

# Conservation Almanac

*Trinity County Resource Conservation District*

Fall 1999

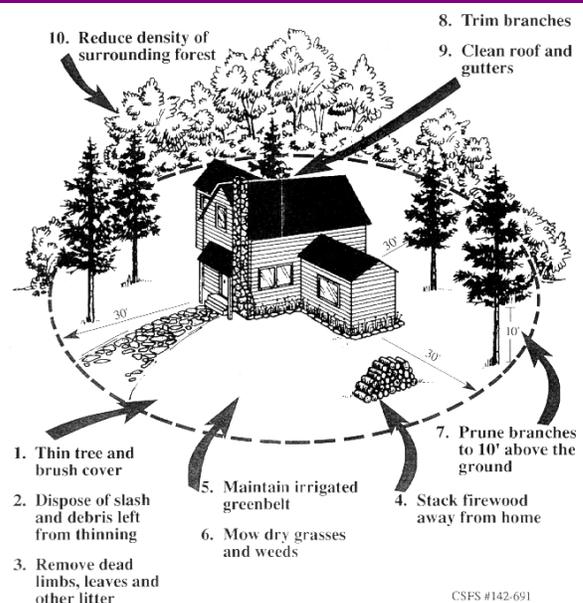
Vol. VIII No. 4

## Trinity County Fire Safe Council Responds to Fire Risk

Recognizing the importance of the County's forests on our lives and the significance of the fire risk, the Trinity County RCD joined the Fire Safe Council when it was formed late last year. In the wake of the devastating Lowden Fire and the more recent Big Bar Complex of fires, the Trinity County Fire Safe Council is compelled to address all landowners in Trinity County. What occurred in Lewiston can very easily occur in your community. Whether a fire starts from natural causes such as lightning, or is human-induced as a result of a discarded cigarette, wood stove embers, a car's catalytic converter, or the lack of spark arrester on equipment, the fire risk in this county is intense. Fuel loads have built up over the past 40 years. When a fire does occur, it tends to be catastrophic rather than one that can be easily defended against. The costs and frequency of wild land fires are increasing.

The Lewiston fire dramatized this point all too clearly for us. Hopefully this disaster can have a silver lining, if it alerts other landowners to the fact that we can no longer be complacent about the situation. Fire risks increase as human encroachments expand in forested areas. It is time to stop talking about it and take action! We need to do everything we can to be prepared for fire.

The Fire Safe Council intends to do everything possible to keep homes and communities from being



## Homeowner Fire Safety Guidelines

destroyed by fire. Planning and education are key to our mission. The Trinity County fire planning effort has multiple parts including: 1) Developing a strategic plan for the management of fire based on local expertise and the latest fire

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## TCRCD's No-till Drill

The Trinity County Resource Conservation District owns a Great Plains End-Wheel No-till Drill and we are encouraging landowners to discover the benefits the No-till drill can make on their properties.

The machine is designed especially for the over-drilling of pasture and the direct drilling of crop seeds and fertilizers. A variety of soil types, moisture and trash conditions can be tolerated with this equipment. The drill is 10' wide and about 10' long and pulls easily behind a truck (¾ ton or greater for steeper grades). The RCD charges a rental fee of \$75 per day, making the drill a cost-effective tool.



No till Drill

### Benefits of Conservation Tillage:

**Reduced labor** – as little as 1 trip for seeding compared to 2-3 for conventional tillage/planting.

**Improved long-term productivity** – carbon accounts for

about half of the organic matter in the soil. The less you till, the more carbon you keep in the soil to build organic matter to promote future productivity.

**Improved water quality** – crop residues help hold soil particles and associated nutrients and pesticides on the field, cutting

**Reduced soil erosion** – minimizes soil disturbance.

**Decreased soil compaction** – reduced weight and horsepower requirements with no-till will minimize compaction.

**Improved soil tilth** – no till increases soil particle aggregation which makes it easier for water to move through the soil and allows plants to use less energy to establish roots.

