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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Restores Stream on Swanton Pacific Ranch

SANTA CRUZ – Professors and students at Cal Poly's Swanton Pacific Ranch near Santa Cruz are in the middle of a $350,000 project to create habitat and spawning grounds for Coho salmon and steelhead trout in Queseria Creek.

The project will restore 1,600 feet of lower Queseria Creek to a more natural, winding riparian corridor, complete with redwood trees and other indigenous plants and a meandering, rock-lined streambed.

Lower Queseria Creek is a very unique setting, offering refuge and possibly spawning habitat for Coho salmon and steelhead trout, explained Professor Walter Mark, director of Cal Poly's Swanton Pacific Ranch program. The project is recreating a portion of the channel originally altered when the ranch was established in the 1800s. Some of the significant man-made channel changes date back to the 1860s and some to the 1880s.

"It was apparent that this area is very important to Coho and steelhead, which we have been found here in numbers greater than any other Scotts Creek tributary – even in poor years and even in its altered condition." Mark explained.

"This is an important opportunity to restore habitat and stability to the lower portion of Queseria Creek," said Natural Resources Management Professor and hydrologist Brian Dietterick, who is also working on the project. The project should benefit not only salmon and steelhead trout, but also reduce erosion and flooding in the watershed by improving the channel condition and reducing sediment delivery to Scotts Creek during flood periods, Dietterick added.
The project is roughly 80 percent complete with final work and re-vegetation slated for this summer.

Both private donations and public funding and grants made the project possible. RMC Pacific Materials of Davenport donated more than 300 tons of local rock worth some $18,000 used to rebuild the instream channel structures, Dietterick said.

Additional funding and grants for the project came from a number of agencies, including $80,000 from the California Department of Fish and Game (SB271 funds), $20,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, $90,000 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, $55,000 from a USDA grant for forestry research, and $70,000 from the Santa Cruz County Public Works Department. The Santa Cruz County funding included a $25,000 grant from American Rivers, a program supported by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Cal Poly Foundation provided some funding for the project as well, and UC Santa Cruz donated more than 100 redwood rootwads after removing the trees from a UC Santa Cruz building site on campus. The rootwads were hauled to Swanton Pacific Ranch in spring 2003 and planted in the Queseria Creek and lower Scotts Creek floodplains to aid in the re-vegetation effort and add stability and habitat benefits along the channel banks.

Mark, Dietterick and graduate students Jason Pearson of Laguna Niguel and Alyson Aquino of Ventura are implementing the project and monitoring results. The ranch will continue to monitor and maintain the stream area for the next five years to ensure plant survival and monitor the performance of the channel work.

The project, notes Dietterick, not only provides educational opportunities for the graduate students, “but will serve as a demonstration project on stream re-naturalization for decades to come.”

It is also the subject of a video documentary, “The Return Home,” made possible by a grant to Santa Cruz County. The 27-minute documentary is being shown on public television in Santa Cruz, and is available for airing on public television stations in other areas. For information on the video contact Dietterick at bdietter@calpoly.edu. To find more information about Swanton Pacific Ranch, visit www.spranch.org.

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