2018 Annual Report

This 2018 Annual Report edition of the Conservation Almanac reviews the Trinity County Resource Conservation District’s (District) new projects and accomplishments during the 2018 calendar year. As a special district of the state, and a self-governing local government agency, the District enters into grants and agreements with many different partnering agencies and organizations, to achieve a variety of natural resource projects and services in Trinity County on both private and public lands. The District relies solely on these grants and agreements for funding its work and receives no tax-base revenues.

In 2018, the total new funding secured by the District was $2,656,186 million for 28 projects awarded. Some of these new awards are multi-year agreements. The following charts display the new projects by the funding source, and the new funding by the program area.
The District welcomes Charlie Holthaus as the new Forest Health Project Coordinator. Charlie first came to Trinity County when he was 2 months old, and lived with his family in a one room cabin on the banks of Rush Creek near Lewiston. Charlie lived in Hyampom, Lewiston, and Weaverville before his parents Jerry and Susan eventually built their retirement home back on their original property on Rush Creek.

After graduating from Trinity High School in 1993, Charlie attended Humboldt State University where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry Production with a minor in Fisheries Biology.

Charlie began working in the forest products industry in 1994 and has worked for Sierra Pacific Industries, Green Diamond Resource Company, and for the past 12 years, Western Timber Services, Inc. as a Consulting Forester. Charlie became a Registered Professional Forester in 2002.

In addition to his professional work experience, Charlie has been a volunteer firefighter with the Samoa Peninsula Fire District since 2006. Charlie assumed the role of primary organizer for the “Perch’n on the Peninsula” Surfperch Fishing Tournament and Fish Fry Fundraiser for the Samoa Peninsula Fire District, which became an annual event in 2010.

More recently, his volunteer efforts have shifted to organizing and coordinating a group of volunteer anglers who capture natural origin steelhead on the Mad River for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, for use as broodstock at the Mad River Hatchery. Charlie considers himself an expert angler and an outspoken advocate for the fishing community.

In October of 2010, Donna Rupp joined the District as an AmeriCorps volunteer through the Watershed Stewardship Project. During this time Donna was immediately recognized for being diligent and motivated.

Donna expressed her passion for conservation of natural resources, and inspiring the youth of Trinity County to get outside and learn about Trinity County’s natural wonders which led the District to hire her as the Education and Outreach Specialist.

She established and implemented the District’s Education and Outreach program, and developed a brand new Watershed Health program at the District. During her development of both the Education and Outreach and Watershed Health programs, she accomplished many other large tasks such as writing the California Wildfire Protection Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Watershed Gap Analysis, assisted with the development of the Trinity County Active Transporta

In April of 2019, Donna decided to set her sights on making an impact on a different mountain-based community. Her incredible efforts and countless hours of dedication to Trinity County are appreciated and will never be forgotten. We miss you Donna!
Fuel Reduction

In 2018, the Trinity County Resource Conservation District’s (District) fuels reduction team implemented projects in multiple communities throughout Trinity County. These efforts, funded through the California Fire Safe Council, CALFIRE, US Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and private landowners through Fee-for-Service agreements, facilitated the creation of several strategic shaded fuel breaks and many acres of thinned forests. This tangible change in the landscape makes for safer, resilient communities, and healthy forest ecosystems.

One excellent example of this is the Timber Ridge Community Fuel Break, a 30-acre contiguous project forming a protective buffer around the Timber Ridge subdivision in Weaverville. Once completed, it will provide an anchor point for fire suppression efforts in the Wildland Urban Interface south of Weaverville, and tie in with fuels reduction treatments the BLM is implementing in the Weaverville Community Forest.

Forest Stewardship

The Weaverville Community Forest (WCF) Steering Committee met three times in 2018, including a public meeting in October.

A field trip was held in February to view the site of the Browns Forest Health Project, Phase III in the WCF. The USFS awarded the contract in October to Warner Enterprises, Inc. and they will have three years to complete the job. The award was through an Integrated Resource Timber Contract, which will generate revenue and create retained receipts for future use on Weaverville Community Forest projects. Warner Enterprises, Inc. also received the contracts for Browns Phases I and II. Non-commercial fuel reduction treatments for the Browns Phase III area have not yet been confirmed, but there is a possibility that the area will be treated under maintenance work in upcoming agreements.

Review of official and unofficial trails in the Weaver Basin Trails System has begun by the USFS, with the goal of incorporating some of the unofficial trails into the official trail system.