Please call (530) 623-6004 for more information on the no-till drill.

## Weaverville Basin Trail Committee—Public Meetings

The Weaverville Basin Trail Committee held two public meetings over the past few months to obtain public input regarding the in-town components of the trail system. This information will be incorporated into the Weaverville Basin Trail Master Plan being developed through funds from the US Forest Service's Community Economic Revi-

talization Team (CERT) program.

The Master Plan will help prioritize projects and assist in the ability to obtain funds to implement the projects.



Supervisor Chris Erikson assisting the design team with trail alignment

Approximately 60 interested citizens—hikers, bicyclists, adjacent property owners and motorcyclists—attended these two meetings to provide input to the design team. The participants had the opportunity to see some broad concepts on what a completed trail system could do to highlight the uniqueness and beauty of the Weaverville Basin, including historical and natural features of the area.

Discussion included the design of such key features as trailheads, informational kiosks, and various trail surfaces for different uses. The Master Plan is expected to be completed this month.

Sponsors of this project include the RCD, NRCS, and the Resource Conservation & Development Council.

# K I D S P A G E

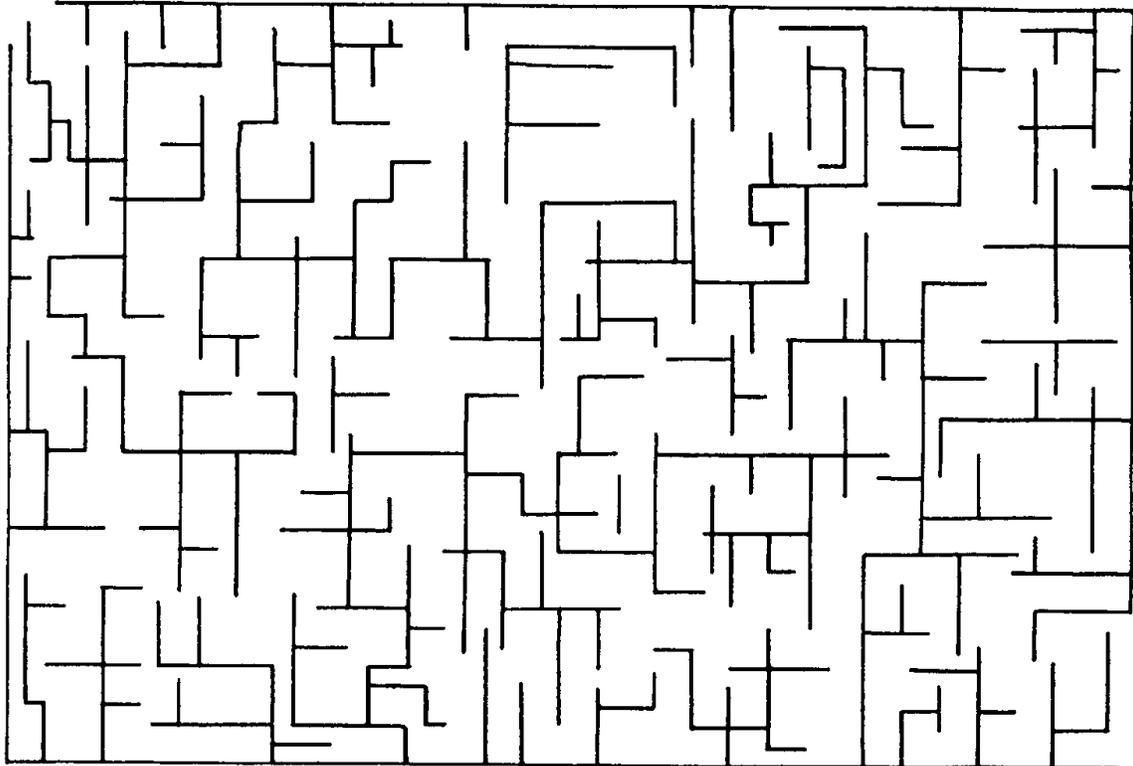
## Help Ted the Tanager Find His Winter Home in Mexico

Many of the birds that we see around our homes all summer are not here in the winter. Birds like robins, hummingbirds and western tanagers spend the winter in warmer places like the deserts of southern Arizona, and the tropical forests of Mexico and Costa Rica. They return to Trinity County in the springtime when the weather gets warmer to build nests and raise families. This is called migration.

