

Conservation Almanac

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Winter 2006

Vol. XV No. 1

Down River Fire & Fuel Management Plan

The District has just completed a plan to help landowners and land managers to deal with the threat of wildfire in and around the communities of Salyer and Hawkins Bar. Kenneth Baldwin, a local Registered Professional Forester, led the planning. The Down River Fire & Fuel Management Plan looks at current conditions and fire protection infrastructure and identifies things that can be done to help protect residential properties, promote healthy forests and protect natural resources such as soil, water, fish and wildlife from severe wildfires. The plan addresses residential property protection, fire control access and safety, water development for firefighting, and fuel management. It includes the communities of Salyer, and Hawkins Bar and the residential areas of Oden Flat, Suzy Q Ranch, Gray Flat, Hudson Creek (southeast Willow Creek), and along South Fork Road. It was funded as a part of the “Down River Communities Fire Safe Plan and Demonstration Project” by the USFS through the National Fire Plan Economic Action Program.

There are recommendations that agencies and individual landowners can follow to reduce the danger of wildfires. Kenneth did extensive research and spent a lot of time in the field to develop some overall recommendations and to identify specific projects to be done on private land. They include shaded fuel breaks to reduce ladder and surface fuels, thinning overstocked forests, and using prescribed fire to reduce fire spread and intensity. These projects, taken in conjunction with the work that is being done by the Lower Trinity Ranger District of the USFS, should reduce the likelihood of high severity fires and improve firefighters’ ability to control low and moderate severity fires to prevent them from increasing in intensity or becoming crown fires.

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Trinity River Restoration Program Prepares For High Fishery Flows This Spring

By: Ed Solbos, Implementation Branch Chief, Trinity River Restoration Program

At the time this newsletter went to print, the preliminary water forecast provided by the California Department of Water Resources would indicate a “wet” water year for the Trinity River basin. To the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) this means the potential for releases from Lewiston Dam of up to 8,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) this May. This would be the highest release from Lewiston Dam for fish restoration purposes, and the third highest release since Lewiston Dam was built. To prepare for these flows, the TRRP has been inventorying private structures in the floodplain and working with landowners to assess any potential impacts. If it is determined that existing structures are likely to be damaged as a direct result of the fishery flows, funds are being made available directly to landowners to allow necessary work to be performed prior to release of the flows. These activities have thus far been limited to structures (homes, pump houses, driveways, etc.) that will have some degree of inundation from the 8,500 cfs dam releases. A separate grant program is being developed, to be administered by Trinity County, to address potential water and septic system impacts from the fishery flows. More information about program benefits and eligibility requirements will be available in the near future. If you live along the river and believe you have a structure that will be adversely affected by the 8,500 cfs release, and have not been contacted by TRRP staff, please call **Denise Wiltse, TRRP, at 623-1803.**

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Down River Fire & Fuel Management Plan

Down River Fire Hazard Severity

The Fire Hazard Severity rating in the Down River area is ‘Very High’ (CDF) because:

- Flammable structures are interspersed along the 299 and Trinity River corridor, with concentrations in Gray Flat, Hawkins Bar, Suzy-Q Road, Oden Flat, Salyer, Ammon Ranch, and the Hudson Creek area.
- Most of the residential areas are adjacent to steep slopes with flammable vegetation.
- Roads into many homesites are not adequate to accommodate 2-way fire engine traffic.
- State Highway 299 and five county roads are well traveled during fire season, increasing the risk of human fire starts.
- There is limited access for fire suppression forces in most of the communities.
- Summer conditions include hot, dry and windy weather, especially in the afternoon.
- Thunderstorms, with lightning strikes, are common during the summer months.
- Wildland vegetation is dense in many places, with areas of continuous fuels, including dead fuel on the ground.
- Fire ladders exist in many areas.



Upper Trinity River Watershed Assessment and Management Plan Sediment Delivery Risk Assessment

A sediment source assessment is being conducted by Graham Matthews & Associates for the watershed area that extends from the Trinity Lake dam north to Deadfall Lakes near Mt Eddy. This is being funded by the State Water Resources Control Board as part of the Upper Trinity River Watershed Assessment and Action Plan. The objective is to look at the amount of sediment that gets into the streams and ultimately Trinity Lake. Graham Matthews and his team have done an inventory of erosion sources, looked at whether they are natural or caused by people and estimated which sources would likely produce the most sediment. Phase I was an aerial photograph inventory and mapping and model of erosion sources. Phase II consisted of crews visiting sites on the ground to help verify aerial mapping and model results.