Watershed Coordination

The District coordinates the Trinity River Watershed Council (TRWC) through funding from the Bureau of Reclamation’s WaterSmart program. The TRWC brings together agencies and stakeholders working on watershed restoration, rehabilitation, and natural resources management to improve ecological resilience in the watershed.

Other Watershed Projects

An analysis of projects completed in the tributaries of the Trinity River Watershed and recommended future restoration projects, based on data and GIS analysis, was completed in 2018. The 187-page final document can be downloaded from the District’s website (www.tcrcd.net).

The District worked with the Integral Ecology Research Center to rehabilitate over a dozen trespass cannabis grow sites on public lands in 2018.

A Wildlife Conservation Board agreement with the District is funding a stream flow enhancement planning project to keep more water in Little Browns and West Weaver Creeks. The project is taking a multi-pronged approach for stream flow enhancement including fuels reduction along Little Browns Creek and upgrading the Weaverville Community Service District’s diversion on West Weaver Creek.
The District has been performing road-related sediment reduction for over 20 years throughout Trinity County. In 2018, The District performed decommissioning, upgrades, and surveys of more than 40 miles of roads with the goal to reduce the potential for controllable sediment delivery to waterways to protect water quality and fisheries. This work was supported by the State Department of Parks and Recreation (OHVMR Commission), Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, and Trinity River Restoration Program.

### Projects Implemented in 2018

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
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<td>Rattlesnake Ck, South Fork Trinity</td>
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<td>Smokey/East Fork Road Decommissioning</td>
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Gully erosion after the Carr Fire

Road decommission on Browns Road

Gully from poor road drainage

Construction, rocking, and compaction of a rolling dip
Connor Creek Helena Fire BAER Project
The Connor Creek BAER Project, intended to mitigate the potential for sediment deposition into Connor Creek in Junction City, was a result from high severity burn conditions during the Helena Fire, and the subsequent exposed and highly erodible soils. The project consisted of three treatments:

1) Native straw mulch was spread by hand in the most erodible locations within the project area, 2) Hand broadcasted four species of native grass, and 3) Standing burned woody material was cut and spread out across exposed soils to act as mulch.

A pre-implementation drone survey was completed to obtain aerial imagery and identify the most problematic areas within the project footprint, for specific treatment areas and strategies. In total, the District spread 450 pounds of native seed across nearly 80 acres of burn scar in this important watershed.

Connor Creek Helena Fire BAER Project
The District’s Native Plant Nursery continued to expand in 2018, with generous support from Caltrans. Twenty-four different species of native seed were collected, treated, stratified, and propagated at the nursery, which added valuable diversity for revegetation projects. Plants grown from local seed are more adapted to the harsh climate, poor soils, and unique topography found in Trinity County, ultimately contributing to healthier and more resilient ecosystems.

Revegetation Quick Stats
- 24,500 = gallons of water used to irrigate Collins Bar Revegetation site
- 91.1% = 2-year survival rate at Slate Creek Revegetation site
- 3.1 = miles of streams surveyed for invasive species
- 24 = species of native seed collected
- 79.89 = acres of burn scar broadcast with native grass seed
The Trinity County Resource Conservation District’s (District) Geographic Information Systems/Information Technology (GIS/IT) Department wore many different hats in 2018. Work included: continued GIS support for Trinity County, continued updates to County parcel information, contributed to the RCD Project Tracker (a new collaboration with RCDs throughout California), and revamped the District’s website.

For several years, including 2018, the District provided contractual GIS support services to Trinity County. While many counties in California have dedicated GIS staff, Trinity County does not, and the District GIS staff helps fill that role. Typical tasks include mapping requests, data distribution requests, and general troubleshooting. Additionally, the District provided data for a new Sheriff’s dispatching system, and is currently working with the Sheriff’s Office on a complete system overhaul.

Ongoing corrections and updates to the Trinity County GIS parcel layer began in 2017, and are on-going. Generally, the process for updating the parcel information begins with a split or lot line adjustment coming through the Planning Department, which is then filed with the Assessor’s Office. After being processed by the County, the District adjusts the parcel lines in the County GIS parcel layer. The public can view the parcel information online using the online Trinity County Parcel Viewer:

https://tinyurl.com/yxn6fkyg

During 2018 the District utilized CA Department of Conservation (DOC) funding to contribute to an online project tracking platform called the RCD Project Tracker (www.rcdprojects.org). The first project of its kind, the tracker showcases work completed by all California RCDs in one online platform. The tracker displays various project information including location, RCD, funders, year(s), project stage, resource area, program type, cost, project themes, and more. Photos are often included of the work completed.

In addition, DOC funding helped IT staff redesign the District’s website with a new modern layout, and easier access to posted events, announcements, documents and information. When the update is complete, each District program area will have its own section on the website, with details about ongoing and completed projects. The new website homepage is viewable, and the remainder of the website will be live in the near future.

Visit us online at:
www.tcrccd.net
Education and Outreach is a short and sweet title for the diverseness that is this District program. One main focus of this program is environmental education for all ages to encourage exploration of what can be found out-of-doors, to promote land stewardship, and to inspire a deep-rooted connection to nature. The District strives to increase community involvement and awareness of ongoing conservation efforts of Trinity County’s natural resources.

With such a diverse mix of programs, projects, and opportunities at the District, we are constantly reaching out to get you involved (hence the “outreach” in the title). You may see our work on the “Trinity County RCD” Facebook page; our updated website at www.tcrcd.net (work in progress); supporting the Trinity River through “Trinity River, CA” Facebook Page and www.TrinityRiver.org; the Trinity Journal; and other community news sources. You can find our work highlighted in this quarterly newsletter: The Conservation Almanac. If you know someone who might be interested in learning more about the District’s efforts, tell them to sign up for this newsletter by visiting our website and clicking on the “Newsletter Sign-Up” button.

Highlights for youth education and outreach in 2018 include:

• Awarded one $500 scholarship for pursuit of natural resource interests to the graduating senior Hanali (Dara) Gaeuman
• Assisted with expansion of the Trinity Bike Park at Lowden Park in Weaverville
• Day at the Wetlands with Weaverville fourth-grade students
• Environmental education field trips for local schools
• Fire Ecology Day with Junction City Elementary School
• Participated in the Hyampom Salmon Gathering
• Three-day, two-night Environmental Science Camp for Weaverville sixth grade students at Bar 717 Ranch, sponsored by TRRP
• Three, week-long Summer Day Camp sessions at the Young Family Ranch
• Awarded three free mountain bikes for underserved students from Weaverville with donated funds from the Weaverville Lions and Rotary Clubs

Highlights for all-age education and outreach in 2018 include:

• Coordination of the Trinity County Collaborative community meetings and field trips
• Coordination of the Trinity County Fire Safe Council meetings
• Development of a Fuels Reduction brochure
• Public wildflower hike on Day Ranch Loop on East Weaver
• Public float trips on the Trinity River
• Science nights including Trinity River Trivia, and at local Art Cruises highlighting the Trinity River Timeline
• Trinity River Clean-Up
• Trinity River Photo Contest
• Trinity County Annual Apple Festival
• Trinity County Plant and Seed Exchange at the Young Family Ranch
• Trinity River Salmon Festival
• Update of District brochure and website (www.tcrcd.net; in progress)
• Various educational pieces regarding watershed health

These efforts were supported by:

• Bureau of Land Management
• CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
• California Fire Safe Council
• CA Department of Conservation
• Humboldt Area Foundation’s Trinity Trust
• Natural Resources Conservation Service
• Redding Rancheria Community Fund
• Rotary Club of Weaverville
• State Water Resources Control Board
• Trinity River Restoration Program
• UC Cooperative Extension
• US Forest Service
• The Watershed Research and Training Center
• Weaverville Lions Club
• Young Family Ranch Trust
• Individual volunteers and contributors
• And You!
Through an agreement with the Young Family Ranch, Inc. trustees, the District manages the ground work, day-to-day operations, and coordination of programs and events at the Young Family Ranch. In 2018 the District co-organized the annual Trinity County Plant and Seed Exchange in April; brought back the old time ranch feel at the first annual Weaverville Frontier Days in May; managed and implemented Weaverville Summer Day Camp, a three week-long summer camp in July; and co-coordinated the second annual Apple Festival. The Ranch is also host to UC Master Gardener workshops and trainings, a youth garden, and public and private events.

This would not have been possible without support from Trinity Trust, Humboldt Area Foundation, UC Cooperative Extension, UC Master Gardeners, UC CalFresh, Young Family Ranch volunteer Board of trustees, and many others who supported these events.
The Trinity County Resource Conservation District (District) is a non-regulatory special district self-governed by five volunteer directors appointed by the Trinity County Board of Supervisors. The District serves all of Trinity County and receives grant funding from local, regional, state and federal partners. These entities recognize that locally-led projects yield the greatest benefits. Project involvement by the District enhances public trust and provides greater cost-effectiveness. This approach generates local jobs and enhances the local economy. Employees of the District carry out the day-to-day operations, guided by priorities and policies set by the District Board of Directors.

Meet our Board of Directors:

Morgan Rourke, board member since June 2017. Morgan has lived most of his life in Hayfork and Trinity County. He has taught Agriculture at Hayfork High School for 13 years. He was recognized as a California Agriculture Teacher of Excellence in 2017. He is a ranch manager for his family’s ranch in Hayfork that includes timber, commercial cattle, and hay. His career has given him a diverse background in agriculture. He has managed farms and ranches, worked for nurseries, a water company, orchards, and the US Forest Service. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture Science and a Masters Degree in Agriculture Education from Cal Poly SLO. He is looking forward to lending his experience and expertise to the many forest and community projects that the District is involved in.

Colleen O’Sullivan, board member since 2002. Colleen graduated from Humboldt State University in 1984 with a Bachelor’s degree in Natural Resource Planning. Her interests lie in protecting and enhancing the abundant natural resources of Trinity County, which she feels is compatible with intelligent and thoughtful growth. In 2013 the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts bestowed a top statewide award to Colleen as RCD Director of the Year. The state association pointed to her steady leadership of the local district, noting that during her tenure, TCRCD has been at the forefront in natural resources management and education throughout the County. The award noted her efforts in helping to establish the 13,000-acre Weaverville Community Forest on forestlands administered by the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Gregory Lowden, board member since 1992. Greg has been a resident of Weaverville since 1967. He graduated from Trinity High School in 1969. After a tour of duty with the U.S. Army, he attended Shasta Junior College in Redding, graduating with an AA degree in history in 1974. He has been employed as a surveyor with Hunt Land Surveying, Inc., since 1978. Active in community affairs, he is a member of the Weaverville Lion’s Club.

Mike Rourke, board member since 1996. In 2017, Mike retired from Trinity High School (THS) after working for over 20 years as an agriculture teacher with focus on teaching animal science, plant science, forestry, natural resource management, agriculture business management, and agriculture mechanics. He has been recognized as the “Outstanding Agriculture Teacher” in northern California for having the "Outstanding Agriculture Program" at THS. He currently farms the roughly 900-acre Rourke Ranch in partnership with his wife, father, and mother. The ranch includes 100 acres of irrigated pasture, plus timberland, rangeland, and wildlife habitat.

Patrick Truman, board member since 1984. Patrick Truman has been a county resident and landowner for many decades. Born in Echo Park and originally from San Pedro, Patrick has lived and worked throughout California all his life, landing in Weaverville in 1976 upon accepting a position with the US Forest Service. Mr. Truman has extensive experience as an engineering technician, non-profit business manager and long time supporter of community development and systemic social change. Mr. Truman has been an active board member for many years on local, regional, state and national public and private associations to advocate for those organizations. Mr. Truman brings long-term institutional knowledge as a member of the conservation community.
Contributed by the Trinity River Restoration Program

In 2018 the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) continued its support of Trinity County Resource Conservation District’s environmental education and public outreach events designed to promote watershed stewardship and restoration awareness. This work fits within the TRRP’s mandate to recover naturally spawning salmon and steelhead populations in the Trinity River by re-establishing natural form and function in the river.

Channel Rehabilitation Design and Permitting

Advancing future proposed restoration projects in the Junction City was an emphasis in 2018. Project designers and teams of various specialists from cooperating agencies focused on refining channel rehabilitation designs along with the associated environmental permits. A public meeting was held on November 28, 2018 at the North Fork Grange in Junction City to discuss the projects and incorporate public input on site designs.

Design and environmental permitting for the Chapman Ranch Phase A project neared completion in 2018 and construction is expected to begin by July 1, 2019. The project site is approximately three miles upstream of Dutch Creek Road Bridge in Junction City and about one mile upstream from the 2017 TRRP project. (See photo #1 on next page)

An updated environmental assessment for a project several miles upstream from the Chapman Ranch project, called Dutch Creek, also neared completion by the end of 2018. The Dutch Creek project may be permitted for construction by the summer of 2020 as TRRP staff continue work with partner agencies, including the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. (See photo #2 on next page)

In addition to the Chapman Ranch and Dutch Creek projects, planning is underway with input from various stakeholders, property owners, and land management agencies for other projects in the Junction City area at Oregon Gulch and Sky Ranch.

