



Eel River Native Plant Network

First Meeting Summary

Purpose and Outcomes	1
Getting Oriented	1
Network Intent & Feedback	3
Timeline for Eel River Dam Removal	5
Plant Material Estimate	5
Landscape Map: What We Heard	6



Convening Purpose

On June 18th, 2026 members of the Eel River Native Plant Network met for the first time in-person in Fortuna, Ca at the River Lodge Conference Center. Network members were there to:

- Build relationships,
- Test the working version of the vision, focus, and frame for the Network,
- Begin to understand how revegetation needs within the basin will shift in the coming years,
- Begin to identify the key opportunities and barriers this network could work to address.

Desired Outcomes

Connect	• Built personal connections around shared values, work, and aspirations
Align	• Tested a (working) network vision and scope for the network • Clarified what this network is and is not aiming to do
Learn & Make	• Reviewed the intent behind the Native Plant Network Member Survey; • Shared preliminary estimates for plant material quantities needed for revegetation following dam removal; • Shared some initial survey results & sought input from participants; • Shared the network's landscape map showing barriers & opportunities to increase native plant production; and • Discussed priorities for future Network projects.

Getting Oriented

Understanding the Need

In early 2024, Friends of the Eel River staff were reflecting on the Yurok Tribe's 5-year effort to produce and obtain 160,000 lbs of seeds to restore habitat as part of the Klamath dam removals. Plans to remove two dams on the Eel River, known as the Potter Valley Project, are underway. Eel River dam removal could happen in as little as 5 years. The reservoir footprints on the Eel River are larger than on the Klamath, and will thus require even more seed to revegetate and restore.

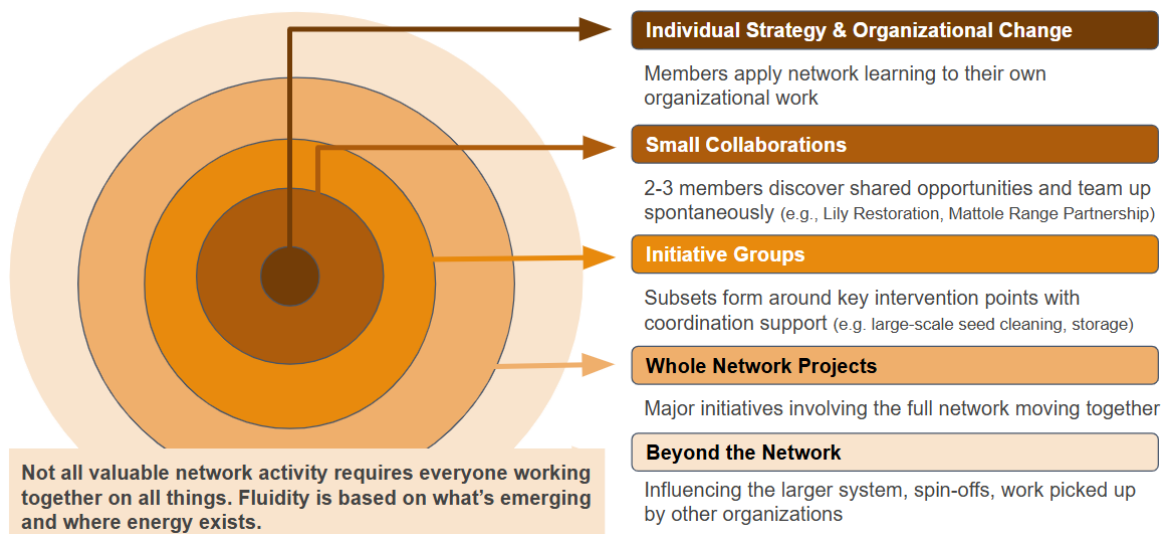
Currently, there are not enough plants/seeds produced within the region for even relatively small-scale projects in the Eel River basin. This understanding was the inspiration to form the Eel River Native Plant Network.

Friends of the Eel River (FOER) is the backbone organization for this network, is committed to build the network using a collaborative model, and is willing to transfer this responsibility if a better-suited entity emerges.

As part of launching the Network, FOER recruited volunteers to form a "Stewardship Team" to help guide the development of the Network. The Stewardship Team includes staff representing the Wiyot Tribe, Round Valley Indian Tribes, the Yurok Tribe, Samara Restoration, Applied River Sciences, and Friends of the Eel River.

Why a Network Approach

A Network is the right approach for this scale of collaboration in part because work can be done by individuals, small groups, or the entire network. It is important that this Network have a spectrum of engagement for those who are unable to be involved in every meeting or project.



What's Happened So Far

- Funding from the State Coastal Conservancy was approved in late 2025.
- The Stewardship Team was formed in early 2026.
- Nearly 30 one-on-one interviews between FOER staff and Network members.
- A virtual Network Orientation was held on March 18, 2026 to get initial feedback on the vision and intent of the Network and build early connections among members.
- A production capacity survey designed and shared with Network members in spring of 2026.
- The first in-person meeting was held on June 18, 2026, and a virtual report-out session on that meeting on June 23.

Creative Tensions

Some of the most important questions a network faces aren't problems to solve, but instead tensions to work with over time. These "creative tensions" happen when two true things pull in different directions, and where the most generative work happens not by choosing one over the other, but by committing to getting the best of both. Naming these is an important first step. Some of the creative tensions identified during the initial interviews and Stewardship Tem meetings are shown in this table.

Action	&	Relationship
Technical	&	Cultural
Immediate supply needs	&	Generational time horizon
Decentralized capacity	&	Shared infrastructure
Sovereignty	&	Coordination
Abundant production	&	Non-extractive practice

Our *Intent* for the Network is Described in the Vision, and Focus/Frame

Vision

Connect Tribal Nations, stewards, restorationists, gatherers, and growers to sustain and increase regionally diverse native plant material production that supports Eel River watershed restoration, cultural uses, and food sovereignty.

Feedback on Vision:

- Invasive species control is essential, but don't see that here explicitly.
- Economic viability for humans should be included.
- "Regionally diverse native plant material" should be "diverse locally-native plant material."

Focus & Frame

What is our initial **focus** for this network? What's also happening in the larger periphery or **frame** that we need to pay attention to as we work toward our focus?

	FOCUS	FRAME
Geographic Boundaries	Eel River watershed (includes all tributaries)	Alignment with State and National plant initiatives
Possible Areas of Work	- Identify sources & collect diverse native seed - Increase small-scale amplification facilities & rooted plant production - Increase seed cleaning & storage capacity - Market forecasting of plant material needs - Sharing knowledge & infrastructure - Data collection & sharing - Developing, sharing best management practices	- Large-scale seed production (250K lbs seed may be needed following Eel Dam removals) - PG&E's restoration plan for the Potter Valley Project - Fire mitigation & climate resilience (diverse native plants are critical for climate adaptation)
Values	- Protecting the sovereignty of seed & plant relatives - Non-extractive & non-exploitative of native plant populations and TEK.	
Timeframe	- Next 5 years, preparing for dam removal	- Generational, serving cultural uses and restoration projects for years to come.

Feedback on Possible Areas of Work *in Focus*:

- On collecting and sharing seed:
 - Consider who is best placed to collect materials

- Consideration of indigenous sovereignty for cultural plants and sharing location of rare plants on a need-to-know basis
 - Include plants needed for restoration of high flood plains and other key habitat types
 - Identify edges/boundaries for where to prioritize seed collection
- Clarify Network organization and structure and how we will work together
 - Decentralized emphasis
 - Relationship-building
- Develop resources to help members source, access, and obtain the native plant materials.
- Develop priority species list, possibly focused on less common or rarer species
- Consulting
- Coordinate sourcing, amplification, and distribution of native plant products.
- Develop infrastructure to facilitate knowledge sharing.
- Cultural landscape re-composition with culturally important and unique species
- Invasive species should be an initial and ongoing focus, including removal, replanting with native species, and monitoring the success of removal after the restoration project is finished.

Feedback on Possible Areas of Work *in Frame*:

- Cultural burning as part of the holistic plan
 - Cultural burning without petro-chemicals
- Understanding the restoration demand for the region over the next 3 yrs or 10 yrs
- Climate adaptation – resilience
- Workforce development, education, trainings

Feedback on Values:

- Provide educational materials/opportunities, including:
 - Cultural literacy for newcomers.
 - Non-extractive, non-exploitative, sustainable, and ethical use of native plants
- Community-centered participatory action
- Ensure “unrecognized” tribes, i.e., Eel River Wailaki, can participate.
- Data sovereignty
- X fire mitigation ✓ fire stewardship
- Economic recovery

Feedback on Timeframe:

- Decentralize reason for native plant network
- Generational future + landscape care frameworks

What this Network is Not Doing:

At this time the Network will not be implementing restoration or purchasing land. It’s important to understand that the Network will provide input to PG&E and FERC on post-dam removal restoration, but will not develop or implement the restoration plan.

Timeline of Eel River Dam Removal Regulatory Process

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), responsible for regulating hydropower projects, has just begun their environmental analysis of dam removal. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this process will assess potential impacts of dam removal, including consideration of any alternative projects. The entire NEPA process will take at least two years.

The State Water Board will soon begin their process to develop a water quality certification for dam removal under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This process must be completed within one year.

PG&E is required to provide detailed plans for all aspects of dam removal, including a plan for restoration of the area, to FERC by July 2027. The Network will not determine what is in this restoration plan, as that is up to PG&E and FERC, but we can provide relevant information to PG&E for their consideration and can recommend what the plan should include during FERC's scoping period (open now).

A planning horizon of 5 years is consistent with the current stage of the regulatory process, assuming FERC's NEPA process is finished promptly.

Plant Material Estimate for Post-Dam Removal Revegetation

John Bair, ecologist with Applied River Sciences, described the analysis underlying his estimate of plant materials needed for the PVP restoration plan. In short, John estimates that as much as 300,000 lbs of seed and up to 1,878,400 plants may be needed.

What would you add to the estimate of plant material needed?

- Year 1 is key because it drives succession
- Our purpose/desired condition should be resilience, not equilibrium. Adaptive capacity will be required to attain functioning ecosystems
- A survey of what producers currently grow?
- Generate estimates based on using drones for re-seeding
- Determine BMPs for maximizing effectiveness of seeding (timing seed treatment, microbial inoculants, etc.)
- Account for browse pressure from elk and other large herbivores, and potential need for fencing.
- Ensure restoration of open habitats and grasslands is well-considered in revised estimates.
- Avoid planting anything over 300 trees/acre because you will soon need to deal with overstocked stands. The forestry community has backed off of that density, and typically plans for 150-250 trees/acre, because seedling success has gotten better.
- Size of plants may need to be larger (e.g. gallon) to survive being planted in sediment disconnected from the water table.
- Recognize issues with bringing in larger plants on big heavy trucks - this may not be practical, even if those bigger plants would be more successful.

What specific elements of revegetation matter most to you?

- Locally collected seed, and plants grown from locally-collected seed.
- Locally purchased plants.
- Species diversity.
- Timeline for diversifying species after the initial revegetation happens. A second round of planting will likely be needed.
- Seed amplification fields at Round Valley should be online and should be part of the estimate.

What questions remain?

- What kind of plant diversity should we recommend?
- What germination rates and success to maturity rates should be assumed?
- For each facility that would provide native plant products for PVP restoration, what is the projected growth in capacity between now and when we would need the native plant products?
- Are you wild collecting?
- What are the estimated seed yields for different species?
- How does the seed lbs estimate change with drone seeding?
- School gardens?
- Valley Floor Strategy: The strategy for the 1,800-acre valley floor (leaving it as a meadow vs. trees) is undecided.

Landscape Map: What We Heard About Priorities, Barriers, and Opportunities

After learning about themes that arose during interviews, participants added thoughts and voted on priorities for the network. Votes are shown in **(green)**.

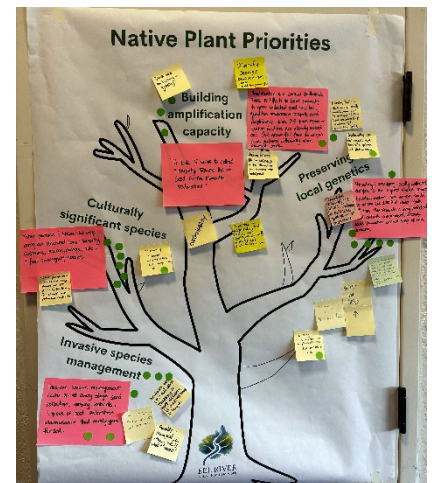
Native Plant Priorities

Culturally significant species (7)

- Tribal partners + native led orgs should get 1st priority for funding for expansion or potential contracts
- Focus on producing the highest value, best yielding, most ecologically and culturally significant species
- Forefront cultural LANDSCAPES, not a single-species lens **(1)**

Increase amplification capacity (7)

- Stock seed availability + quality
- Diversify species production to include rarer species that are harder to grow.
- Work with orgs like the university or local farms to get resources more widespread
- Existing facilities that are currently maxed-out may want to expand if they have guarantees (or \$ in advance) to meet the needs
- Develop resource maps using GIS, showing both plant populations/communities and existing facilities/equipment **(1)**



- Sustainability

Preserve local genetics (6)

- Plan for a hotter, drier future throughout the basin area. Expand diversity of plants grown, when appropriate, to compensate.
- Develop shared understanding of how need for local specificity can differ across species
- Biosecurity + phytosanitation
- Protect against disease and pest outbreaks (e.g., Sudden Oak Death)

Manage invasive plant species (6)

- Monitor to gauge effectiveness of invasive removal techniques, including over longer timeframe
- Include an invasive species threat analysis when planning a project, and build control of invasive species into the project for later on, after the native plants are brought in.
- Allow for flexibility in management vs. one-size-fits-all, i.e. differing methods, pivot if needed.

On-going care of plants built into restoration projects such as cultural fire (1)

Barriers to Capacity Growth

Lack of infrastructure (10)

- “Dozens of empty cannabis greenhouses sit idle...” and there are many regulatory issues for conversion from cannabis (1)
- Existing farms/agriculture sites could be good places for amplification? Organic or not: [Organic has] more opportunities for funding (1)

Funding timelines (6)

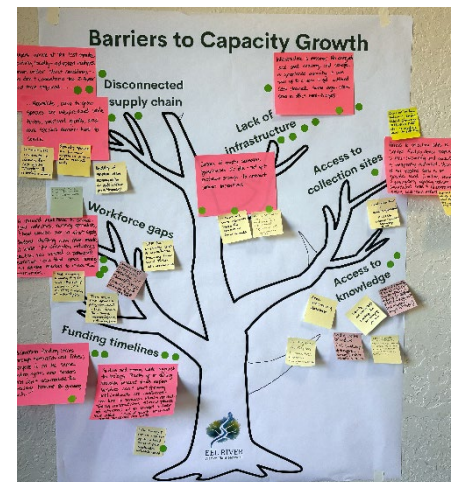
- Seeds must often be ordered years before they will be used (because they must be amplified), yet funding typically kicks in after that. Not economically viable for nurseries to invest without certainty of the market.
- Philanthropy funds can be a quicker option, although requires years of relationship building (1)

Disconnected supply chain (5)

- Specialty species not already in wide production are more expensive to grow than established workhorse species, due to research costs. Growers need contracts and funds in advance before investing in these species.
- Possibility of meristem culture micropropagation for plants with slower germ? (expensive)

Workforce gaps (3)

- No funding at my org to give me “staff time” to attend/participate in this initiative



- Workforce training may be more efficient if we start with existing nurseries geared to grow other types of plants.
- Generational professional knowledge is sometimes lost. Rebuild lineages with mentorship & pathways to professional growth.
- Grants + programs sometimes available to train farmers. There may be crossover objectives + funding.
- SRF has capacity, BMP & workforce training funds, especially for Tribes.