The erosion sources can be divided into two categories termed acute and chronic. Landslides tend to deliver sediment infrequently or acutely, during short and intense storms or spurts. This might happen when the slide originally happens, or years later as the slide moves again. Landslides can be triggered naturally or by land use activities depending on factors like climate, soils, bedrock geology, and slope steepness. On the other hand, chronic erosion typically results from rainfall-running off of disturbed areas, such as roads poorly managed lands or new construction sites and it tends to occur frequently.

Preliminary results of the Phase I and II sediment delivery risk assessment indicate that our network of roads has a high probability of producing chronic and acute erosion that is affecting Trinity Lake. Results show that about half of the active landslides within the Upper Trinity were triggered naturally, about 30 percent were associated with roads, and about 20 percent with timber harvest activities. For chronic erosion, about half is from natural sources, about 40 percent from roads, and 10 percent from timber harvest activities.

The initial results show that about 55 percent of the small streams that flow into Trinity Lake produce more sediment than the EPA recommended in its Trinity River TMDL in 2001. The TMDL, or Total Maximum

Daily Load, is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant (in this case, sediment) that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality objectives. Once the sediment delivery risk assessment is finalized, the results will be reviewed and recommendations will be made in the Upper Trinity River Watershed Assessment and Action Plan to identify and prioritize projects that will help reduce the impacts that erosion has in this watershed and that will help us maintain the natural resources that we all have come to enjoy and benefit from in and around Trinity Lake.



Finishing Touches on Hocker Flat Channel Rehabilitation Site

By: Joe Reiss, Civil Engineer, Trinity River Restoration Program



Located in Junction City, starting where Canyon Creek enters the Trinity River and extending 1 mile downstream, Hocker Flat is the first of over 40 channel rehabilitation projects planned by the Trinity River Restoration Program for construction over the next 5 years. On the ground restoration work at Hocker Flat began in February of last year when the TCRC cleared riparian vegetation to minimize impacts to birds that would otherwise be nesting at the start of construction activities. The construction contract was awarded to Erick Ammon, Inc. (Salyer, CA) and construction began in August. More than 93,000 cubic yards of excavation, earthwork activities were finished in mid-October. A series of winter storms hit the area starting in mid-December, and flows in the Trinity River at Hocker Flat exceeded 6,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), the flow at which the constructed floodplain surfaces were designed to begin to flood and start nature's portion of the restoration work. Flows at Hocker Flat peaked at about 24,000 cfs at midnight on New Year's Eve, resulting in the creation of high flow channels, sediment deposition and scour, and large woody debris landing on floodplain surfaces: exactly what the TRRP hoped would happen.

Following construction activities and the winter storms, Hocker Flat was ready for revegetation. The District has worked closely with the TRRP on revegetation concepts under the supervision of Bernadette Cooney, the District's Revegetation Coordinator, and has been growing plants from seeds and cuttings in preparation for planting at Hocker Flat. The goal of revegetating the rehabilitation sites is to introduce a diverse mixture of native riparian (streamside) plants to the outer edges of the constructed floodplains to provide food and shelter for juvenile salmonids and wildlife. In contrast, much of the today's Trinity River is confined by riparian berms formed by encroachment of white alder, Himalayan blackberry (non-native and invasive), and narrowleaf willow. Riparian species planted at Hocker Flat include black cottonwood, arroyo willow, red willow, shiny willow, Oregon ash, and white alder. Upland areas, where the excavated materials were deposited, were planted with a variety of native, drought tolerant trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers, with the goal of minimizing aesthetic impacts and to discourage colonization by noxious and invasive species.

One of the most challenging aspects of revegetating Hocker Flat was actually putting the riparian plants into the ground, which is comprised of sand and silt with cobbles up to 2-feet in diameter. The planting plan called for placing over 3,000 cottonwood and willow "pole" cuttings at least 4 feet deep into the groundwater table. To do so with conventional methods (e.g. backhoe or by hand) would have taken several weeks and been cost prohibitive. That's where the "Stinger" came in. The Stinger is an excavator attachment used specifically for planting in difficult areas, and was developed for planting willows in rip-rapped banks. The District contracted Erick Ammon, Inc. for the excavator work, and Northwest Revegetation and Ecological Res□ acres of riparian vegetation, putting in over 500 plants per day.



Th□ Trinity River's fishery. The TRRP will monitor the site after construction, but it will be up to Mother Nature to bring the flows, sediment, seeds and salmon to continue the restoration process.

Hocker Flat Photos

Hocker Flat, Pre Construction at 450 cfs Flow.



Hocker Flat, Post Construction at 450 cfs Flow.