Restoration Flow Releases

Restoration flow releases were implemented in the designated critically dry water year in 2018. The release schedule recommended by the Trinity Management Council (TMC), and approved by the Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Department of the Interior, had five short peaks ranging from 1,400 to 1,900 cubic feet per second (cfs) and was designed to meet restoration objectives for a critically dry water year. Flow release objectives for a critically dry year include maintaining water temperature targets and timing flows to trigger young fish to begin moving downriver at the appropriate time.

The water level on undammed rivers fluctuations slightly between night and day as water evaporates in the heat of the day and vegetation absorbs and then releases water in a diurnal pattern. Spring releases from Lewiston Dam in 2018 were designed with this pattern to match a natural river system more closely. Due to the critically dry water year in 2018, flows released from Lewiston dam were insufficient to transport gravel, so no gravel was added to the river.

Fine Sediment Reduction and Adaptive Management

To support fine sediment reduction, dredging of Hamilton Ponds near Lowden Ranch was initially scheduled in 2018 (Photo #3). The ponds were first excavated in 1988 and 1989 to help reduce fine sediment input to the Trinity River from Grass Valley Creek. Since then the ponds have become one of the largest Pacific Lamprey nurseries in the entire Trinity River basin. Because of this, a plan was developed that would allow the young lamprey, called ammocoetes, to relocate prior to dredging. After several attempts to encourage the young eels to relocate, the dredging project was postponed after a team of lamprey experts and other specialists determined that the benefit of maintaining ammocoete habitat in the ponds was not outweighed by the sediment reduction that dredging could accomplish. This was one example of the TRRP working with partners and using various experts to inform management actions. Restoration activities and the need for dredging at Hamilton Ponds will be re-examined in future years. (See photo #3 on next page)

Work Groups

Similar to the work at Hamilton Ponds, TRRP restoration activities are developed, reviewed, implemented, and monitored by various specialists in independent work groups with distinct specialties. For example, the TRRP Fish Work Group is composed of fish biologists, hydrologists, riparian ecologists, and other specialists. The Flow Work Group, which develops flow release schedules and monitoring plans,
includes hydrologists, fish biologists, physical scientists, and engineers. In 2018 the reorganized Riparian and Aquatic Ecology Work Group was approved by the TMC and is now meeting regularly. The group is working on computer models that can better predict cottonwood and willow recruitment; and Foothill Yellow-legged Frog production; based on flow releases and channel restoration projects.

TRRP work groups collaborate with direction provided by the Trinity Management Council under the common goal to restore normal function to the Trinity River so that salmon and wildlife can thrive in a healthier river ecosystem.

On a highly regulated and managed river like the Trinity River ecological disruption is unavoidable; But with focused and continued effort that works toward maintaining and recovering natural river processes, wild salmon and steelhead can return to the Trinity in strong numbers.

**2018 Chinook Salmon Returns**

Although salmon numbers are variable on every river system from year to year, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife estimate of natural Chinook salmon that returned to the river to spawn in 2018 was a recent encouraging sign. An estimated 20,568 natural Chinook returned to spawn in the river, nearly double from the 2017 returns at 10,388. This improvement is a positive signal, but there is still a long way to go for Trinity River salmon and steelhead. Successful river restoration takes decades of sustained effort and the results are not always immediately identifiable.

Please visit www.trrp.net for more information, technical reports, other products and links to partner and cooperator information.

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**Photo 1.** Aerial photograph of the Chapman Ranch site, which is proposed for construction in the summer of 2019

**Photo 2.** The Dutch Creek site, several miles from the Chapman Ranch site, is proposed for construction in the summer of 2020. This straight stretch of river is cut-off from the floodplain and offers little habitat for young fish, especially during higher flows

**Photo 3.** Hamilton Ponds were built to prevent decomposed granite and fine sediment from Grass Valley Creek from building up in the Trinity River
The Trinity County Resource Conservation District 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 District's Vision**
The District 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 District's Mission**
To assist in protecting, managing, conserving and restoring the natural resources of Trinity County through information, education, technical assistance and project implementation programs.

The District's Board of Directors are Mike Rourke, Morgan Rourke, Patrick Truman, Colleen O’Sullivan, and Greg Lowden.

The District is landowners assisting landowners with conservation work. The District can guide the private landowner in dealings with state and federal agencies. The District 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 Bureau of Reclamation, CA Department of Conservation, CA Fire Safe Council, Trinity River Restoration Program, US Forest Service, and the Young Family Ranch, Inc.

Printed on Recycled Paper with Vegetable Inks