

Conservation Almanac

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Winter - Spring 2009

Vol. XVIII No. 1

WEAVERVILLE COMMUNITY FOREST

Last year was a great year in the Weaverville Community Forest. The community's partnership with the federal land managers – the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service – was strengthened as we worked together. In December, the District and the Forest Service entered into a new, 10-year cooperative agreement for almost all of the Forest Service lands in the Weaverville basin to be managed as a part of the Weaverville Community Forest (WCF). This will increase the size of the community forest to about 13,000 acres. The initial community forest was formed in 2005 from 984 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands. The same principles that have guided stewardship on the BLM lands will now be used to manage the entire community forest. These strategic efforts include the following:

- Promote healthy forest stands and reduce fire hazards through vegetation management
- Road and trail maintenance and obliteration to improve or maintain water quality
- Weed management.
- Watershed and wildlife habitat improvement
- Cultural resources protection and interpretation
- Effectiveness monitoring
- Community outreach and outdoor education
- Increased recreational use

The District understands the importance of planning AND implementing projects at the same time. So we put down our pens and picked up our tools to implement a number of projects in 2008 with the BLM. This plan focused on smaller stewardship projects that did not involve the removal of merchantable timber. Instead, these projects met other stewardship objectives using

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Weaverville Community Forest, cont.

funds earned from the timber sale in 2007. Fuels reduction work continued in the vicinity of the 2007 timber harvest and firewood was sold. Additional small diameter trees were removed and will be the source of firewood this year. Brush was removed in the Grub Gulch area of the Oregon Fire to increase growth of conifer seedlings and additional trees were planted. The "Christmas Tree Farm" was replanted and Douglas Fir seedlings were cared for throughout the summer, resulting in a 95 percent survival rate.

A new trail was constructed along Weaver Creek, extending Weaver Basin Trail system from Mill Street to the Industrial Park. A blackberry eradication project was completed along portions of this same trail. A crew from the Trinity River Conservation Camp built the mile-long trail in May by cutting away huge blackberry thickets to clear a route. Then a herd of 32 goats was brought in for two weeks to browse back the new shoots.

Getting people out to the community forest is key to its continued success. We gave a number of tours of the community forest in 2008 to showcase the projects on BLM lands and to assist with efforts to expand it onto USFS lands. Interpretive tours were provided to:

- General Accountability Office of Congress (April 17)
- Humboldt State University Natural Resources Class (April 3)
- BLM Resource Advisory Committee (June 11)
- California Association of Conservation Districts Forestry Committee (August 14)
- University of California Cooperative Extension Roads Workshop (September 13)
- Congressman Herger (October 6)
- East African Group Study Exchange Team (November 14)

Much good is derived from involving the community in the forest and its management. The 2008 Community Firewood project was a great success. Wood purchased by TCRCD from BLM was prepped and sold for local household heating use. The Lowden Aquatic Park Project (LAPP) worked with TCRCD staff for the second year to collect Douglas Fir boughs from the forest. These were used to make holiday wreaths and swags as a fundraiser for LAPP and to decorate downtown Weaverville.

In 2008, the District was able to obtain \$102,800.00 in additional funding for the forest from other sources, by leveraging WCF Stewardship funds obtained through the 2007 timber sale. These funds will be used to assist with reducing impacts of wildfire on the streams in Weaverville basin, to improve the forest stands in the Grub Gulch area, to storm proof Democrat Gulch Road and to develop an educational brochure for trails in the West Weaver Creek Mining District.

Trinity River Flow Releases - Frequently Asked Questions

Q: WHAT CONTROLS THE WATER LEVEL IN TRINITY LAKE?

A: The level of the Trinity Lake works just like your checking account, it is controlled by how much water comes in and how much water is released. The inflow to Trinity Lake is based on how much rain and snow nature provides. Releases from Trinity Lake either go down the Trinity River or are diverted into the Sacramento River through the big pipes you can see coming down the mountain into upper Whiskeytown Lake. The Bureau of Reclamation controls how much water is released from Trinity Lake. This is a difficult task because they have to balance the competing needs for the water (on both the Trinity River and Sacramento River) while trying to maintain adequate lake levels. Releases from Trinity Lake are also cold and are used to meet regulatory criteria for water temperature on both the Trinity and Sacramento Rivers. These water temperature criteria benefit fish and are one of the main drivers of how much water is released in dry years. Current and forecast lake levels can be found on the Trinity River Restoration Program website at www.trrp.net/water.

Q: WHAT IS THE WATER IN TRINITY LAKE USED FOR?