Hocker Flat, Post Construction Winter Flood at 14,000 cfs.



Hocker Flat, Post Winter Flood at 7,400 cfs.



Upcoming Trinity River Channel Rehabilitation Projects

With Hocker Flat completed, the TRRP plans to continue constructing fish habitat projects along the mainstem Trinity River. Towards this end, two TRRP channel rehabilitation projects are planned for 2006: The Canyon Creek Suite of Rehabilitation Sites (downstream of Hocker Flat) and the Indian Creek Channel Rehabilitation project (in Douglas City). A third TRRP project, to supplement coarse sediment (gravel) at the Trinity River hatchery, is also planned for implementation in late July/August 2006. All of these projects will be constructed to enhance river processes and to increase fisheries habitat. These projects will remove fossilized riparian berms and increase access by juvenile fish to the floodplain at higher flows, while setting the stage for geomorphic changes brought on by coarse sediment and high flows. Features such as side channels, alcoves, and feathered edges will be created to provide slow water juvenile fish habitats at a variety of intermediate flows.

The Canyon Creek project starts about 1 mile downstream of Junction City, and goes downriver nearly 5 miles to just above the confluence with the North Fork Trinity River. The project reach includes four separate rehabilitation areas: Conner Creek (near Powerhouse Road), Valdor Gulch (near Cooper's Bar), Elkhorn (near Lime Point), and Pear Tree Gulch. A Draft Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Report (EA/EIR), now available for public review and comment through March 27, outlines the project in detail and identifies potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures. To receive a copy of the EA/EIR, please contact Brandt Gutermuth at 623-1806 or visit the TRRP's website at www.trrp.net under the Canyon Creek Complex heading.

The Indi

high flow impacts to homes and other improvements located adjacent to the river. The project will require extensive removal of riparian vegetation, excavation and removal of earth materials from the floodplain, and reshaping portions of the active river channel. Though the project is still in the planning phase, the TRRP's partner on the project, Trinity County, has already received funding via the California Department of Fish and Game's Coastal Salmon recovery program and a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. A public meeting for this project was held at the Weaverville library on February 8th. A public Draft EA/EIR for this project is expected to be available for review and comment in late May. The TRRP plans to implement the project during fall 2006.

The last rehabilitation project scheduled for 2006 is placement of gravel adjacent to the Trinity River fish hatchery in Lewiston in August. This project will require some vegetation removal and excavation along 1,800 feet of river, and placement of approximately 6,000 cubic yards of clean gravel into the channel. The project will place coarse sediment in the river that used to be provided naturally from upstream, prior to construction of the dams. Though fishing in the hatchery reach will be temporarily impacted by construction activities in August, it is

information on the hatchery gravel project, contact Loren Everest of the U.S. Forest Service at 623-1754.

South Fork Trinity River Watershed Restoration Gains Momentum

Efforts to reduce the impacts that the extensive network of roads in the South Fork Trinity River watershed has on the river and its fisheries have come a long ways in the last few years. It has taken the coordination of landowners and land managers with the agencies funding restoration to develop the long-range plans needed to make this happen.



The District began road-related watershed restoration in the South Fork of the Trinity River on private lands in 1997. That early work was exclusively road upgrades – keeping the roads in place, but making them less prone to washouts or catastrophic failures. In 1998, with the cooperation of the USFS in Hayfork, work began on public lands. The Forest Service completed comprehensive plans in a number of areas that looked at access for future forest management and fire fighting, recreation and impacts to the natural environment. These final plans include decommissioning and hydro-closing some roads. The USFS completed another assessment after the Sims Fire in 2004. Work identified in this analysis primarily involves fire rehabilitation, including a small portion of the Hyampom Compartment. On-the-ground work in this area began last summer, and is expected to be completed by early this summer. Geographically speaking, these areas represent all of the SFTR upstream of Grouse Creek.

All road-related restoration projects, whether upgrade, hydroclosure or decommission are designed to help the Forest Service meet the South Fork Total Maximum Daily Load established by EPA in 1998 to reduce sediment getting into the river while maintaining a road system that provides access for resource management and recreation. Considerations used in developing the road assessments include risk of harming stream habitats related to road location and design, reducing annual road maintenance costs, and current and future transportation needs.

From 1997 through 2005, the District, in cooperation with the USFS, has completed 147 miles of road upgrades, 6 miles of hydroclosure and 28 miles of road decommissioning in the South Fork of the Trinity River. The District has received funding from a variety of sources over the years, such as the Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California State Water Resources Control Board, U.S.F.S. and the California Department of Fish and Game, and has received tentative approval for funding from the California State Parks OHV Commission. We gratefully thank all of them for their continued support.

