

Profiles in Sustainable Forestry:

Mendocino Redwood Company: Restoring California's Coastal Forests

IN 1998, THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED MENDOCINO REDWOOD COMPANY (MRC) purchased 233,000 acres in Northern California. Located about 100 miles north of San Francisco, the once-pristine old-growth redwood and Douglas fir forest had been harvested since the early 1850s and was in such need of repair that local residents had become increasingly concerned about the future of their lands. Habitat loss, deforestation, landslides and disruption of the natural species mix were among the many conditions threatening the well-being of this vital ecosystem.

Despite the numerous challenges, MRC was confident that they had the resources needed to take a long-term approach to the land's restoration. With approximately 228,000 acres of the more than 1.3 million acres of coastal redwood forest in private ownership, the company thought it could create a successful model of sustainable forestry, restoration and economic viability.

In 2000, the Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program certified MRC to standards set by the Forest Stewardship

Council. In 2005, the Rainforest Alliance re-certified MRC for continuing to meet Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards. The Rainforest Alliance also certified Mendocino Forest Products (MFP), an associated but separate company that operates a sawmill and distribution business. This additional "chain-of-custody" certification ensures that certified wood is being tracked from the certified forest managed by MRC through the production process of MFP to the end consumer.



The marbled murrelet is among the endangered species protected on Mendocino Redwood Company lands.

Rising to a Unique Challenge

According to Chris Maser, an ecologist who took part in the Rainforest Alliance's original assessment of MRC's land-management practices, "It was the

history of the land that made this particular certification unique." For 150 years, the forests had been industrially logged. The previous owners had practiced "high grading," cutting all valuable trees, as well as clear-cutting in older forest stands of redwood and Douglas fir. This allowed tanoak, typically an understory tree, to aggressively take over the forest.

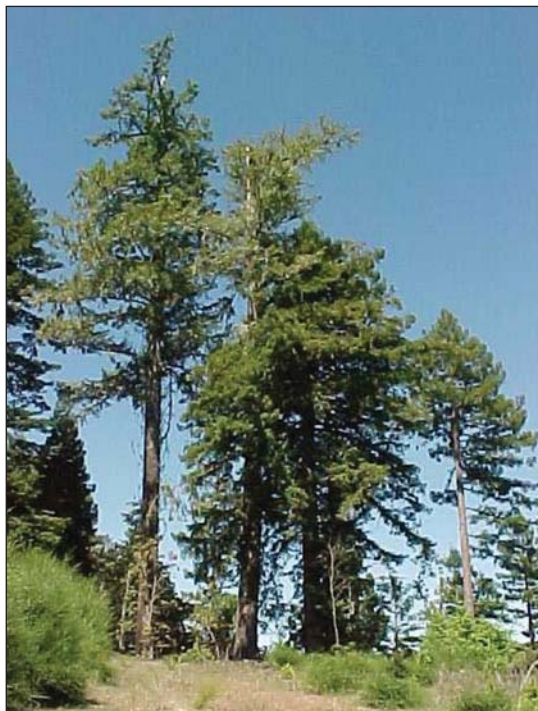
HIGHLIGHTS OF MRC'S EFFORTS INCLUDE:

- 🌲 Significantly reduced annual harvest to one-third of growth and 1.5% of inventory.
- 🌲 Reduced use of chemical herbicides and reduced the herbicide GARLON by over 90%. MRC continues to research methods to reduce its herbicide use while continuing to restore its forestlands.
- 🌲 Recorded its first conservation easement, a "forever wild" protection of 90 acres of mature redwood in the town of Comptche, California. In 2005, MRC protected an additional 515 acres with two separate "forever wild" conservation easements in Willow Creek, Sonoma County.
- 🌲 Identified and protected old-growth trees, incorporating public concerns and scientific definitions.
- 🌲 Distributed relevant landscape planning documents to the local public in regular community forums and on the MRC Web site.
- 🌲 Mapped and inventoried wildlife data such as salmon habitat, northern spotted owl territories, and marbled murrelet detections.
- 🌲 Completed more than 230 restoration projects, spending over a combined \$9.3 million with company partners to control erosion and improve fish passage. Bridges made from recycled railroad flatcars are replacing culverts that once impaired stream flow.
- 🌲 Hundreds of thousands of seedlings are planted each year in company reforestation projects.

MRC has worked hard to overcome the legacy of short-sighted land management, and has begun to actively restore the forest back to a healthy, functioning ecosystem with its former mix of tree species. Not only is MRC conserving the land, but protecting threatened species such as the marbled murrelet, the northern spotted owl and the Coho salmon. While the process of repairing the land will take decades to complete, the average annual cut is now substantially less than the annual growth of timber. MRC land managers actively protect unique and key habitat components such as old growth and pygmy, and retain large woody debris on the forest floor and standing dead trees, which provide habitat to birds and insects and other animals. MRC has also significantly reduced the use of herbicides, and continues to look for alternatives to herbicides to assist in restoration forestry.

Through 2005, MRC and its restoration partners have invested \$9.3 million on projects aimed at restoring streams and waterways, ensuring safe passage and habitat for fish and reducing sedimentation. The company has been a leader in developing and adopting a comprehensive policy to protect old-growth trees and has eliminated the use of traditional clearcutting on its lands. Annual harvest levels have been reduced to about one-third of growth and less than 1.5% of inventory. MRC managers have identified impaired areas, such as damaged logging roads and culverts (pipes that carry streams under a road), which, if in need of replacement, can be outfitted with salmon-friendly alternatives. As a result of many of these projects, salmon

are now able to travel further upstream to spawn. MRC has also improved aquatic habitat by removing barriers to fish migration, reducing sediment discharge to streams and managing streamside buffers to enhance and protect stream temperatures.



MRC's sustainable forestry practices conserve old-growth forest stands and help maintain healthy ecosystems.

When MRC first took over the land, the company was met with a community that had grown skeptical after a succession of industrial landowners made promises they did not keep. Today, MRC encourages open dialogue with the public about how the forest should best be managed. MRC foresters and scientists accompany community members and stakeholders through the forest to discuss areas of mutual concern. This level of direct involvement with the public is remarkable in large, privately held timberlands and provides further evidence of the company's unusually high level of commitment to working out solutions that are beneficial to the long-term sustainability of the forest and to the people who care for and depend on it. Employing an ethic of long-term stewardship,

the Mendocino team is on a path to generate meaningful improvements in this important California redwood and Douglas fir forest.



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The mission of the Rainforest Alliance is to protect ecosystems and the people and wildlife that depend on them by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior. Companies, cooperatives and landowners that participate in our programs meet rigorous standards that conserve biodiversity and provide sustainable livelihoods.

The Rainforest Alliance pioneered the concept of sustainable forestry certification by auditing participating forest product companies and awarding its seal of approval to those complying with a rigorous set of environmental, social and economic standards. This leadership in forestry certification was the catalyst for the founding of the Forest Stewardship Council, and today the Rainforest Alliance continues its leadership as the gold standard in the industry. The Rainforest Alliance operates in all forest types and has certified more than 1600 forest operations on nearly 73 million acres worldwide. 🌳

Rainforest Alliance

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