

Conservation Almanac

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Summer 2003

Vol. XII No. 3

Trinity River Advisory Group Formed

It didn't take long for the members of the newly formed Trinity Adaptive Management Working Group (TAMWG) to meet the challenge of providing recommendations to the US Department of Interior on the restoration of the



Trinity River. The nineteen individuals appointed by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior late last year have met four times this year. In February they elected long-time Trinity County resident Arnold Whitridge as chairman and Serge Birk, the Ecosystem Restoration Coordinator for the Central Valley Project Water Association, as vice-chairman.

This past spring the Group reviewed a couple of key issues associated with the restoration of the Trinity River.

Spring Flows: Last year we had a normal amount of rainfall, but the Federal government is limited by a judge's order to release into the Trinity River only the amount of water allocated for a dry year. The stakeholders recommended that

scientists with the Restoration Program look for ways to use the limited amount of water to maximize the benefits to the river and its fisheries. The result was a slightly delayed release of the spring flows and keeping those flows for a longer period of time.

Proposed Budget and Strategic Plan:

The stakeholders group reviewed the restoration program's draft strategic plan and the proposed budget for the upcoming year. They supported the overall concept and on a motion by Pat Frost, the RCD's Manager, requesting that the program's management team (the Trinity

Management Council or TMC) specifically identify the importance of conducting restoration work in the tributaries of the Trinity River even when there are not adequate funds available to

implement every high priority project.

Members of the Working Group represent a cross-section of agencies, organizations and groups that are not otherwise represented on the Trinity Management Council. These interests include, recreational and commercial fishing interests, commercial and recreational boaters, mining, power utilities, irrigators, forestry associations,

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TMC Recommends Actions to Prevent Possible Fish Die-Off This Fall

by: Daryl Peterson, Branch Chief for Technical Modeling and Analysis Group, TRRP



Members of the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) staff in Weaverville have been working closely with other agency scientists and stakeholders to recommend a flow schedule for releases at Lewiston Dam to help ensure that a major die-off of Trinity River salmon, similar to what happened in September 2002, doesn't happen again this year.

According to a draft Fish & Game report, the Trinity River lost up to 26% of last year's fall-run Chinook salmon to the diseases Ich and Columnaris. (For those of you who have lost aquarium fish, these are the same culprits.) Although final reports have yet to be issued, Federal and State biologists working in the Klamath/Trinity River system do know the following: 1) that Ich and Columnaris were the primary causes of death of fish during the 2002 fish die-off, 2) that warm water temperatures, low water velocities, high fish density, and long residence times contribute to major outbreaks of Ich, 3) that water temperatures, river stage, and channel geometry interact to affect adult salmon migration, and 4) that the events of 2002

demonstrate that a major fish die-off can occur during low flow conditions. Our best understanding at this time is that a larger than average run size coupled with low flow conditions contributed to increased localized fish densities and residence times in places of thermal refuge and below riffles. These physical and biological conditions facilitated the transmission and severity of the disease pathogens.

Because these conditions may again be present this summer and fall, District Court Judge Wanger allowed for the potential use of up to 50,000 acre feet of water to help prevent another die-off. On June 26, 2003 the Trinity Management Council (TMC) endorsed a planning approach that included stakeholder input and the development of an Action Plan for submittal to the Bureau of Reclamation. The Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) coordinated this effort with participating agencies, tribal governments and various stakeholders. Public input was provided directly to the agency scientists through the TRRP's Trinity Adaptive Management Working Group (TAMWG), a federally

chartered advisory committee.

The comments and suggestions from the TAMWG included public safety issues, economic impacts, lake and river recreation, as well as strategies to avoid another die-off. State and federal biologists met on July 23-24 to develop a flow schedule considerate of these comments, and designed to provide in-river conditions known to be adequate for salmon migration.

