focus in 2014 were implementation of the King Range RMP and the King Range & Rocks and Islands WMP: completing the Pacific Rim Trail segment of the Paradise Royale MTB Trail System; Wilderness 50th Celebrations; on-the-ground wilderness management and operations; the on-going proposal to implement an allocation, permit, and fee in the King Range Wilderness and the accompanying Business Plan process and public participation required; managing on-going youth education, involvement, mentoring, and employment programs.

The primary source of disturbance continues to be new and increasing public uses of the King Range Wilderness. Visitation to the King Range Wilderness increased significantly again in 2014. The number of permitted overnight visitors increased by 20% over the previous highest use levels, in 2011. Oddly, the number of self-reported visitor-days of use from the same permits only increased by 6% over 2011 levels, to 23, 752 user-days within the King Range Wilderness. The on-going user allocation/permit/fee proposal is intended to address this issue.

A relatively new phenomena, unpermitted video productions featuring the King Range NCA and Wilderness, were discovered on-line by King Range staff in 2014. As of the end of 2014 5 video productions were known to have been produced, at least in part, inside the King Range Wilderness. None of the film producers obtained permits, nor contacted BLM prior to film production. These films include: a 90 minute feature film by Slowboat Productions (based in Germany) entitled *Lost Coast*, and self-described as part of the "slow film movement"; a video commercial advertising Black Hawk Paramotor (motorized paragliders) shows extensive video of motorized paragliders flying over the King Range Wilderness and along the coast, frequently within inches of the ground; two videos, one by Gear Junkie sponsored by Yakima, one by the Live Well Network, both showing backpackers hiking through King Range Wilderness engaging in unnecessary and risky behavior (presumably exciting for the intended audience), close encounters with wildlife, and prominent product placement throughout the video; a film featuring riders on the Paradise Royale MTB Trail System on the website of the MTB Magazine *Free Hub*. The commonality of these productions is none contacted the BLM before filming nor obtained film permits, and their commercial intent and/or prominent product placement.

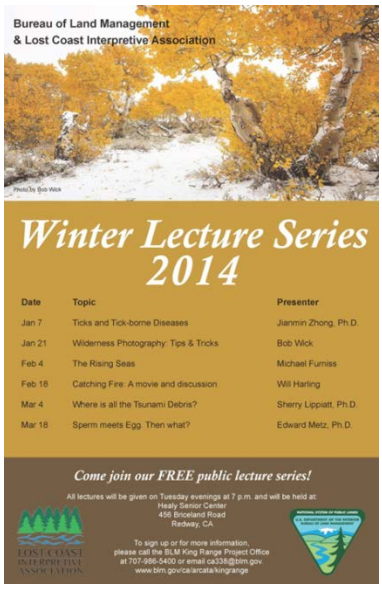
BLM Law Enforcement staff have contacted Slowboat Productions, Yakima Gear Junkie, and Black Hawk Paramotor and, after extensive discussion, concluded there was no "knowing and willful" conduct by these entities. California State Office Recreation and Lands staff are seeking Solicitor input into the issue, and working on a standard, state-wide, first contact letter of potential trespass with which to make future contact with video producers.

A production on the *Gizmodo* website surfaced in late-2014, again featuring prominent product placement and advertisement, questionable and risky behavior, and the King Range Wilderness. We expect this trend to continue to keep the exciting, dangerous, and beautiful King Range Wilderness prominent in the backpacking public attention.

Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

Summer Hikes: This program offered five hikes (one was rescheduled for Spring 2015) throughout the summer for the general public. Topics included: tidepool ecology, animal tracking, Leave No Trace, exploring the Lost Coast via sea kayaking, and natural history. There were approximately 55 participants.

Winter Lecture Series: This program offered six lectures throughout the winter for the



general public. Topics included: mushrooms, ticks, wilderness photography, climate change, prescribed fire, tsunami debris, and evolutionary development. There were approximately 100 participants.

Left: Animal Scat, Tracks, and signs. Right: Leave No Trace for the Wilderness.

