

Conservation Almanac

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Fall 2015

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Trinity County Benefits from Smart Center Drought Program

The District accomplished several water-conserving projects this season thanks to a grant designed to alleviate direct and indirect impacts from the drought. Emergency drought funding from the state enabled the District to employ six temporary conservation technicians, via the Smart Business Resource Center in Weaverville, to conduct drought-related work on public lands.

The dual-purpose grant from the California Employment Development Department provided employment while addressing issues on public lands related to Trinity County's drought emergency.

The District's "drought crew" made repairs to the historic Moon Lee Ditch on US Forest Service lands, cleared fuel breaks on Bureau of Land Management lands in the Weaverville Community Forest (WCF), and accomplished a slew of much-needed work at the historic Bowerman Barn near Trinity Lake, managed by the USFS.

Members of the crew cleared vegetation along the three-mile length of Moon Lee Ditch and removed woody debris causing blockages and ditch failures. They replaced 125 feet of culvert that burned during the Oregon Fire and added 40 feet of new culvert in two places to stop water loss. They also fortified forty feet of ditch adjacent to Weaverville Cemetery to stop leakage and mud flows that had crushed the cemetery water tanks.

In the WCF the drought crew cleared brush along two spur roads, creating a shaded fuel break 100 feet wide along 4,500 feet of road. These workers also "released" oaks on five acres burned in the Oregon Fire by cutting out the dead wood and new sprouts of each oak to leave two or three main trunks for increased vigor.

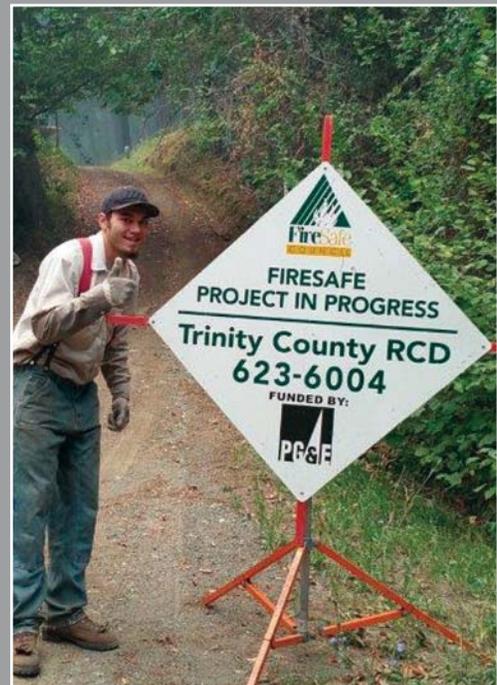
At the historic Bowerman Barn, the crew cut down and removed three acres of invasive sweet briar rose that was overtaking the pasture. They also conducted thinning for forest health and fuels reduction on two acres, removing undergrowth plus dead and dying wood.

The cumulative work accomplished through this drought grant contributed significantly to the stewardship of these public lands while providing much needed employment within Trinity County.



Drought crew chipping in the Weaverville Community Forest.

See what our crews were up to this season on page 8.



Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Update

The TCRCD working in partnership with the Watershed Research and Training Center, will be updating the 2010 County Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) with funding from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire). The CWPP is a document used by all area natural resource agencies when planning for fuel reductions to keep our communities safe from wildfire. Some of the objectives of the plan update include:

- Review and evaluation of the current plan with communities
- Update and prioritize fire and fuels related projects in the County
- Update GIS (digital) maps and information layers
- Involve federal agencies consideration of community priorities
- Improve abilities to protect lives and property from wildfire
- Increase public awareness of the realities and responsibilities of living in a wildfire prone area
- Provide the public with clear steps on how to reduce wildfire risk

The resulting CWPP update will be used by the Trinity County Firesafe Council, member organizations and partners in the selection and implementation of strategic fuels reduction projects.

As part of the update process, public meetings will be held at communities throughout the county to seek public input. At the public meetings, topographic maps of the local community and the county at large will be placed on display and the public will be asked for input into developing strategic projects. Combined with input from agencies, such as the USFS and CalFire, those maps will be incorporated into the new plan. For more information about the CWPP update or the Fire Safe Council, please contact the TCRCD at 623-6004.