Ted the Tanager is a western tanager. You'll recognize him by his bright yellow breast, black wings and orange head. In Trinity County he sits on the very tops of trees and sings all day long. It is time for him to find his way to the lush, green forests of southern Mexico for the winter. Help Ted find his way through the maze below.



**Summer**



**Winter**



## Covington Mill Fuels Reduction Project

The RCD obtained funds to implement a fuels reduction project and develop a strategic plan for the Covington Mill community from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CDF) Forest Stewardship Project. This was submitted at the request of the neighborhood, many of whom have been concerned about the buildup of fuels and the high risk of fire.

The RCD has contracted with Ken Baldwin, a local Registered Professional Forester, to prepare a strategic plan for the area. He is working with CDF, the US Forest Service, Sierra Pacific Industries and area residents to gather relevant information to assess high risk areas in order to come up with a prioritized list of projects that should be completed to minimize the threat of fire in this community.

As a pilot project, the RCD worked with participating landowners to reduce fuel loads and fuel ladders on private property around Guy Covington Drive. We had a tremendous response from the community (most likely the spate of recent fires in the county added to the interest). About 20 landowners worked to clear underbrush and fuel ladders on their property. The RCD then chipped the material that was piled up on the roadside. We had more people and material than anticipated, and with the current funds available, were barely able to complete the chip-



Charley Gacek and Jack McGlynn Chipping Material Cleared by Landowners in the Covington Mill Community

ping of all of the material provided. With the success of this project, we hope to obtain additional funds to implement additional work and convince other neighbors to participate during the next phase of the project. There are now several great examples of what a good defensible space around a home should look like in this community and should serve as an example or model to other landowners and other communities in the county.

Other aspects of this project include implementing a buffer along Long Canyon Road and continuing outreach efforts with the Long Canyon and Lake Forest Communities encouraging participation in additional phases of fuels reduc-

tion efforts in this area of the county.

One of the landowner's who was instrumental in the success of this project, John Griffin, stated, "This has been very, very gratifying. The community members acted with great enthusiasm to get their neighborhood fire safe, and to help keep it from going up in smoke. We really look forward to the RCD getting additional funding to keep the project going next year."

We have made significant headway, but additional work is necessary. The drawing on the front page of this newsletter depicts what we are aiming to achieve.

## Lowden Fire Rehabilitation—RCD's Role

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) requested the assistance of the RCD to utilize local labor to implement restoration projects in order to rehabilitate the burned area of the Lowden Fire, which affected approximately 2,000 acres and adjacent downslope properties.

In August the RCD Board of Directors came to an agreement with BLM authorizing expenditures of up to \$1.8 million dollars through federal fiscal year 2002 to implement several aspects of the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) plan. The Board also agreed to be the local sponsor for the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Protection program for the fire in July.



### These projects include:

- Rehabilitate handlines, dozer lines, drop points, staging areas, and unnecessary access roads which were a result of fire suppression activities.
- Remove debris from existing culverts and replace inadequate drainage culverts.
- Remove debris from basins.
- Remove residual floatable debris from channels and flood plains.
- Reforest by planting native (commercial) conifer species.
- Revegetate using a variety of native non-commercial species.
- Monitor reforestation, aerial seeding, and revegetation success.
- Inventory of private access roads for erosion problems.