Tidepools & Seastar Wasting Disease (Researchers from UC Santa Cruz spoke with the public)

Hands on the Land: The King Range NCA is a Hands on the Land site. The Lost Coast Environmental Education Resource (LCEER) is a curricula that is designed specifically to be place-based for southern Humboldt K-6 grade students. LCEER has monthly themes with correlating lessons for each grade level, building on student's cognitive development and

prior knowledge as they progress through school. Topics include: science inquiry, rivers and oceans, archaeology and culture, geology, ecology, interrelationships, processes, energy, and watersheds. Environmental educators provide in-class lessons, plus benchmark fieldtrips are available for each grade and are designed to complement and build on the above classroom lessons. These will include, but not be limited to, activities such as invasive species removal, native plant propagation and planting, water quality monitoring, tidepool exploration, estuary activities, animal tracking, aquatic macroinvertebrate observation, and native plant identification. There were approximately 3,000 participants in all Hands on the Land programming.

Tidepool fieldtrip with Redway Elementary School

Phytoplankton monitoring is another component of our Hands on the Land site and in partnership with South Fork High School's Marine Biology class to provide a service-learning opportunity for high school students.

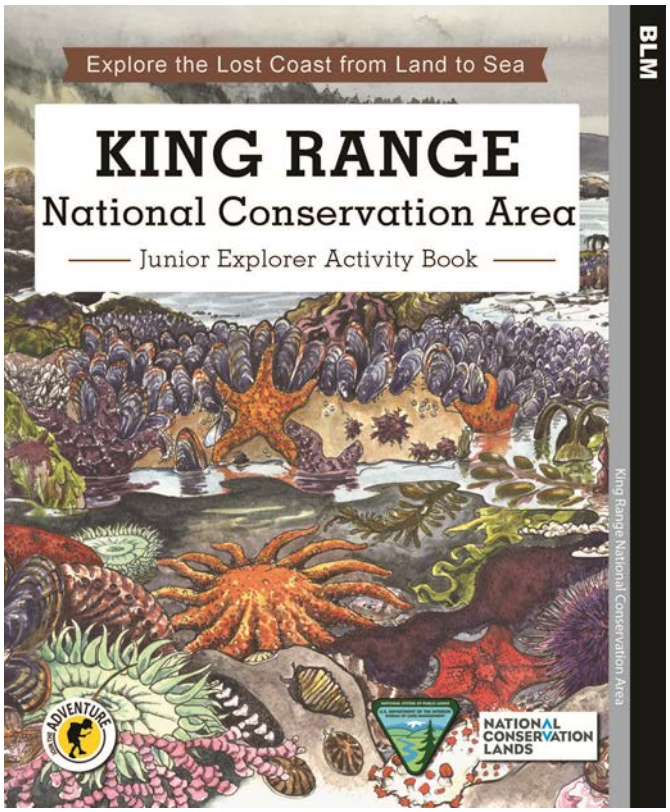
Phytoplankton monitoring fieldtrip with South Fork High School

King Range NCA staff partnered with the Mattole Restoration Council and Mattole School to create signs for the protection of coastal prairies. Students learned about the importance of coastal prairies in class and on fieldtrips, then created signs to encourage the public to protect them.

Prosper Ridge prairie fieldtrip with Mattole School

Prosper Ridge prairie protection signs created by Mattole School & Mattole Restoration Council

Junior Explorer Activity Book: The goal of the Junior Explorer program is to encourage awareness of the BLM and public land stewardship, and instruct in the natural and social sciences. The Arcata Field Office Junior Explorer booklets will help further the education/interpretive goals of the King Range National Conservation Area, California Coastal National Monument, and Headwaters Forest Reserve. These three booklets were worked on in collaboration throughout the FY13 and will be produced in FY14.



Partnerships

CCNM Lost Coast Gateway: The Gateway decided a strategic plan wasn't necessary for this group and would prefer to work on specific projects. The group established quarterly meetings and outlined a list of future projects (e.g. native plant workshop for Spring 2014, invasive species awareness program, and additional trails).