A: Water in the lake provides excellent recreational opportunities for boating and fishing. Water released down the Trinity River supports the fish and wildlife populations, provides recreational opportunities for rafting and fishing, and also supplies water to local communities in Trinity and Humboldt Counties. Diversions to the Central Valley are made for a variety of purposes including municipal water supply, irrigation, and hydropower.

Q: WILL FLOWS TO THE TRINITY RIVER BE REDUCED THIS YEAR DUE TO THE LOW LAKE LEVELS?

A: The answer is both yes and no. The amount of water released down the Trinity River is tied to the climate (i.e. how much rain and snow we get) and ranges from 815,000 acre-feet in "extremely wet" years to 369,000 acre-feet in "critically dry" years. So, yes the river flows are reduced in dry years. However, these legally mandated amounts are fixed, regardless of the lake level.

Q: WHY IS TRINITY LAKE LOW BUT WHISKEYTOWN LAKE IS HIGH?

A: The main purpose of Trinity Lake is for water storage. Lake levels have dropped over the last several years in response to a high demand for water. Whiskeytown Lake acts as a pass through for the water diverted from Trinity Lake into the Sacramento River. Whiskeytown lake is kept full in order to keep the water going to the Sacramento River as cold as possible. Whiskeytown lake is drawn down by approximately 10 feet in the winter as a flood protection measure. Keeping the lake full provides excellent year round recreational opportunities and forms the heart of the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area.

Q: WHAT ARE THE SCHEDULED FLOW RELEASES FROM LEWISTON DAM INTO THE TRINITY RIVER?

A: Flows are kept at 300 cubic feet per second (cfs) through the winter months and then come up at the end of April. The actual flow schedule for the rest of the year is set in mid-April, after the water year is classified and we know how much water is available for release. The final release schedule is then posted at the Trinity River Restoration Program website (www.trrp.net/water). The website also has information on current and forecast river conditions and lake levels, and lets you sign up for automated announcements of flow releases changes via email or phone. Feel free to call the Trinity River Restoration Program (530-623-1800), or better yet, stop by the office at 1313 S. Main St. in Weaverville (next to TOPS supermarket) if you can't find the information you want on the website.

Q: HOW DOES THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION DECIDE TO MAKE HIGHER FLOW RELEASES TO THE TRINITY RIVER DURING THE WINTER?

A: During the winter, the Bureau of Reclamation maintains lower levels in Trinity Reservoir to provide a buffer in the event of an extremely large winter storm. The quantity of that buffer is based on several factors, and primarily references many years of hydrologic record for the basin. Maintaining storage space is a very important aspect of flood control operations, and is fundamental in protecting areas downstream of Trinity Dam, as well as the dam itself. As winter storms fill Trinity Reservoir, the Bureau of Reclamation may need to increase releases to the Trinity River to maintain the lower lake levels. Because these elevated winter releases help protect the dam, they are commonly called "Safety of Dams releases" and may or may not occur in conjunction with actual winter storms. Safety of Dams releases are typically no greater than 6,000 cfs, but may go higher if conditions warrant.

Q: WINTER STORMS CAUSED TREES AND OTHER WOODY DEBRIS TO FALL INTO THE RIVER NEAR MY HOUSE. DOES THE TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM PLAN TO REMOVE THE DEBRIS FROM THE RIVER?

A: The Trinity River Restoration Program has no authority, and is not responsible, for removing woody debris from the river. Private landowners and public land management agencies make decisions about removing debris that might impair public safety, threaten the integrity of bridges or other structures, or increase the likelihood of local flooding. If landowners elect to remove debris, we urge that landowners are cautious and follow safe work practices. If left within the watercourse, fallen trees and bushes do play an important role in the juvenile life stages of fish in the river. Large woody debris provides cover, shade, and structure for fish. It also causes local scour that refreshes gravel, and increases the number and size of pools or holes for fish to utilize during low flow periods. Large woody debris contributes to the geomorphic processes, resulting in the creation and maintenance of the complex river habitats required by Chinook and Coho salmon and steelhead.

PLANTING VEGETATION FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE

The Trinity River Restoration Program has been working to create quality fish and wildlife habitat at its channel rehabilitation sites by releasing the river from its straightened condition (confined by vegetation and historically high banks) and allowing it to create complex habitat within its floodplain. This is done by lowering the floodplains so they are inundated with water more often, opening up the river banks, and adding gravel in selected locations.