A primary function of the RCD is to provide assistance to landowners. The RCD has a solid record of providing the types of assistance that will be needed in the coming months, and possibly years for the rehabilitation of the Lowden Fire burned area. We are the local agency with the expertise in revegetation, soil stabilization, and sediment control. Our experience in Grass Valley Creek watershed and with decomposed granite is important to the success of the rehabilitation effort. The RCD has a long history of working closely with the BLM and the other agencies that will be involved in the project. Community outreach and education also will be a critical task to assure that best management practices are used and maintained to protect private property and the natural resources in the area of the fire. The RCD has the experience and the tools to assist in this effort.

## Glimpse From the Past

The remains of the East Fork Ranch Barn is located on the Wildwood Road at the junction of East Fork and Hayfork Creek.

This barn is on the large flat that was the site of the McCampbell home in the 1890's. A cluster of homes used to be located in this area.



East Fork Ranch Barn

(Continued from page 1)

ecological science. This plan will use fire models and GIS for indications of where primary fuel breaks, staging areas, community protection perimeters, etc. should be located. This plan also will assist in prioritizing risk in order to indicate areas that can most effectively be treated and have the most impact in providing safer communities, 2) fuels reduction demonstration projects on private lands, 3) forest restoration, and fuels reduction demonstration projects on public lands, 4) implementation of the strategic plan, 5) coordination and enhancement of emergency response to protect assets at risk, and 6) public outreach and education.

The Trinity County Fire Safe Council, with the support of the Trinity County Board of Supervisors, consists of local Volunteer Fire Departments, the Trinity County Planning Department, the Trinity County Resource Conservation District (RCD), the Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC), as well as local representatives of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), US Forest Service (both Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers), and Bureau of Land Management. Community organizations such as SAFE, Women in Timber, and Trinity Bioregion Group also are members. They have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a coordinated program for fire management in the county by identifying high risk areas and undertaking strategic planning to reduce those risks on private and public lands using a locally-led planning proc-

ess. If you are interested in this process, meetings of the Fire Safe Council are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Weaverville Fire Hall at 7 p.m.

The Trinity County Fire Safe Council would like to encourage landowners to take a critical look at their property and take steps necessary to create defensible space around homes and to thin overstocked forested areas. The RCD and CDF have been working with a few neighborhoods that have expressed interest in making their areas safer. These include East Branch in Weaverville, Covington Mill, and Hyampom Road in Hayfork. We soon will be implementing similar demonstration projects with landowners in Timber Ridge (Weaverville) and Post Mountain (South of Hayfork), who have expressed interest in reducing the risk of fire in their community. The WRTC has implemented several projects to reduce fuels on US Forest Service lands. It is hoped that future treatments can be done on an integrated basis rather than a piecemeal one, so that the treatments will be as effective as possible in reducing the threat of catastrophic fire.

The Trinity Fire Safe Council recommends that landowners protect their homes and land by:

#### **Creating adequate defensible space around structures**

- minimize or eliminate tall grass, weeds and dense brush
- remove accumulations of woody debris, leaves, and pine needles
- replace highly flammable plants with fire resistant species
- remove trees, especially highly flammable ones, within 10' of structures

#### **Breaking up the continuity of fuels**

- Removing fuel ladders
- Irrigating the landscape around your home
- Stacking wood at least 100' away and uphill from the house and other structures
- Installing or replacing your address sign to be visible to firefighters
- Making sure roads are passable for fire fighting equipment
- Contacting CDF or RCD for more ideas on how to reduce the fire risk in your area.

#### **Definitions\***

**Defensible Space** is that area between a house and an oncoming wildfire where the vegetation has been modified to reduce the threat and allow firefighters to safely defend the house.

**Fuel Ladders** are created by layers of flammable material that allow a fire to move from the ground to the tree canopy.

**Assets at risk** includes homes and other structures, as well as forestland.

**Fire risk** is the chance of a fire starting based on several factors such as humans, their equipment, and their facilities.

**Fuel condition** is a combination of fuel size, quantity, arrangement, and the ratio of dead to live material.

**Fire hazard** is composed of fire risk, fuel condition, weather (including temperature, humidity and wind) and topography.

**GIS** - Geographic Information Systems are used to map and analyze landscape scale information such as fire risk and hazards.

\* Excerpted from the CDF's, Forest Stewardship Program newsletter.



## District Manager's Corner

Pat Frost

As a property owner it seems like there are always chores that need to be done. They vary by the season, but they are there every year. You all know what I am talking about. How many of us, though, include maintaining our property to reduce the risk of fire? I am not just talking about cleaning out the chimney, but really taking a close look at the landscape that surrounds our homes and making sure that we have done what we can to provide a defensible space.

The recent fires in Trinity County should be a reminder that creating and maintaining a fire safe environment is something we all can do. This year Carol, my wife, and I have been building a home. We consulted with the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection. CDF has simple, easy to follow guidelines that are as important to our safety as any part of the building code.

In this issue of the Conservation Almanac, you will see examples from around the county where your neighbors are planning and implementing Fire Safe programs. In Covington Mill, as in other rural residential communities, the homeowners are working with the RCD to create defensible space. The Trinity County Fire Safe Council, a group of concerned citizens and agencies, is dedicated to designing a plan for safer, healthier forests within Trinity County.

The Resource Conservation District has been directing significant resources towards the Fire Safety and Forest Health issues in Trin-



ity County — dedicated staff like Charley Gacek and Jack McGlynn, who spent several days working with the residents in Covington Mill and Noreen Doyas' unwavering efforts to find financial support for fuels management projects. We invite everyone in Trinity County to join us, and to make a Fire Safe landscape a regular part of your home maintenance.

### Employee Feature Helen Aunspach

Not many people can lay claim to starting a new job on April Fool's day, but that is what Helen Aunspach, the Trinity County RCD's new Fiscal Manager did. Helen was born and raised in Red Bluff, and attended Shasta College and later College of the Redwoods before entering the medical profession. Her work experience has been as varied as Napa State Hospital, Sempervirens in Humboldt County and the Trinity County Probation Department.



Helen and her husband, Joe, have been residents of Trinity County since 1990, but their attraction to our wonderful corner of California goes back many years. As avid kayakers, Helen and Joe were visiting Trinity County every spring and fall for many

years to run the rivers. During those annual visits they began to look for, and eventually found, a special hide-away at Tangle Blue in the north county. The attraction to our peaceful, rural living grew stronger, until finally 9 years ago they gave up the hustle and bustle of places like Sonoma and Humboldt counties for full-time residency here.

This isn't the first time that Helen has worked at the RCD's offices on Horseshoe Lane. Her first job in Trinity County was with the Trinity County Rural Indian Health Clinic when it was located in these same offices. Most recently Helen worked at Trinity Hospital, as the Med/Surgical Unit Secretary. Helen's early training was in psychiatric nursing, and over time she developed an expertise in bookkeeping.

Helen has pretty much hung up her paddle. Now she dedicates her free time to gardening. She is an avid organic gardener, and has been developing an expertise in habitat gardening. "Habitat gardening is the blending of traditional gardening with the surrounding landscape, and emphasizes the use of native plants," Helen proclaimed with great enthusiasm.

When not tending her gardens or driving shuttles for her husband's kayaking runs, you just might see her renovating the homestead at Tangle Blue or keeping Gus, her pet goose, company.

### Meeting Reminders

#### Fire Safe Council Meetings—

the fourth Thursday of each month  
at the Weaverville Fire Hall at 7 pm.

#### South Fork Coordinated Resource Management Planning Group—

October 14—Weaverville Library  
December 2—Fairgrounds, Hayfork

#### Trinity River Task Force—

November 18-19