Northwest California RAC Tour

Members of the BLM's Northwest California Resource Advisory Council heard an update on planning activities for the Weaverville Community Forest, when they toured the 980-acre site as part of a Council meeting held Feb. 15 and 16 in Weaverville. The BLM Redding Field Office and the Trinity County Resource Conservation District have entered a partnership for management of the forest on the outskirts of the community. The partnership will provide public access, expansion of a trail system, fire safe practices and forest products. Francis Berg, assistant field manager for the BLM Redding Field Office discussed details of the partnership during the tour.

Later in the day, RAC members toured the Trinity River Lumber Co. sawmill in Weaverville. For most members of the advisory council, it was a first opportunity to learn about lumber milling processes. On the tour members saw various processes, beginning with handling of logs from massive log decks, to processing into various dimensions of finished lumber.

RAC members Michael Kelley and Charlene Wardlow listen as mill employee Matt Winn explains operations.



Meet RC&D Coordinator Bruce Williams

The Trinity Resource Conservation and Development Council, NRCS and the RCD are pleased to welcome Bruce Williams to Weaverville. No stranger to the conservation arena, Bruce has spent the last 29 years working for the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Pacific Northwest. He has been the District Conservationist at four sites in Oregon and Washington throughout most of his career. So, it is not surprising that in the short amount of time he has been here, he is already working on several projects including: The Trinity Horticulture Center - a joint project with the UC Cooperative Extension, Phase II of the Timber Bridge - demonstrating the use of secondary forest materials from local fuels reduction projects, and assisting the Downriver Fire Department with finding sources to build and equip a new fire hall in the Big Bar - Big Flat area.

Bruce and his wife, Mary, have two daughters and six grandchildren. They enjoy traveling and exploring areas of the U.S. not previously visited. An avid fisherman, Bruce is anxious to use every available opportunity to cast a line in the waters of Trinity County.

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"I look forward to working with local citizens, community organizations and government entities in Trinity County. I'm excited about promoting and fostering conservation and rural development projects approved by the Trinity RC&D Council that will improve the local economy, the environment and the community health of the area."

District Manager's Corner Pat Frost



"Winter of 2006." I say that to myself knowing that I have been at the District for 7 years, and I think about how long that has been and how much I've accomplished. I catch myself realizing how inaccurate my assessment is. First off 7 years isn't very long when I remember that the Trinity County RCD is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year – fifty years of folks helping each other to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that living in a rural county like ours presents. I have been thumbing through old newsletters and documents to learn about some of the great work that was done before my time. I read about a tour of Dick Jesse's "Total Farm Management System" in the fall of 1993 and that Trinity High School's 1994 California Envirothon Team placed 4th in California. Loretta Sue Martin from Platina was selected by her teachers at Hayfork High School to represent Trinity County in 1995 at the annual Range Camp in Half Moon Bay. These are just three, fairly recent snapshots of the District's history of service to the people of Trinity County. I will keep digging into the old files and I will share other examples from our past in upcoming newsletters.

My self-assessment was wrong on another level, too. We also celebrate our Golden Anniversary with a diversity of projects made possible by strong partnerships. Just look through the pages of this issue of the Conservation Almanac. We are introducing a new face to you – Bruce Williams with the Resource Conservation & Development Council where they focus on opportunities to build our local economy through natural resources-based projects. The Hocker Flat project breaks new ground for the Trinity River Restoration Program and for the District. The methods used for the replanting of the Hocker Flat project are new. It took a great team effort and a can-do spirit on everyone's part to make this first channel rehabilitation project a success – the landowners, the contractors, the Restoration Program and District staff. Those kinds of partnerships are a part of our history, too. I will continue to highlight these kinds of projects and partners also as a way to celebrate fifty fruitful years of the Trinity County Resource Conservation District.

WEAVERVILLE BASIN TRAIL MAPS ~ 2ND EDITION

Now Available!!

If you have been looking for a copy of the map for your recreational enjoyment, or would like to see the exciting new additions to the map, please stop by one of our local Weaverville retailers for a copy.

Cost \$5.00



Trinity County



Resource Conservation District

Trinity County Resource Conservation District
P.O. Box 1450
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Established 1956

District Board Meetings

Third Wednesday
5:30 PM
Open to the Public

TCRCD Office

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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 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**

This issue of the *Conservation Almanac* is funded in part by grants from the Trinity River Restoration Program, State Water Resources Control Board, Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee, California Department of Fish and Game and the Trinity County - Title III Program