Lost Coast Interpretive Association (LCIA): BLM has been partnering with LCIA to provide the Lost Coast Environmental Education Resource to local elementary students, public hikes and lectures, and outdoor recreation activities. BLM has also been working collaboratively to develop the Lost Coast Education Center.

Mattole Restoration Council (MRC): The BLM has been partnering with MRC since the 1980's; we're currently working with MRC on the King Range Native Perennial Bunchgrass project, Prosper Ridge Prairie Plan implementation, as well as with a coordinated invasive, non-native weed management program.

Mattole Salmon Group (MSG): The BLM has been partnering with the MSG since the 1980's; currently we're partnering with MSG on the implementation of the 5-year Mattole Estuary Restoration Plan, and long-running programs of salmonid spawner surveys, down-stream migrant trapping, summer steelhead surveys, and habitat enhancement and restoration, including the Baker Creek Stream Improvement Project.

Nick's Interns: This program serves local high school students in southern Humboldt County by offering three-week, full-time paid summer internships with the BLM, Mattole Restoration Council, Mattole Salmon Group, and Sanctuary Forest. In 2004, Ray and Marie Raphael founded Nick's Interns in memory of their son. Nick started his career working outdoors in high school with several local non-profit conservation organizations and the BLM before graduating from Humboldt State University with a forestry degree. Today, this program works with the same organizations that inspired Nick, offering local youth the opportunity to work directly with natural resource professionals. Since its inception, Nick's Interns has employed 187 local youth, with 18 hired in 2014. Projects this year included: streamflow monitoring, mountain bike trail maintenance, campsite maintenance, Leave No Trace training and teaching, Prosper Ridge prairie sign installation, Hidden Valley prairie thinning and interpretive trail construction, community garden maintenance, steelhead monitoring, trash cleanup, native seed collecting, trail and campsite maintenance in Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, and Southern Humboldt Community Park brushing.

Before and After: campsite maintenance in Sinkyone Wilderness State Park

Left: Campsite maintenance. Right: Native seed collection

Redwood Coast Mountain Bike Trail Association: Formerly known as the Big Foot Bike Club, Redwood Coast has partnered with the King Range NCA since 2002 to develop a system of mountain biking trails in the King Range NCA. Redwood Coast has hosted many volunteer

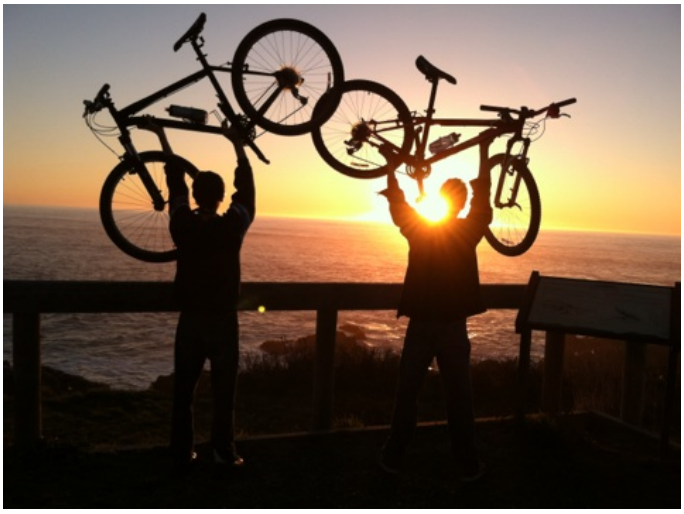
work events on the Paradise Royale MTB Trail System throughout the years on National Public Lands Day, National Trails Day, and at other times when needed. They played a critical and key role in the "small army" event in September 2014.

Youth Alive! Outdoor Adventures: This program provides engaging activities and opportunities to build relationships with positive adult role models. This mission is accomplished through three themes: Community, Arts, and Outdoor Adventures. Recognizing that even rural youth can suffer from Nature Deficient Disorder, Youth Alive! Outdoor Adventures provides free outdoor activities (e.g. mountain biking, backpacking, tidepooling) for youth ages 11-19 that promote stewardship of our natural resources. All equipment and food are provided for each activity. If individuals or families would like to donate toward an activity they may do so, thus offsetting the cost of other teens that many not have the ability to pay. Youth Alive! Outdoor Adventures is a coalition of government, non-profit, and community volunteers that meet monthly. Activities this year included: mountain biking, tidepooling, white water rafting, hiking, and Leave No Trace workshop. There were approximately 100 participants.

Left: Leave No Trace Workshop Right: Hiking in Sinkyone Wilderness State Park

Hiking to King Peak to watch sunset and moonrise

Whale Gulch School: We partnered with the school to provide a weekly mountain bike club for students. BLM provides an initial safety training meeting, equipment, and a place to ride to develop their skills on the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail and Tolkan Terrain Park.



Volunteers

Tamiscal High School: This was their ninth year volunteering in the King Range NCA. There were 30 volunteers that spent an entire day hauling rock on the new section of the Hidden Valley Interpretive Trail.

Tamiscal High School building the Hidden Valley Interpretive Trail

Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions

There were no land acquisitions or interests in lands activities for the King Range National Conservation Area completed in fiscal year 2014.

4 Science

Science

Population Structure of Steelhead in Coastal California, NOAA Fisheries:

In 2014 the NOAA Fisheries conducted a follow-up study to a 2001 genetic analysis of the steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss)* in California coastal watersheds, including Big Creek in the King Range Wilderness. In 2001, NOAA Fisheries undertook an extensive study of steelhead population genetics to better understand the relationships among different populations and breeding groups. Tissue samples were collected from young-of-the-year steelhead at 60 sites in 40 different watersheds from Morro Bay to the Smith River in northern Californias. This study was replicated in 2014; King Range Wilderness staff provided transportation, logistical and operational support.

The key results from the 2001 study and potential management implications were as follows:

(1) In general, populations in the northern part of the steelhead's California range generally showed higher genetic diversity (i.e., more different forms of each gene) than those in the southern part of the range.
(2) The genetic evidence indicates that steelhead populations exhibit both strong structuring (i.e., populations can be distinguished from one another based on their genetic make-up), but also that interaction among populations occurs with regularity, i.e., the "genetic distance" between populations is related to the geographic distance between populations
(3) The relationships between populations from the same watershed were mixed. In some cases, populations from tributaries were no more closely related to each other than to populations from neighboring watersheds that enter the Pacific Ocean. In other cases, within-basin populations were more similar to each other than to neighboring populations
(4) At a large scale, there were clearly defined geographic breaks between groups of coastal populations, indicating lower flow of genes across these breaks. These breaks often coincide with sections of the coastline that lack larger watersheds (for example, the area just north of the Russian River, and the Lost Coast (King Range Wilderness) area of southern Humboldt County) or other major geographic features such as San Francisco Bay. In most cases, these breaks are consistent with the current "distinct population segment" boundaries, but there instances where additional data are needed to determine if the patterns observed are stable through time or may have been influenced by recent hatchery activities.

NOAA Fisheries researchers survey Big Creek in the King Range Wilderness in 2014.

Understanding how steelhead populations are structured is important for conservation and management of species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. Most importantly, understanding how populations and breeding groups interact is critical in determining the appropriate biological units for conservation. Detailed genetic analysis is not yet complete, but field observations during sampling in 2014 found that, in general, young-of-the-year (YOY) fish in Big Creek were larger than YOY fish surveyed anywhere else in the state.

Taxonomic analysis of coastal *Erysimum menziesii* and its near relatives:

Linda Vorobik and Danica Harbaugh Reynaud of University of Jepson Herbaria and University of California Berkeley conducted a taxonomic analysis of coastal *Erysimum menziesii* (federally endangered) and its near relatives. Approximately 60K was provided by the Arcata Field Office with one-time threatened and endangered plant funding. The King Range hosts a discreet coastal bluff/upper beach population of wallflower that is currently named *Erysimum concinnum. E. concinnum* has also been named a subspecies of *E. menziesii* in varying floras. While its morphological characteristics and ecological characteristics seem distinct, the current genetic research shows a tight relationship to the federally listed Humboldt Bay wallflower (*Erysimum menziesii subsp. eurekense*).