The TRRP staff then presented the technical group's recommendations to the TAMWG and TMC. Both groups strongly endorsed the Action Plan, and on August 6, the plan and flow recommendations were sent to the Bureau of Reclamation for consideration. A decision is expected by mid-August.

Although we hope that the circumstances associated with a die-off don't repeat themselves, all participants felt that the process envisioned by the framers of the Restoration Program worked well to provide local public and agency input into decisions that contribute to the health of the Trinity River and its communities.



Wetland Project Moves Forward

The Board of Directors of the RCD entered into a memorandum of understanding with Trinity County to restore approximately 6 acres of wetlands in the Trinity Alps Industrial Park with construction planned for fall 2003. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing most of the funds through its Wetland Reserve Program – the same program that was used to place about 50 acres along Weaver Creek in an easement in 2001. Lorrie Bundy, the NRCS engineer, provided the design and Ann Francis, NRCS botanist from Paradise, has been working with RCD staff to design the planting plan for the restored site. The District will be implementing all phases of the project, including the re-grading of the site, construction of water control structures, erosion control and planting with native species of wetland plants.



Wetlands provide three important services, and the Industrial Park Wetland has been designed to provide all three – store flood waters; clean pollutants from the water before it gets into a stream; and provide wildlife habitat. This wetland, when fully restored, will provide a mixture of habitats that will add to the diversity in the Weaver Creek corridor and will receive water from Lance Gulch during winter storms.

A future phase of the project is to build a network of trails and wildlife viewing platforms around the wetlands and link it to the Weaverville Basin Trail system.

Celebrating the Salmon's Return

The fascinating story of the salmon has been a source of awe and inspiration to people since time out of mind. For tens of thousands of years these amazing fish have evolved with the ever-changing conditions of a temperamental planet. Born into cool streams and rivers, these fish must completely change their body functions in order to adapt to salt water conditions when they migrate to the ocean. The amazing part of their journey begins when they leave their nutrient rich ocean to return again to the exact streams in which they were born, in order to reproduce.

The thriving run of the salmon up the rivers has historically provided a major food source for people; and it is no wonder that it has also been a source of massive celebration. Here in Trinity County, the annual Salmon Festival has honored the largest return of salmon in the fall. Many of you have probably had the pleasure of attending this exciting event with many children's activities and great music.

Unfortunately, due to budget cutbacks, the festival will not be able to happen this year. But not to worry, the salmon will not have to return unnoticed this year. Collaboration is underway at the RCD with many agencies to keep the tradition of celebration going. Get out your crayons and markers kids! We are planning a salmon poster contest in October. More information will be issued once the children are back at school. This is a great opportunity for the community to get together and have some fun. Anyone who is interested in helping out is encouraged to contact Cassie or Kate at the RCD at 623-6004. Let's welcome back these extraordinary fish!



...continued from page 1

farmers and ranchers and the general public. Ten of the members, including Frost, are residents of Trinity County.

According to Doug Schleusner, Executive Director of the Trinity River restoration Program, "The individuals on this advisory committee were selected, because of their knowledge of the Trinity River and its related issues, as well as their demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with competing interests."

Members of the Working Group (listed in alphabetical order) include: Serge Birk (Red Bluff), Central Valley Project Water Association; Jeffery Bryant (Mad River), American Forest Resource Council; Tim Colvin (Trinity Center), Trinity Lake Resort Owners Association; Edgar Duggan (Willow Creek), Willow Creek Community Services District; James Feider (Redding), Northern California Power Agency; Patrick Frost (Weaverville), Trinity County Resource Conservation District; Zeke Grader (San Francisco), Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association); Dan Haycox (Junction City), Miners Alliance; Dana Hord (Big Bar), Big Bar Community Development Group; William Huber (Hyampom), South Fork Trinity River Coordinated Resource Management Planning Group; Kevin Lorenz (Douglas City), long-term local resident; Charles Schultz (Redding), Bureau of Land Management; Jimmy Smith (Eureka), Humboldt County Board of Supervisors; Dr. Elizabeth Soderstrom (Nevada city), Bay Delta Science Consortium and Environmental Water Caucus; James Outfitter and Guide Association; Arnold Whitridge (Douglas City), Safe Alternatives for Forest Environment.

Meetings of the Trinity Adaptive Management Working Group are advertised in local newspapers and are open to the public. For more information on the Working Group you can contact the local office of the Trinity River Restoration Program in Weaverville at 530-623-1800 or call pat Frost at the RCD at 530-623-6004.

Oregon Mountain and Other Fuels Reduction Projects Funded

The US Forest Service's Community Protection Program approved several proposals submitted by the RCD to fund fuels reduction projects on private lands. These projects include:

- **Oregon Mountain Regional Fuels Reduction Project** in Weaverville (\$75,000). This project will implement fuels reduction on 75 acres in an area identified in the Trinity County Fire Safe Council's Strategic Fire Management Plan as a high priority. This project calls for a shaded fuel break along a heavily traveled residential road, a regional fuel break along a strategic ridge, and defensible space around 25 residences with property values of over \$3.6 million. This project was submitted at the request of John Richards and several other landowners who have been part of a Program Timberland Environmental Impact Report (PTEIR) for forest lands in the Weaverville Basin completed by the Trinity RC&D Council.

Approximately 25 families in this area have expressed a strong interest in implementing the recommended fuels reduction.

- **Bar 717 Ranch Perimeter Fuel Management Zone Project** in Hyampom (\$50,000). This project will create a shaded fuel break roughly 200' wide along the private property/national forest interface. This high-risk property is comprised of two parcels totaling 450 acres, surrounded by US Forestlands. The goal of this project is to create a fuel management zone that encompasses the boundaries of the Ranch property, for a total of 36,369'. Total acres treated would be about 167 acres.

- **Down River Communities Fire Safe Plan and Demonstration Project** (\$50,000).

Funds will be used to implement high priority defensible space treatments around homes in order to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire in the Down River communities, including Salyer, Hawkins Bar, Burnt Ranch, Del Loma, Big Bar and Big Flat as per the recommendations of the Trinity County Fire Safe Council. More detailed community fire management plans will be developed as well. These communities have not yet had any assistance with fuels reduction projects, but have expressed interest, especially following the large fire events of 1999 and 2001. The RCD will work with the local Volunteer Fire Departments in these communities to provide necessary planning, outreach, technical assistance, and labor to implement recommended defensible space fuels reduction projects on private lands.



The US Forest Service's Rural Community and Private Land Fire Assistance Program also approved the **Trinity County Fuels Utilization Pilot Project** for \$50,000. This project will allow for the purchase of a portable tub grinder or its functional equivalent for woody debris utilization.

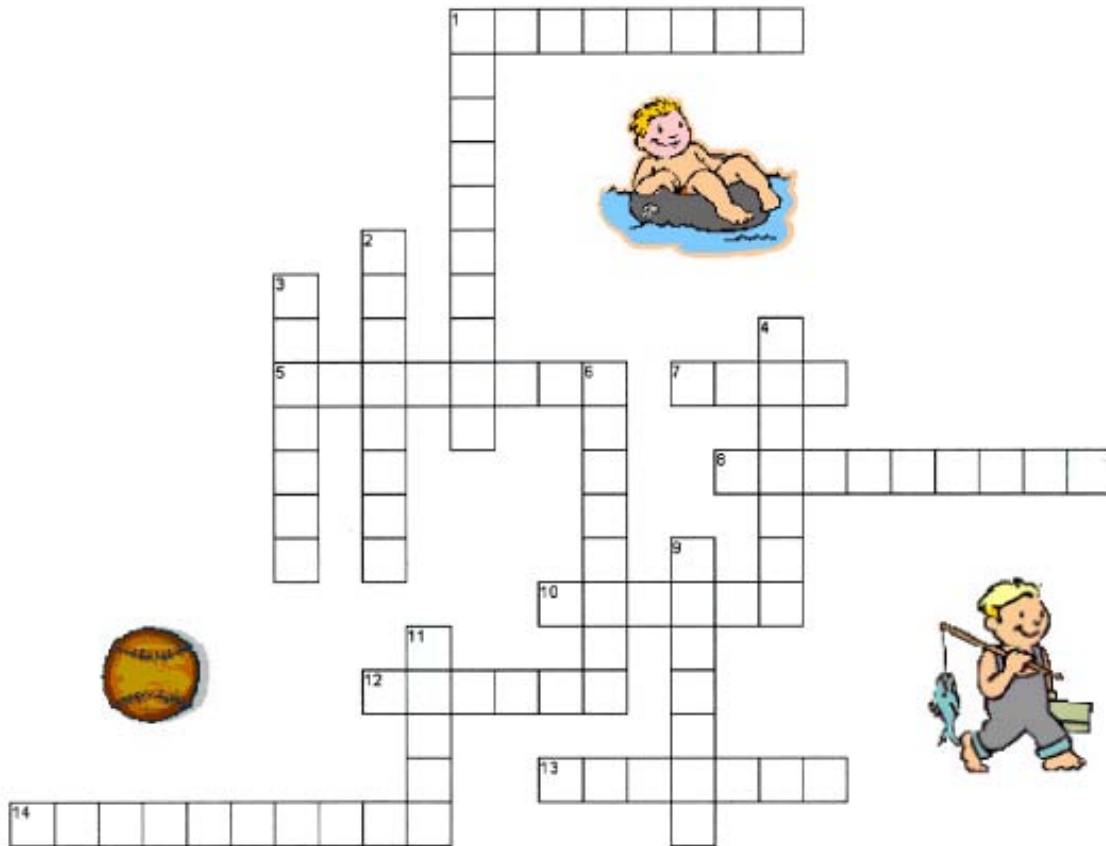
This equipment will be made available to neighborhoods as a free service to those involved in fuels reduction efforts. This project will encourage the sustainable use of material that could eventually help fund the recommended community fuels reduction effort. The wood products such as chips, mulch and compost resulting from this project will be donated to the communities participating in fuels reduction projects.

The Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee has approved funding for fuel reduction at the **Trinity Center Ball Park** (for \$34,000), for **shaded fuel break along Highway 3 and Rush Creek Road** on US Forest Service lands (for \$125,000), and for thinning US Forest Service lands within the **Covington Mill Neighborhood** (for \$24,000).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentive Program is also funding 50% cost share to several landowners implementing fuels reduction in the North Lake and Southern Trinity areas.

The fact that so many of these fuels reduction projects have been funded recently demonstrates the effectiveness of the Trinity County Fire Safe Council and the momentum created by its planning and education and outreach efforts. We would like to encourage other communities and neighborhoods to take part in this process and make your homes safer from the risk of wildfires.

Summer Fun!



Across

1. An activity you might do in a pool or a river
5. A yummy cold treat on hot days (2 words)
7. A vessel you might take on Trinity Lake
8. The kind of trout that is found here in Trinity County
10. An adventure you might go on in the Trinity Alps
12. A red fruit that grows in your garden
13. The name of the watershed we live in
14. A nonnative berry that grows near creek banks

Down

1. Really tall flowers that grow in gardens
2. A sport played on diamonds during the summer
3. A type of salmon that comes up the river in the summer
4. An adventure you might do on the Trinity River
6. A pesky insect that can leave an itchy bump on your skin
9. An activity you might enjoy with a hook on a pole
11. A native plant that blooms in spring and summer with a yellow-orange flower



Answer Key is located on page 7

Trinity County Fire Safe Council Takes a Stand on Salvage and Restoration Activities

The Trinity County Fire Safe Council is dedicated to coordinating efforts to improve fire safety for our communities and outlying areas and promoting healthier forests. The Oregon Mountain and Hyampom wildfires occurred in 2001 in the wildland-urban interface of Weaverville and Hayfork, two of Trinity County's most populated communities. In recent years, other areas in Trinity County not adjacent to communities have also been impacted by catastrophic fire.

It is imperative that land managers involved in the post-fire treatment of these forests be enabled to take both an immediate and a long-term view in developing and implementing post-fire treatments. A catastrophic fire isn't the end, but a new stage of fire risk. The buildup of fuels adjacent to our communities will remain for decades and the next fire will undoubtedly be worse in all respects. The Fire Safe Council's resolve is to protect our volunteer firefighters, our communities and our valuable natural resources.

The Fire Safe Council wants to ensure that the vitally needed salvage and non-merchantable fuel removals in the areas of these previous major wildland fires be implemented quickly. If we, and the federal agencies responsible for these lands, are not successful in removing the threats posed by the extremely heavy dead and downed fuels left in the aftermath of these fires, the residents of Trinity County face a much greater threat for decades to come. Residential subdivisions affected by fire have been rebuilt in the past and will be rebuilt in the future. Unfortunately, people believe that since these areas have suffered a wildfire already, they are "fire

proofed". Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, without substantive action to salvage fire-damaged timber and subsidize the removal of non-merchantable, fire-damaged materials, these areas will be facing much greater fire danger in the future.



Salvage and restoration activities must begin as soon as possible to ensure the useable material is utilized and not wasted. The value of the material could substantially offset the cost of restoration activities and provide a valuable and much needed resource to local, wood-product businesses. However, rehabilitation costs are often far more than are available through salvage receipts or appropriated funding. If these burned areas are to be cleaned up and then maintained in a fire safe condition, more funding must be provided that gets to the ground and on a consistent long-term basis.

The Trinity County Fire Safe Council recently sent a letter to several elected representatives in Washington to ask for their help. This letter pointed out that four years of National Fire Plan funding has made it clear that the available funds getting to the ground after filtering through the bureaucratic process are

woefully inadequate to address the needs in these fire prone forests.

This letter stated that we need their assistance to require the responsible agencies to work together immediately after a fire to develop salvage and rehabilitation plans consistent with applicable laws, regulations and plan guidelines.

This will allow more of the value in the salvage to be captured before the trees begin to rot.

The Fire Safe Council requested our representatives help to achieve the following:

- Enable agencies to take an immediate and a long-term view in developing and implementing post-fire treatments.
- Ensure that vitally needed salvage and non-merchantable fuel removals in the areas of major wildland fires be implemented quickly.
- Re-forestation programs need to provide management that includes fuel reduction and maintenance until we have fire-resistant forests.
- All salvage needs to be linked to the best possible level of rehabilitation of the landscape.
- More funding must be provided and it must get to the projects on the ground consistently and on over the long-term.
- Agencies must be adequately staffed with qualified people to accomplish the goal of implementing post-fire salvage and comprehensive, long-term forest and watershed rehabilitation.

Featured Employee

The District's newest employee Dan Westermeyer, Project Implementation Coordinator, comes with a record of experience and interests as long as his title. Dan was hired in June to assist in the development of road inventories and implementation of erosion control projects.



Dan moved to Trinity County in 1989, after graduating from Humboldt State University with a BS in Natural Resources. His background includes performing wildlife and fisheries field research for the US Forest Service, CA Dept. of Fish and Game, and as a private consultant. Dan has also worked as a Planner for the Trinity County Planning Department. In addition he has worked part-time, for the past 9 years, as an Emergency Medical Technician for Trinity County Life Support.

Besides hiking in the Alps, Dan enjoys most water sports, especially kayaking and rafting. This is not surprising as he served seven years in the Navy as a deep sea diver!

