

Residential Storage & Forbearance Project Little Arthur Creek

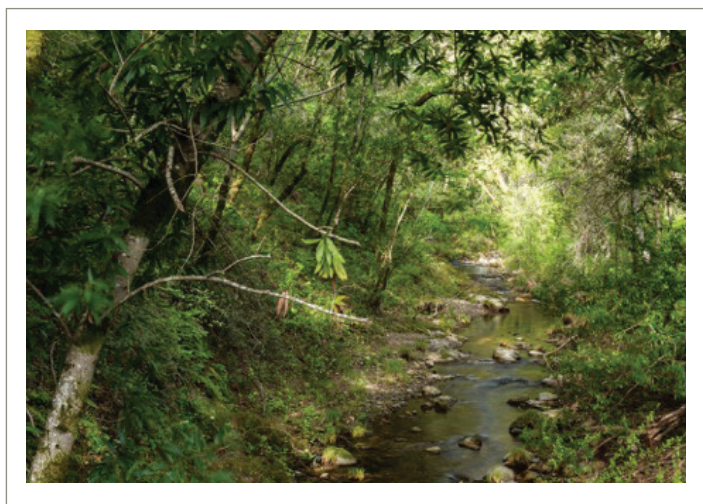
The Little Arthur Creek watershed west of Gilroy is home to oak-studded hillsides, cool redwood groves, and the historic summer retreat of writer Robert Louis Stevenson. It also contains the best remaining spawning habitat for native steelhead in the upper Pajaro River system. Although the creek historically had year-round flow, in recent years its flows have dwindled during the summer dry season, due in part to increased streamside residential development. Reduced streamflow has made it much more difficult for newly-hatched steelhead to survive, bringing the creek's steelhead run to the brink of extinction.

To restore the creek's streamflow, Trout Unlimited partnered with the local nonprofit Coastal Habitat Education and Environmental Restoration (CHEER) to create the Little Arthur Creek Residential Storage and Forbearance Project. With the help of CHEER founder Herman Garcia – a Gilroy native and avid steelhead fisherman – TU reached out to streamside landowners to offer a simple deal: we build the

landowner a state-of-the-art water tank system to store water in the winter wet season, and in exchange the landowner agrees not to pump from the creek during the driest months (June 15 through October 15). The result is a true win-win: residents get a reliable year-round water supply to provide security against drought, while fish get more water instream when they need it most. The arrangement is written up in a 20-year renewable contract called a forbearance agreement, which is accompanied by a new state-issued water right authorizing the storage.

To date we have completed seven tank projects along the two-mile spawning reach of Little Arthur Creek. Our goal is to build tanks for at least ten of the 13 diverters on this reach, which should be sufficient to keep the creek flowing even in the driest of years.

A video describing this project is found at <https://vimeo.com/channels/californiastreamflow>.



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