Habitat for Threatened Frog is Protected in California

A groundbreaking collaborative project with private landowners and public agencies is restoring habitat for the federally threatened California red-legged frog on public and private lands encompassing an entire watershed in Merced, San Benito, and Fresno counties in central California.

An equipment operator uses an excavator to restore habitat on one of the ponds.

The project is creating two new ponds on public lands in tributaries of Mine Creek and Mercey Creek, and has already restored three existing ponds on adjacent private lands, for a total of more than 10 acres of new breeding habitat. This will increase frog occupation to an additional 20 miles of riparian habitat.

Increasing the amount of breeding habitat available to the frog will help secure the existing population and lay the foundation for future population expan-sion. The project will bring California red-legged frogs closer to recovery in another way as well - the creation of enduring partnerships with private landowners, which will result in even greater protection of frogs on private lands.

The $75,000 project was initiated in May 2009 and is expected to be completed in June 2010. It has provided work for a consulting biologist and the San Benito Resource Conservation District and has helped support local businesses.

Workers have already completed improvements at the three ponds on Lower Mine Creek which were silted in and not viable breeding habitat. The project work improved the berms, expanded the area and depth of the ponds, and cleaned the springs that feed each pond. These ponds now are expected to provide excellent breeding habitat for the frogs.

California red-legged frogs on pond

California red-legged frogs are found in California from sea level to elevations of about 5,200 feet. Threat-ened primarily with habitat loss, the species occu-pies only about 30 percent of its former range. It needs a variety of habitats, but pools and ponds are essential to breeding success.

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS