Stockwater and Irrigation Efficiency Projects
Little Shasta River, Siskiyou County, California

The Little Shasta River is a tributary to the Shasta River—historically one of the most productive salmon streams in the Klamath Basin—with spring driven flows providing cold water that could support salmon and steelhead during the hot and arid summer months. Anecdotally, in the mid to late 1800’s, community members would use pitchforks to harvest hundreds of salmon each year as the fish were making their trip upstream to spawn.

However, around this same time, agricultural users began to use this cold spring water year-round for the irrigation of pasture and hay production and to provide water for livestock, often using leaky and inefficient earthen ditches to transport the water. This year-round water use, coupled with the increased demand for water over time, has resulted in the Little Shasta River becoming disconnected on an annual basis. Unsurprisingly, this lack of water limits the ability of salmon and steelhead to return and thrive.

In 2017 the Hart Ranch, in partnership with California Trout, began the planning, design, and implementation of an irrigation efficiency and stockwater improvement

Figure 1. Improved stockwater trough. Approximately 15 were installed throughout the ranch to provide greater grazing flexibility and improved management practices.

Figure 2. New mainline system
Funding for this project was provided by the State of California Wildlife Conservation Board, US Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the United States EPA through an agreement with the CA State Water Resources Control Board, as well as contributions from The Nature Conservancy.