



- North Coastal Diversity Stratum: Eel River Rapid Assessment
  - Lower Mainstem Eel River Tributaries<sup>1</sup> (Dependent)
  - Howe Creek (Dependent)

The following sections provide a general overview of the abundance and distribution of NC steelhead, history of land use, current resources and land management, and a brief summary of the CAP viability, stresses, and threats results for the Eel River Watershed.

### **Abundance and Distribution**

Information on the historic abundance and distribution of adult steelhead in the Eel River watershed are limited and poorly understood. Historically, winter-run (winter) steelhead are thought to have spawned and reared in the mainstem and tributary streams of all major subbasins in the Eel River Watershed. The distribution of summer-run (summer) steelhead was less extensive with populations primarily located in the Middle Fork, Van Duzen, and North Fork subbasins (Moyle *et al.* 2008). Like other coastal populations throughout California, steelhead use of the Eel River estuary was undoubtedly extensive with multiple life stages utilizing the estuary throughout the year. The construction of Scott Dam (1922) eliminated significant portions of historic spawning habitat for steelhead in the Upper Mainstem Eel River including “*some of the best spawning grounds in the entire watershed (Gravelly Valley)*” (Shapovalov 1939).” Aside from the loss of habitat upstream of Scott Dam and within reaches flooded by both Van Arsdale Reservoir and Lake Pillsbury, steelhead remain widely distributed throughout the Eel River Watershed.

Based on amount of historic habitat available in the watershed, Yoshiyama and Moyle (2010) estimate the historic run size ranged between 100,000 and 150,000 adults per year for both the winter and summer populations. There are two long-term data series of adult returns to the Eel River Watershed—ladder counts at the Van Arsdale Fisheries Station (VAFS) located at Cape

<sup>1</sup> The Lower Mainstem Eel River includes a set of small tributaries to the lower mainstem of the Eel River.



