This rehab work requires removal of much of the riverine vegetation on the banks and floodplain, yet this vegetation (e.g., willows and cottonwoods) is integral to creation of good fish and wildlife habitat. So, we save the big trees where we can and replace the vegetation lost during construction. This is done using a combination of mechanical planting and by creating conditions that encourage natural recolonization. The replanting is a joint project between the Trinity County Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the TRRP and occurs in the wet months following the project construction.

To ensure a natural diversity of plants recolonizes the constructed channel rehab sites mature trees are preserved as seed sources. These preferred "save trees" are the relatively rare and tall "tree type" willows (e.g., red and shiny willow species) and cottonwoods. Additionally, cuttings from a diversity of native riverine trees are planted and natural seed beds (e.g., small depressions and logs left on the floodplain) are left to capture drifting seeds and encourage natural riparian regeneration. To enhance these sites even further, wetland plant species like sedges and rushes (and various willow species) are also being planted on the edge of side channels and wetlands. Altogether, these plants will provide important shelter and food for fish and wildlife, especially when the high flows wash bugs from these plants into the river and side channels.

While channel rehab sites are quick to construct, we are testing various techniques to efficiently and quickly restore disturbed areas for fish and wildlife use. In fall 2008, at the Forest Service's Sven-Olberston Rehab site near Lewiston dam, a pond behind the weir was drained, the floodplain lowered, and several side channels were created. Already in February 2009, spawning steelhead and chinook salmon juveniles were using the new side channels. The RCD has now planted sedges in the area. They used a backhoe to plant pole cuttings of relatively rare riverine species deep enough so they will remain in contact with wet soils. These plantings were placed on the edges of the side channel so they can soon provide cover for juvenile fish which are already using the area. The RCD also seeded the floodplain throughout the Lewiston project area, with inundation tolerant species of rye and barley that will grow to enhance wildlife habitat for years to come. If you start to visit the river near Lewiston now, you too may watch as these recently constructed channel rehab sites develop and grow to maturity.



A selection of riparian native plants delivered for planting.



Using backhoe to dig 10-foot deep planting holes so live stake cutting contact groundwater.



Newly constructed side channel at Indian Creek restoration site.



Watering fresh "pole" plantings to increase root to soil contact.



Mature trees are left to serve as seed sources for natural revegetation.



Deeply planted live stake cuttings of Cottonwood and Willow along bank at Sven site.

RCD Welcomes New Americorps Members

Bo Kimball is one of two members of the AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Project (WSP) assigned to the District for 2009, and we're excited about the experience, energy and enthusiasm she brings to her work. Bo recently retired as a middle school teacher in San Francisco and figured she was done with classroom teaching. It turned out this opportunity to focus on bringing fun environmental education activities to Trinity County kids through WSP was too irresistible.

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA, Bo has a history of helping and teaching others. She moved to Berkeley with her two daughters in 1970 just as civil rights and women's rights movements were progressing.

"I joined a women's center, an African dance class and a cooperative child care center. I also joined a food conspiracy where all members help to obtain healthy, inexpensive foods, and distribute it among members."

Bo played keyboard with other women musicians and one invited her and her daughters to move to Bridgeville in Humboldt to live on some land there. "We spent that summer living in an A-frame, sometimes sleeping out in the meadow under a sky so starry I couldn't believe my good fortune," Bo recounted. "Then some of us moved to Eureka to enroll our children in school, rented a big Victorian and lived the communal life. My girls flourished in Humboldt County and I worked with my housemates to create and run the Humboldt Shelter for Battered Women. We made presentations, raised awareness and sought financial support. We spent nights on-call for the 24-hour crisis line and provided child care and advocacy for sheltered women during their stay."

"My love of nature and desire to do service work brought me here, through AmeriCorps and the Watershed Stewards Project, to the Trinity County Resource Conservation District. In the schools, I meet young people with open faces and minds, curious to know and eager to share what they already know. I deeply enjoy the slower pace and simpler, more essential daily routine of Weaverville and Trinity County. I especially enjoy the welcoming warmth of the people here."

Danny McKnight grew up and went to school in southern California, graduating in December with a Bachelors of Science in Environmental Science from Cal Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks.

Knowing he wanted to do service of some sort, Danny began researching various Americorps programs and came across the Watershed Stewards Project. Being one of the oldest and most respected Americorps programs and one of the few that focus on environmental issues, it seemed the perfect fit.