Answer Key for puzzle on page 5

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 B L A C K B E R R Y G

District Manager's Corner--Pat Frost

It is said that variety is the spice of life. That old saying is an important one at the District in many ways. Conservation takes many forms and the District is very fortunate to be able to work on a wide range



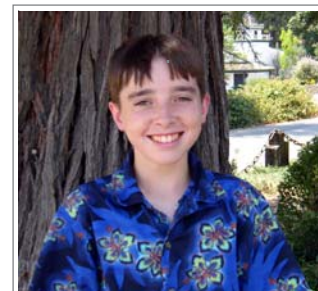
of projects this year. Thumb through the pages of each issue of the *Conservation Almanac* or go to our www.tcrd.net to get a sampling of the fuels reduction, erosion control, stream restoration, weed management and education projects that keep the District's hard-working and dedicated employees busy.

This variety of projects also means that we have to form a variety of partnerships to fund and complete the work. The District receives funds from many sources. For example – this issue of the *Conservation Almanac* comes to you with funds from three sources (the Trinity River Restoration Program, the Sacramento Regional Foundation and Trinity County's Title III program). The industrial park wetland restoration project featured on page 3 is being done with funds from the Natural Resource Conservation Service through an agreement with Trinity County. Our work in the South Fork Trinity River is another example of strong partnerships – stream monitoring (California Department of Fish & Game and the State Water Resources Control Board) and erosion control (USFS, Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee and California Department of Fish & Game). We rely on the skills and knowledge of local contractors, suppliers and businesses to work with our staff to design and implement high quality, cost effective conservation projects.

Different ideas and outlooks are critical for the District to help us focus on what is important and how we can meet the conservation needs of Trinity County. I am very fortunate that I sit on a number of advisory committees. Groups like

the Trinity Adaptive Management Working Group (page 1) and the Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee are designed to bring people from different backgrounds together to share ideas and develop strategies for managing our natural resources. The recommendations that come out of these groups are stronger and more effective, because of this diversity of opinions and I know that my own approach to solving problems is enriched by what I learn from my colleagues.

Speaking of which, one of my newest colleagues is Nathan Parks, a tenth grader at Trinity High School. Nathan is working in our office this summer. He brings a whole new perspective to the District –



his is the view of youthful optimism and fresh ideas. He has an eagerness to learn and an aptitude for sharing. Nathan gives me great encouragement that the next generation is ready to take its place along side of us to meet the challenges of managing our natural resources for their children. Nathan gives me a reason to find ways to bring more high school students to the District during vacations and after school. So thanks Nathan!

Trinity County RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Established 1956

District Board Meetings

Third Wednesday
5:30 PM
Open to the Public

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The Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) is a special district set up under state law to carry out conservation work and education. It is a non-profit, self-governing district whose board of directors volunteer their time.

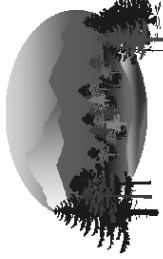
The TCRCD Vision

TCRCD envisions a balance between utilization and conservation of our natural resources. Through economic diversity and ecosystem management our communities will achieve and sustain a quality environment and healthy economy.

The TCRCD Mission

To assist people in protecting, managing, conserving and restoring the natural resources of Trinity County through information, education, technical assistance and project implementation programs.

Trinity County Resource Conservation District
P.O. Box 1450
Weaverville, CA 96093



TCRCD Board of Directors are
Mike Rourke, Rose Owens, Patrick Truman,
Colleen O'Sullivan, and Greg Lowden.

The RCD is landowners assisting landowners with conservation work. The RCD can guide the private landowner in dealings with state and federal agencies. The RCD provides information on the following topics:

- Forest Land Productivity
- Erosion/Sediment Control
- Watershed Improvement
- Wildlife Habitat
- Water Supply and Storage
- Soil and Plant Types
- Educational Programs



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