Access to collection sites (2)

- Reach out to large landowners, ranches, Wildland Conservancy, USFS, State parks, etc...to negotiate access for collection
- Land return (Tribal) + network - facilitated MOUs for collection + population stewardship access
- Educate landowners about the value of plant materials on their property

Access to knowledge (2)

- Seed availability database
- A long-term vision/plan for this network should be developed to prioritize restoration throughout the Eel River basin
- Seed collection calendar for scheduling & temporal diversification of wild collection
- Capacity development and industry-specific knowledge development for engaging producers
- Seed saving/seed collection resources are mostly agriculturally focused - adapt them to serve native seed growers or find common areas

What this Network could do

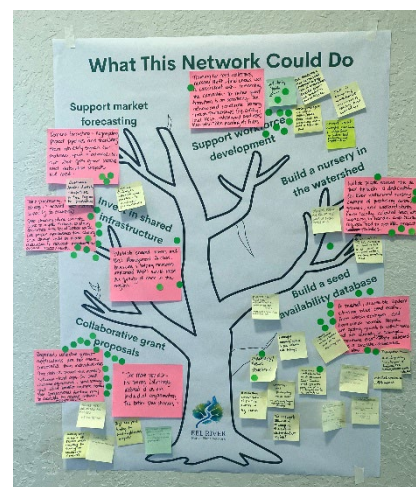
Invest in shared infrastructure & establish shared norms (27)

- Joint purchasing, cold storage, seed cleaning capacity, amplification fields, etc. (10)
- Establish shared norms and Best Management Practices (7)

Collaborative grant proposals (15)

- Funders want big projects, so make bigger asks. Consider block grants
- Multi-partner, joint proposals are what grantors like to see and tend to favor
- Collaborate among members to reduce competition for funding
- Funding for long-term maintenance of restoration projects (control invasives)
- Pool funding across organizations for seed amplification projects

Seed availability database – build and keep current (19)



- Make available detailed information including species, organization, ecotype, where and when collected, quantity, age of collection, how cleaned, where and how stored, etc.
- Understand what native plant materials are currently available, who to see for what
- Grower database showing who grows what kinds of material for what species
- Make good use of existing and ongoing available resources that might otherwise be wasted as unused seeds age
- Members can refer to the database before deciding what to plant/grow/order for their particular restoration projects
- Consider collaboration with regional food + flower seed growers, who are also working towards a database
- Track locations of wild populations to harvest from, and coordinate harvest to prevent overharvesting. Ensure sovereignty is respected, and determine which information is and is not available to all Network members

Provide workforce development & educational resources (13)

- Include youth (2) and former cannabis growers
- The California Community College - Mendocino is developing a new native plant propagation program. Consider future CCC interns in nurseries, etc.
- Nursery managers are highly skilled, under-paid, and hard to find
- Convert unused cannabis greenhouses + infrastructure to native seed production and amplification
- Community public education (2)
- Education about value of native plants on ag lands
- Community-based participatory action research
- Facilitate information exchange and provide opportunities to build job skills

Increase nursery capacity in the Eel River basin (8)

- Support new nurseries currently in the planning stages
- See which existing Tribal nurseries or native-led organizations want to expand before creating something new
- Consider building a new nursery within the basin
- Amplification fields needed at the different elevations found in the basin
- Open to public for education and sales of excess materials

Facilitate market forecasting (5)

- Determine species diversity and expertise in the region for production
- Provide funding/contracts to producers in advance when possible

Native Plant Network Member Survey

The purpose of this survey is to better understand the regional need for native plants and the current production capacity. This will inform decisions about how to increase production of native plants within the Eel River basin.

Survey Objectives

- Estimate annual plant material production (from Network members) for three different types of plant material.
- Identify production capacity limitations.
- Evaluate whether current production can meet current need, or the need for large-scale restoration projects like dam removal.
- Estimate the cost to expand existing ERNPN plant material production capacity to meet the demands of a project like dam removal.
- Identify where opportunities currently exist to expand capacity and potential limitations in expanding capacity.

Next Steps

The second in-person meeting of the Eel River Native Plant Network will take place in Ukiah on Thursday, September 16, 2026.

We will focus on prioritizing future projects for the Network outline the path for collaborative work.

Please plan to attend!