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TCRCD Conservation Scholarship Fund Donation

TRINITY COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Make a tax-deductible donation today! We will mail you a receipt or you are welcome to stop by the office.

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Please return to: TCRCD Scholarship Fund,
PO Box 1450, Weaverville, CA 96093
530-623-6004 www.tcrd.net

Congrats to Trinity County on Successful WEMBO Race

Many people and organizations came together to bring the World Endurance Mountain Bike Organization's World Solo 24-Hour Mountain Bike Championships race to Weaverville October 3-4. With the help of the entire community and scores of volunteers the race was a huge success.

As the fiscal sponsor of the Weaverville 24 WEMBO race, the Trinity County Resource Conservation District congratulates all who were involved in this world-class event, from the Trinity County Chamber of Commerce and their steering committee, to the US Forest Service and all of the volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this dream a reality.

In preparation for the race, a new section of the Weaver Basin Trail System was constructed to connect the Jackass Ridge and Day Ranch Trails, bypassing a very steep, highly eroded section, known locally as Misery Hill. After the Shasta-Trinity National Forest environmental review process, USFS crews

and the California Conservation Corps Shasta 21 trail crew got to work constructing the trail under the direction of USFS Trail Program Manager, Mike McFadin. Funding for the CCC's crew came from a Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) grant to the District. The race course included the newly constructed "Misery Bypass" section of trail. This new section of the WBT System is now open for non-motorized uses, such as hiking, mountain biking or horseback riding.

The WBT System welcomed visitors with postings of new trail maps and signs. But people made the real difference. Noreen and Don Bradbury hosted five Australians who came for the race, and Don rode in the race as well. Noreen summed up the experience of the visitors by saying "They felt very welcomed and loved the (international) flags on Main Street. They just felt that the town had done more than any other venue they had been involved with." Now that's a Weaverville welcome.

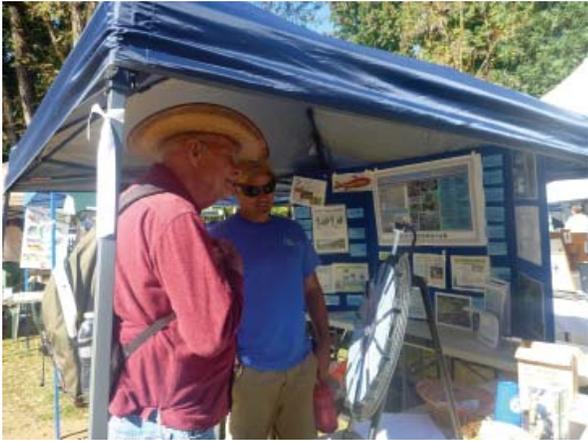


CCC crews working on Weaver Basin Trail System.



New trailhead kiosk and map.

2015 Trinity River Salmon Festival



Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Salmon Festival. From the start of the festival with the native blessing and drumming, to the children's activities, vendors, musicians and volunteer participation, the 2015 Festival was one to be remembered. Special thanks to the Trinity River Restoration Program for their generous support of this community event.



District Managers Corner

Thank you, to the Trinity County community for the warm welcome home, and to the District for the opportunity to serve this amazing community, with its wealth of natural resources and deep historical connection to the land. This is my first DM corner out of what, I hope, will be many more to come.

First, I'd like to provide you with a little background about myself. I am a native of Trinity County - born in Trinity Hospital. I attended Weaverville Elementary School and graduated from Trinity High School in 1990. After high school I attended Shasta College and worked on US Forest Service fire crews in southern Trinity. I attended Humboldt State and graduated with a BS in Environmental Science, Ethics. After college I began work at the Western Shasta Resource Conservation District (WSRCD), working on projects ranging from watershed coordination to fisheries restoration. I spent



Shilo Braxton, the Trinity County RCD's new district manager.

some time at the Shasta County Department of Resource Management working in the planning department and community education before going back to WSRCD. Now here I am back home and looking forward to my tenure at the Trinity County RCD.

When I walked into my office and sat down at my computer for my first official day of work, there was pinned on the board next to my desk, a faded, pin holed, laminated card with the following message, adapted from Pete Nowak's "The Conservation District Official: Villain or Victim?":

The Function of the Conservation District

"To take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water and related resources."

I read this card and at first thought of it as a lofty goal, and pinned it back on the board. But reading it day after day during my first week the quote became a challenge for me to build upon the successful conservation work of previous District Managers. Accepting this challenge, I look forward to working with federal, state and local government agencies, the Trinity County Collaborative Group, Fire Safe Council, S.A.F.E, Trinity River Restoration Program, Weaverville Community Forest, Rotary, Master Gardeners, Weed Management Area, Weaverville Basin Trails Committee, Chamber of Commerce, private landowners and any other organization, committee or individual who can help provide the resources needed to meet this challenge in a meaningful capacity.

During my first weeks at the District I have had the opportunity to meet with many of these organizations above that make conservation a priority, and I have witnessed the hard work and dedication of individual community members. With the help and guidance of the community, I look forward to joining this effort.

2015 Summer Day Camp



Launching "bottle" rockets during Adventure Week.



Cooling off in Rush Creek.



Removing invasive yellow star thistle from the Weaverville Community Forest.



River fun!



Healthy snacks worthy of smiling about.



Pizza fresh from the earth oven.



'Look what I made!'

2015 Environmental Camp at Bar 717



Hayfork Elementary 6th grade students spent their morning learning about creeks and water quality.



Learning how to use a compass.



USFS biologists instructed TPA students on bird and data collection.



Creating salmon posters is a popular activity at environmental camp.



WES/TPA Principal Sprague took on the archery challenge.

Capturing water bugs to assess water quality.



Sixth grade students from Hayfork Elementary School and Weaverville's Trinity Preparatory Academy attended environmental camp in early October. HES students attended a one day field trip, while TPA students spent two nights and three days at camp. TCRCD receives funding from the Trinity River Restoration Program to create curriculum, find and coordinate volunteers and teach at this Trinity County institution. The US Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Watershed Center and local citizens all contribute to make this camp memorable.

District Field Season Round-Up

Cool nights and frosty mornings signal the changing of the season in Trinity County, from long, dry summer days to brisk autumn nights. With the change in the weather, the District's field season is quickly coming to a close as well. Here's a brief round-up of some of the projects the District has been working on during field season 2015:

Our roads crew, led by Cynthia Tarwater, worked in the Prospect Creek, Salt Creek and Plummer Creek Watersheds this year. Funding for these projects came from our partners at the US Forest Service, Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC), California Off-Highway Vehicle Commission, Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP), and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. In addition to our scheduled work, the District's roads crew was tapped by the US Forest Service to help with fire rehab work within the River Complex wildfire near Denny. Road repair is critical to reduce sediment run-off after damage caused by fire and fire-fighting equipment.

Our fuels crew, led by John Condon, worked on both private and public property this season reducing ladder fuels and chipping the results. A project funded by PG&E provided fuels reduction work that directly helped reduce the impact

of wildfire down river during the this year's fire season. Four of the properties that were treated protected 10,000 gallon water tanks used by fire fighters. An additional three properties on the same PG&E project were threatened by the River Complex fire but the work our crews had performed allowed fire fighters to protect these properties and no structures were damaged. In total, the PG&E project allowed the District to treat 46 private properties and 7,000 feet of land in the power line right of way, with an average width treatment of 25 feet.

Our botany and revegetation crew, led by Amy Livingston, kept busy this season with noxious weed removal of scotch broom in Junction City and dyers woad at the Carville ponds. These projects were funded by the US Forest Service. Botanical surveys for several projects and agency partners, along with fireweed inventory and treatment in the Sim's Fire footprint, project work for CalTrans and TRRP, native plant propagation and greenhouse maintenance rounded out their season.

District employees also inventoried, created and installed 43 replacement trail signs on the Weaver Basin Trail System with help from the California Conservation Corps members. This project was funded by the Trinity County RAC.



Before fuels reduction work funded by PG&E.



After fuels reduction work.

County-wide Clean up Comes to a Close



Work on the CalRecycle Farm and Ranch Solid Waste Cleanup and Abatement project is coming to a close for this funding cycle. The District cannot accept any more cleanup sites at this time.

Our work over the last year and a half has resulted in clean up of 25 illegal dumpsites in the County, three of them on private property and the remaining on public lands managed by USFS, BLM and the county.

Several large dumpsites were removed and access roads gated and/or rocked to prevent future dumping of household garbage. Three abandoned travel trailers were also demolished and removed from public lands.

