



2002 ANNUAL REPORT
NEVADA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE



THIS ANNUAL REPORT summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) during 2002. The Nevada County Resource Conservation District, which covers all of Nevada County and Western Sierra County, was founded in 1943 to provide community leadership on resource conservation issues.

The mission of the NCRCD and the NRCS is to promote responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through leadership, education, technical assistance, financial assistance and facilitation. The vision of the NCRCD and the NRCS is to assist educated and responsible landowners and land managers to establish a balance between a high quality rural environment, a biologically diverse landscape, and a healthy economy for the community.

The NCRCD and NRCS coordinated many diverse activities benefiting the natural resources and the community within our area of jurisdiction. The activities described reflect the efforts of the NCRCD staff, the NCRCD Board of Directors, the local NRCS staff, and others in our community who actively promote the wise use and management of our natural resources.

The services provided through the NRCS/NCRCD office are free and available to any landowner in our jurisdiction. In an effort to express the value of our services to the community, we have assessed the services, programs, reference materials, and staff salaries at \$950,000 per year.

PACKARD GRANT PROJECTS

The NCRCD received a \$100,000 cost-share grant from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation in 2001. The funding was used by various property owners, institutions, agencies, and a homeowners association in Nevada, Placer and Yuba counties for seven conservation and restoration projects in the Bear River Watershed during 2002. The total cost of the projects was over \$193,000. This grant allowed more than 219 acres and 1,361 feet of stream bank to be stabilized and restored. The projects were as follows:



Colfax High School Recycling Project - The funds sponsored a new recycling area with a sorting table for students to keep recyclables out of the 43-acre campus property on their part of the watershed. Over 1000 students and staff are benefiting from this project.

Soil Conservation and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project - Landowners Harvego and Watson improved 135 acres of their 2,200-acre ranch on 2 miles of the Bear River. Improvements included wildlife food plots and brush piles, erosion control, rangeland seeding/fertilizing and fencing for riparian protection and grazing management.

No-Till Drill Soil and Water Conservation Program - The NCRCD assisted 9 landowners with their conservation planting projects; improving 34 acres during the first season with the new no-till drill.

Little Wolf Creek Restoration and Education Project - Empire Mine State Historic Park restored native plants on about 150 feet of the north bank and 50 feet of the south bank of Little Wolf Creek. The project includes a sign about the native plants and watershed health; to be designed and created by Sierra Foothills High School students.

Goat Fuel Reduction Demonstration Project - Empire Mine State Historic Park used goats to reduce fuel loads on approximately 5 acres in the Little Wolf Creek Watershed. The project is on a major trail so the public and professional groups can see the results.

Wolf Creek Bank Stabilization - The Ward family stabilized 56 feet of streambank on their property and improved the vegetation cover on 0.2 acres. Native shrubs were used to help improve riparian and wildlife habitat.

Erosion Control Project - Lake of the Pines Association stabilized and revegetated 1,105 feet of eroding lakeshore. This project benefited Lake of the Pines' 5,800 residents and their visitors, plus has numerous benefits for the Bear River Watershed.

The NCRCD thanks the Foundation for their generous donation and commitment to conservation; and the NRCS for technical assistance and office support.

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ARBOR DAY

Our office celebrates Arbor Day each year by giving away free seedlings to the public. In 2002, we celebrated our 20th annual Arbor Day on March 7 by giving away 400 butterfly bush seedlings. This event is very popular. PG&E partnered with us and provided 500 Ponderosa pine seedlings and other materials promoting "the right tree for the right place!" The NCRCD distributes a different plant each year.

TREE GIVEAWAY

This annual event just keeps on growing. On June 7, 2002 over 150 people took home approximately 17,000 trees. We provided planting



and care instructions for the happy tree owners. The USDA Forest Service, who makes this event possible, donated surplus Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, Jeffery pine, Sugar pine, and Red fir from their spring planting operations. This year Sierra Pacific Industries also donated thousands of surplus Ponderosa pine.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

NRCS/NCRCD staff provides technical assistance to private landowners upon request. In 2002, we assisted about 1,250 landowners and groups with natural resource problems, including: erosion control, pond management, star thistle eradication, fuels management, wildlife, rangeland, and forest improvement, and pasture, orchard and vineyard management.



COST SHARE PROGRAMS

The NRCS funds and administers the Forestry Incentive Program (FIP) in cooperation with California Department of Forestry. This program provides landowners with cost share assistance to enhance forestland in our area.

Hundreds of acres of forestland and rangeland are made fire safe and more productive each year through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) also funded by NRCS. The focus of this program is to improve natural resources in the Yuba River Watershed.

NO-TILL RANGE DRILL

In January 2002, we received a Department of Conservation grant of \$17,349 for a "No-Till Drill Soil Conservation Outreach Program." The majority of the funding was used to purchase a **new** drill, maintenance equipment, and to conduct outreach. Thirteen landowners used the drill to apply good conservation practices on a total of 56.5 acres during 2002.