With this study, morphological, ecological and genetic sampling and analysis has been completed across all costal populations from Monterey to southern Oregon, with 20 samples taken from each population. The results reveal that a revised taxonomic treatment is warranted that reflects the lineages as indicated by genetic sampling, taking into account habitat preferences, obvious morphological differences, and lack of morphological intermediates between populations. Genetics strongly reveal that there is no support for *E. concinnum* as a separate taxon from *E. menziesii*; and, populations referred to as *Erysimum menziesii* subsp. *eurekense* is a separate lineage from *E. menziesii*, with no genetic evidence from this study that separates the King Range population from the Humboldt Bay lineage.

The new suggested taxonomic treatment, pending publishing, would ascribe new names to the Humboldt County plants formerly described under the *E. menziesii* complex. In the proposed taxonomy Vorobik suggests plants from Humboldt County are treated as *E. eurekense* (previously considered to be *E. menziesii* subsp. *eurekense*) and *E. eurekense* subsp. *robusta* (King Range plants previously considered to be *E. concinnum*). Once finalized and published, the US Department of Fish and Wildlife would need to evaluate any status change to the King Range wallflower population based on its close genetic and evolutionary lineage relationship to the federally listed Humboldt Bay wallflower.

Figure 8. King Range, Humboldt Co. Plants previously referred to as *Erysimum concinnum*.

D. (Above) Late season inflorescence.

E. (Above) Basal rosette of leaves to left showing lobed and wavy margin;lack of distinct petiole. Closeup of vestiture on right.

F. Above) Closeup of developing fruits showing pedicels and angle of fruits with stem.

B. (Above) *Erysimum* plants in coastal prairie habitat.

A. (Below) *Erysimum* population in coastal prairie habitat.

G. Below) Developing fruits with pencil for scale.

Photos from draft final report on *Erysimum menziesii* taxonomic analysis of *Erysimum concinnum* to be possibly reclassified as *Erysimum eurekense* subsp. *robusta* with potential ramifications for federal endangered species listing.

Graduate Student Research: The geologically active King Range provides a great laboratory for examining the earth's physical processes. Along the Mattole River, for example, river terraces tell a story of rapid uplift of the earth's crust, sea level fluctuations and an ever changing river environment. Partnering with the Humboldt State University Geology Department, a graduate student is examining these river terraces to better understand the geomorphic evolution of the watershed and how these ongoing changes affect the aquatic ecosystem and our efforts to restore them.

Students augering an exploratory hole to describe the subsurface characteristics of a stream terrace.

5 Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

Wilderness

The King Range Wilderness at 56,167 acres is the largest coastal wilderness in the contiguous United States, encompassing more than 35 miles of wilderness coastline. The King Range Wilderness comprises more than 2/3 of total King Range NCA acreage.

Wilderness Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Mostly stable, however, the wilderness quality of solitude declines as visitation increases.

Wilderness Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
56,167	56,167	56,167	30,000

Stressors Affecting Wilderness

In 2014 the King Range discovered and documented five un-permitted commercial films that were recorded on public lands of the King Range (see discussion under **significant disturbances,** above).

Increasing wilderness visitation is the major stressor affecting this resource as California population approaches 40 million. Wilderness visitation to the King Range Wilderness increased 78% between 2006 and 2011. Although increases in visitation leveled off in 2012 and 2013, the visitation increased significantly again in 2014; the number of permitted overnight visitors increased by 20% over the previous highest use levels, in 2011. Oddly, the number of self-reported visitor-days of use from the same permits increased by only 6% over 2011 levels, to 23,752 user-days within the King Range Wilderness.

Although relatively large at 42,625 acres with over 80 miles of wilderness trail system, most use of the King Range Wilderness is focused on approximately 1,200 acres along the Lost Coast Trail. Steep topography, dense vegetation, narrow coastal terraces, and the Pacific Ocean make it virtually impossible to travel outside of the coastal corridor. Most visitors backpacking along the coastal section camp overnight near creeks where water sources are available and hikers can safely camp above high tides. Lost Coast Trail users frequently congregate in a few specific locations due to limited camping sites, average

hiking distances, and tidal conditions. In 2014, approx. 90% of the 23,752 visitor days took place on these 1,200 acres.

The proposed wilderness permit and allocation program described above will attempt to address the ever-increasing visitation to the King Range Wilderness, limiting the number of entries into the wilderness to 60 persons per day.

Hikers congregate above high tide at Buck Creek in the King Range Wilderness.

Recreation

The King Range NCA is well-known for its diverse recreation opportunities. Wilderness recreation opportunities include hiking and backpacking on the 85 mile wilderness trail system accessed by 10 wilderness trailheads, surf fishing, tide pooling, wildlife viewing, and surfing a world-class wilderness surf spot. Front country recreation includes camping opportunities at 6 developed campgrounds, group gatherings at two designated group-use sites, back road touring on 40+ miles of BLM system road, tide pooling, abalone diving, fishing and coastal access at 6 developed coastal access sites, mountain biking for all skill levels on the nationally-recognized Paradise Royale MTB trail system and terrain park.

Mountain bikers enjoy the Paradise Royal Mountain Bike trail system

Recreation Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good, fair, poor, etc. Status is based solely upon the acres found to possess the object or value.	Improving, stable, declining, etc. Trend is based solely upon the acres found to possess the object or value.

Recreation Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
56,167	56,167	56,167	56,167

Stressors Affecting Recreation

Steadily increasing demand for recreation opportunities, increasing state population, increases in vandalism concomitant with increasing use, and shrinking budgets put high levels of stress on King Range recreation resources, facilities, and staff. King Range and Arcata FO staff have developed high quality facilities and programs meeting public expectations over the last two decades, which are now increasing difficult to maintain and deliver. Time, and a corrosive marine environment, monsoonal rainfall, high seismicity, increasing public use and vandalism necessitate a high maintenance workload at the same time as declining budgets have forced a reduction in maintenance staff by 50%. Deferring routine maintenance enhances the deleterious effects of the other stressors.

Watersheds

The King Range NCA contains several watersheds that provide habitat for a number of important aquatic resources. Notably, the Mattole River contains three species of listed salmonids. The several watersheds draining the western sloped of the King Range also provide habitat for steelhead trout. In addition to supporting a diverse aquatic biota, the Mattole River and its tributaries also provide water for numerous rural residences scattered throughout the watershed. The various watersheds comprising the King Range are a mosaic of undisturbed, old-growth forests and heavily altered forest and grassland landscapes. Research suggests these forest alterations, mainly from past logging and road construction, are significantly impacting the hydrologic regime of the Mattole River.

Watersheds Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Fair	Declining to improving. In general, upslope sediment conditions have improved with ongoing upslope restoration efforts while instream flow conditions continue to deteriorate due to vegetative and climate changes.

Watersheds Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
Total number of acres in unit	Number of acres inventoried for object or value	Number of acres found to possess object or value	Number of acre monitored (of those possessing object or value)

Stressors Affecting Watersheds

Three principal stressors are at play in the King Range NCA relative to watershed conditions. First, sedimentation from rural development continues to impact downstream reaches. While the sources are not on public lands, the impacts can be seen throughout the watersheds in the King Range NCA, most notably the Mattole River. However, ongoing restoration efforts have reduced the magnitude of this stressor. Second, changed vegetation patterns are likely having a significant influence on the hydrologic regime in the Mattole River. These vegetative changes are most likely due to past logging activities and altered fire regimes. Long term records show a steady decline in late summer streamflows. These low flows are becoming an increasing stressor for aquatic species in the watershed. Finally, climate change is a critical stressor in the King Range NCA. These changes influence the hydrologic regime and vegetation of the King Range which, in turn, is reflected in the magnitude and frequency of streamflows. Long term streamflow monitoring indicates that many of the lowest flows recorded in the Mattole River have occurred in the last decade.

