

Friday, July 08, 2005

Freshwater property purchase a good step

The Times-Standard

The acquisition of part of Freshwater Farms on Freshwater Slough appears to create a best of both worlds scenario. Owner Rick Storre was going to have trouble maintaining the property, and the Northcoast Regional Land Trust was able to step in and facilitate a purchase.

Instead of shutting the doors to the property, the land trust will continue Storre's generous public access, allow a restoration project to take place, and let Freshwater Farms continue to mine the area for plant cuttings and seeds.

It's an atypical agricultural use of the property, but one that makes sense, since Freshwater Farms is a wetland nursery that provides plants for restoration efforts on the West Coast.

The restoration of part of the Freshwater Creek estuary is an important component of the deal. Diked and drained decades ago for farmland, a chunk of the estuary is expected to be recreated, providing a refuge for the creek's salmon and steelhead. The importance of estuaries in the life cycle of anadromous fish is becoming more clear over time.

It's a project that can be showcased easily, due to its proximity to Arcata and Eureka.

The regional land trust seems to have gotten good projects under way since its formation. We continue to be concerned about agricultural land being taken out of production and land being taken off the tax rolls, but it seems the land trust is cognizant of these concerns and is working to protect properties where acquisition or conservation easements make sense.

Also, Storre deserves credit for letting the land trust take the reins and selling it at a bargain price. It's never easy letting go of something you love.

Thursday, July 07, 2005

Reflections on the slough

By **John Driscoll**, The Times-Standard

Rick Storre is lucky enough to be able to smell the mock orange he planted along Freshwater Slough.

After lengthy and traumatic brain surgeries that had him bound to the hospital for months last year, Storre feels even more fortunate to be able to give something to a community that supported him -- and still stay in business.

Most of his property near Freshwater Corners is now in the hands of the Northcoast Regional Land Trust. In a way, the land trust is expected to carry out his will -- not necessarily the legal variety -- to keep the land in production, restore part of the creek's estuary and keep it open to the public.

"Now if I go away, it's still going to be there," Storre said at Freshwater Farms Tuesday.

Freshwater Farms is a wetland native plant nursery, one of a handful on the West Coast. Under the sale of the property to the land trust, the nursery will continue to be able to take cuttings and collect seeds from plants on the 54 acres.