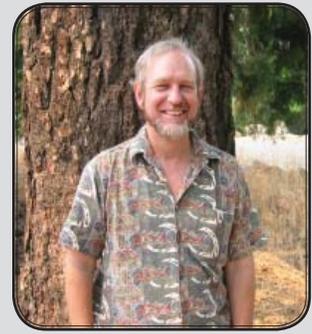
Danny's education helped to shape his ideals and goals, giving him a sense of drive and focus to be an instrument of change in the world. Danny believes his interest in nature and environmentalism started at a young age. Childhood vacations to places like Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, The Colorado River, and countless camping trips to lakes in California inspired in him a love of the natural world. Danny's time in college opened his eyes to ways humans are coming into conflict with nature and this instilled in him a desire to work towards stewardship of our natural resources.

In Danny's spare time he enjoys snowboarding, hiking, cycling, and gardening, and so far Danny feels right at home here in beautiful Trinity County. He chose to serve with the TCRCD because of the opportunity to spend a significant portion of his service year educating youth about the natural world and ways to protect it. Danny is hoping that throughout his time here in Trinity County he can have a positive impact and learn as much as possible in the process.



District Manager's Corner Pat Frost

I have been the District's manager for 10 years. It has been an amazing decade. There have been a lot of milestones. We crossed over into a new century and a new millennium. We have wonderful new technologies to help us do our work. In 1999 the District was just entering the world of the Internet, and now www.tcrd.net is a common public resource for information on our programs and emerging projects. The year 1999 was the first year for the Weaverville Elementary School Sixth Grade Environmental Education Camp at Bar 717 Ranch near Hyampom. That same year we held the first Salmon Festival. This year we will celebrate the tenth annual Salmon and Heritage Fruit Festival. We set up our booth at the County Fair in 1999 and we've looked forward to being there every year since. We travelled around the county in 1999 to get your ideas about wildfire planning and this year we will head back out to see what has been accomplished, what has changed and what still needs to be done. People in Weaverville voiced concerns about their viewshed with the fate of the federal forestlands around their town in 1999. Now, in 2009, we have the 13,000-acre Weaverville Community Forest and the ability to help steward those lands.



I am trained in the sciences, so I am always looking for trends in my observations. I look at the 10 years I have been at the District and a resident of Trinity County, and I see two things that stand out. One is the strong willingness of all of you to volunteer and do your part for your neighbors, your community and this remarkable place we call home. We have a Weaverville Community Forest, because you have shown how much you care by coming to meetings and traipsing around the woods with the BLM and the Forest Service. We have the Environmental Education Camp, because parents and teachers care enough about the next generation of leaders to give them the opportunity to spend a week in the woods and because local natural resources professionals are willing to give up a day of work to collect bugs in Hayfork Creek and explain how to measure a tree or use a compass.

The other observation is that we have had the great good fortune to have AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Project members in our community since 1999. Every year two new members come to serve with us. Bo (Barbara) Kimball and Danny McKnight are already out there working for you, applying their energy and skills to the District's efforts to deliver its programs. These are as wide-ranging as forest health, soil and water conservation, and watershed education. Bo and Danny join a long list of volunteers helping all of us realize your dreams, whether for a successful Community Forest, a fun-filled summer day camp at the Young Family Ranch, healthier forests, or restored rivers and streams. Please join me in welcoming Bo and Danny to our county, our communities and to the family of resource conservation.

Trinity County Resource Conservation District Presents

WEAVERVILLE SUMMER DAY CAMP

**Young Family Ranch — on Oregon St.
Students entering 1st through 5th grade**

**July 6 through July 10 - 1st Session
July 13 through July 17 - 2nd Session
July 20 through July 24 - 3rd Session
July 27 through July 31 - 4th Session**

*Space is limited to 35 students each session
Day Camp times are 9:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.*

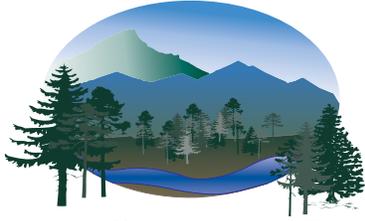
Cost: \$25.00 per week session



Contact: Danny or Bo
Trinity County RCD
623-6004

**New This Year!
Special Session for 4th, 5th & 6th Graders!
Enjoy Field Trips to Explore & Study Nature!**

Trinity County



Resource Conservation District

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



Established 1956

District Board Meetings

Third Wednesday
5:30 PM
Open to the Public

TCRCD Office

Number One
Horseshoe Lane
PO Box 1450
Weaverville, CA 96093

Telephone

(530) 623-6004
FAX 623-6006
E-mail: info@tcrd.net
Internet: www.tcrd.net

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 not-for-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.

**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**
- **Watershed Improvement**
- **Water Supply and Storage**
- **Educational Programs**
- **Erosion/Sediment Control**
- **Wildlife Habitat**
- **Soil and Plant Types**
- **Fuels Reduction**

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