Lower Mattole River showing the cumulative effects of increased sedimentation and low streamflows.

Fisheries

The King Range NCA hosts several species of state and federally listed fish: Chinook and coho salmon and steelhead trout. Most notably, the Mattole River is the southernmost extent of the Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast coho salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit and is a key population for the recovery of the species. However, coho salmon abundance has declined precipitously in the last decade and adult population estimates are well below 100 individuals and far less that what is required for a stable population. The BLM and its partners continue to focus much effort on the restoration and monitoring of coho salmon.

Fisheries Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Fair	Stable, some improving, some declining. Coho salmon continue to decline in abundance while chinook and steelhead abundance may be stable or increasing. Unknown status for steelhead along the western slopes of the King Range.

Fisheries Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
56,167	56,167	56,167	25,000

Stressors Affecting Fisheries

Stressors influencing fish populations in the King Range NCA are identical to those previously described for watershed conditions. Increasingly low summer streamflows due to a combination of past logging, sedimentation, vegetative changes and climate change are impacting juvenile fish. Sedimentation from past and ongoing activities directly impacts instream fish habitat. BLM continues to work with partner groups in the watershed to address these issues of water scarcity and habitat degradation.

BLM staff working with state and federal agencies and partner groups capturing and relocating juvenile coho salmon in a drying stream reach in the upper Mattole River.

BLM and partner groups working on a project in Baker Creek to both restore groundwater and streamflows and improve fish habitat.

6 Summary of Performance Measure

Resources, Objects, and Values Status Summary Table		
Resource, Object, or Value	**Status**	**Trend**
Wilderness	Good	Stable, potential for decline
Recreation	Good	Stable, potential for decline
Watershed	Fair	Stable but adversely affected by California's on-going drought, classified by NOAA as "Exceptional" in 2014.
Fisheries	Fair	Stable but adversely affected by California's on-going drought, classified by NOAA as "Exceptional" in 2014.

7 Manager's Letter

As always, it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of the King Range Project Office and Arcata Field Office team that stewards the nation's first National Conservation Area. Helping also to make it happen at the King Range NCA are some amazing partners, and 2014 was an especially rich year that showcased all that we can accomplish with our wonderful partners.

The completion of the third phase of development of the Paradise Royale MTB Trail System was a prime example of the power of partnerships. The long-term stick-to-it-ness of IMBA and RCMBA, the generous crew donations from the CCC, and the spontaneous fund-raising of many, mostly anonymous, local mountain bike enthusiasts came together this past year in an impressive volunteer effort to add the world-class Pacific Rim Trail to an already world-class trail system. It truly took us all to make it happen.

Restoring the Mattole Estuary and addressing groundwater recharge needs at Baker Creek, although at opposite ends of the watershed, finds BLM well-engaged with our mature partnerships in all things Mattole: the Mattole Restoration Council (MRC), the Mattole Salmon Group (MSG), and Sanctuary Forest, Inc (SFI). As these partnerships grow and mature through the years I am constantly reminded that nothing stands still; we are constantly refining our approaches to solving the systemic problems in our watersheds, and we keep finding new ways in which to engage.

Engaging youth on many levels, from education, mentoring, and employment, to positive recreation experiences and adult role models, finds BLM again with familiar partners throughout the King Range NCA. The Nick's Interns summer internship program for high school students successfully completed its 11th year of service to local area youth in 2014, in partnership with our old friends MRC, MSG, and SFI this program offered opportunities to work with and be inspired by natural resource professionals. Through our collaboration with the Lost Coast Interpretive Association (LCIA), the Youth Alive! Outdoor Adventures program, the Summer Hike and Winter Lecture Series, and the Lost Coast Education Center engaged and connected local youth, and adults, to the amazing landscape in which we live, work, and play.

(**NOTE: Managers are welcome to substitute a different back cover format for this one, as long as all of the information listed here is present. [DELETE THIS TEXT]**)

King Range

National Conservation Area

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