On twelve of the 25 sites, the District worked with the Integral Ecology Research Center (IERC) to remediate and reclaim trespass marijuana grow sites. The Watershed Center was also a key partner helping to reclaim these sites. The IERC coordinated with law enforcement and the interdisciplinary federal, state, local governmental and non-governmental partners on the majority of these sites.

All of these sites were nestled in occupied fisher, northern spotted owl and salmonid habitat. Through these integral partners and with funding from CalRecycle, the team removed many miles of irrigation line, tons of trash and pounds of rodenticides that would have posed significant risks to wildlife, fisheries, and the habitats they rely upon.



An illegal household garbage dump near Lewiston before cleanup by RCD crews.



The same site near Lewiston after cleanup.



One of the camps found at a trespass grow site in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.



One trailer-load of garbage and irrigation piping removed from a reclaimed trespass grow site.

Restoring the Trinity River – Why add gravel & wood to the river?

When we think about river restoration, we can think about what it means to “restore”. One way of looking at restoration is rebuilding something, like fixing an old, damaged house or barn. Another way is to revitalize, or to try to return something to an earlier condition, like an historical section of a town. Both of these are good descriptions of many of the activities of the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP). Another way to restore involves giving back something that was lost or taken away. This meaning is most appropriate for talking about why we put gravel (coarse sediment) and wood

(large woody debris) back into the Trinity River. The main goal of the TRRP is to restore and maintain the Trinity River’s fishery resources. To do that, certain processes had to be reestablished and key elements that were identified as missing from the riverine habitat had to be returned. Coarse sediment and large woody debris were missing from the system. Both of these provide critical habitat benefits to salmon and steelhead (anadromous fish), with some so vital that the survival of the species depends on them.



What good is gravel ??

The life cycle of a salmon begins - and if it survives the full course of it's life - also ends in a gravel bed in the upper reaches of a river



Salmon lay their eggs under 4-12 inches of gravel--this protects them from predators and high flows. The gravel allows water to flow through in order for the eggs to survive. Once the eggs hatch, the fish emerge from the gravel and spread out in the stream to grow.

Characteristics of the gravel are vital to each new generation.



Salmon return to the gravel beds to spawn in the streams where they hatched. The bodies of salmon transfer nutrients from the ocean to the river and riparian forest.





When the dams were built in the early 1960's, they blocked the river's ability to carry coarse sediment through the system. When the river lost its continuous supply of pebbles, rocks, and cobbles, silty sand began to build up until it choked the clean riverbed, making it impossible for fish to spawn. Many people know that anadromous fish are hatched in freshwater streams and rivers, migrate to the ocean for part of their life cycle, and return to spawn in those same

natal streams. What is not as well-known is that the streambed where the eggs are laid must have the right size and combination of coarse sediment present for the eggs to survive. The appropriate blend of sizes protects the eggs from predation, keeps them anchored in place, permits water to flow around them for respiration, and allows the young to escape after hatching. Returning the coarse sediment supply to the river restores its ability to function more naturally.

What good is wood??

Adding large pieces of trees, logs, and woody debris restores complexity to streams and rivers, and improves aquatic conditions for fish.



Juvenile fish and adult fish enjoy gravel and wood!



While people may think that trees and branches in the river aren't very pretty to look at, fish use them to hide from predators, rest near them when flows are high, and find food around them since aquatic plants and insects like them too!

Once the baby fish—known as “fry”—hatch, they need immediate protection from strong currents and predators, and a reliable source of food. With the dams, the river lost the massive flows it once had, and the ability to wash woody debris into the channel. This debris is a key element in a healthy river system. It gives the fry a place to rest and to hide, and provides a banquet of tiny, underwater vegetation

and insects that are attracted to these areas as well. They also divert water and change flow patterns, helping to create a more complex channel and diverse floodplain environment. When these woodpiles begin to decompose, they return valuable nutrients to the water. Putting large wood back into the system is one more way that the river is “restored”.

Trinity County



Resource Conservation District

Established 1956

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

P.O. Box 1450

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District Board Meetings

Third Wednesday
5:30 PM
Open to the Public

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The Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) is a special district set up under state law to carry out conservation work and education. It is a 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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