The no-till drill is available to landowners in our district for a low rental fee. This device creates a seedbed without turning the soil, while it applies seed and fertilizer, all in one pass. The drill saves time, energy, and labor; assists in controlling weeds; decreases soil erosion; conserves water; and enhances crop production.

Landowners wishing to use the no-till drill can contact the NCRCD office.

CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Each year the NCRCD selects individuals or groups to honor for their conservation efforts. The award winners for 2002 were Pat and Sara Ellis, Pat Norris, Alan Haight, and John Lawton. John & Janey Powers, selected in 2001, will be honored this year in May since they could not attend the 2002 ceremony.

The Powers have a park-like, 25-acre horse ranch on Kentucky Flat Road. Three years ago, they used the no-till drill to plant 4 acres of irrigated pasture. It turned out to be the top planting

of the year. They also planted dry-land pasture, put in cross fencing, and managed their timber with assistance from our office. In addition, they have 15 acres of woodland and streamside land that serves for recreation, wildlife, and timber management. They recently added solar power to their barn and an irrigation system to conserve energy.

Pat and Sara Ellis have a large cow-calf ranch on McCourtney Road. They worked with our office to improve their ranch with various conservation practices. Some of these practices were cost-shared through



the EQIP Program and included 25 acres of brushing and seeding on rangeland, cross fencing, irrigated pasture planting and management, and wildlife habitat improvement practices. Their land is part of a Nevada County Land Trust easement.

Pat Norris has about 4 acres of hay land on Ladino Avenue in Penn Valley. He used the no-till drill sev-

eral times to plant pasture and hay. His hay field controls weeds, produces forage, and improves the community. This older gentleman could have retired to his rocker, but he has "farming in his blood" and can't sit still.

Alan Haight and his wife purchased a small farm at the end of Cement Hill Road about three years ago. His vision is to have an organic farm with a large garden, fruit trees, berries, milking goats, and free-roaming laying hens. He wants this to be an educational, hands-on experience for high school and college agricultural students. Our office provided assistance with an irrigation system, green manure cover crops, soils, fencing, pruning fruit trees, pond management, and wildlife habitat improvement. He also used the no-till drill to plant a cover crop in his orchard.

Bob Lawton and his family have owned timber land in the You Bet Road area just east of Greenhorn Creek for many years. His father bought about 1,000 acres sixty years ago and mined part of the land. Bob was more interested in removing the brush, planting trees, and thinning and pruning the conifers for timber production.

He did most of this through the NRCS cost-share programs 30 to 35 years ago. Most of this land has been sold, but the results are still there to see. He recently built ponds, and cleared brush along public roads to make the area more fire safe and a better environment for wildlife.

BEAR RIVER WATERSHED STUDY PROP. 204 GRANT

The Bear River Study continued during 2002. Water quality monitoring was completed in November. Teachers and students from 4 local schools, as well as a team of dedicated volunteers assisted the NCRCD in water quality

data and aquatic insect collection. The volunteers donated a total of 817 hours of their time to this project!

The Disturbance Inventory document prepared by UC Davis and the USGS Mercury Study have been submitted to the NCRCD in draft form. Both will be completed in 2003. The maps and data tables from the draft disturbance inventory can be viewed at <http://snepmaps.des.ucdavis.edu/snner/bear/>.

The draft water quality monitoring database was completed in 2002. The database will be validated and finalized in 2003 after



peer review from Yuba Watershed Council partners. The water quality data will be evaluated and summarized in the Bear River Resource Guide, the Bear River Coordinated Resource Management Plan and the final Project Report. All of these documents will be completed in 2003. Look

MOSQUITO FISH

Mosquito abatement/vector control is a concern in this county because of the numerous ponds. Over 200 ponds received hungry mosquito fish from the office in 2002. These voracious and fecund fish helped to control mosquito populations in private ponds. During the mosquito season, volunteers in the office scheduled a day each week or two when landowners came to the office to pick up mosquito fish. Karen Brown, a local pond-owner, raises these fish and provides them free to the NRCS/NCRCD office for distribution.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Staff was continually striving to increase community awareness of NRCS/NCRCD.



We had a tremendous response to our 2002 Nevada County Fair booth, shared with the Nevada County Farm Bureau and the Nevada-Placer Weed Management Area. The display booth even won the Directors' Choice Blue Ribbon!

The 2002 Speak Off contest had a great turn out. Amanda Courtney from Nevada Union High School, not only won the local contest but won the regional contest and went on to compete at the state level.

The staff contributed articles to The Union on various timely conservation subjects.

The office stocks a wide variety of educational materials, including two new brochures, "Noxious Weeds of the Sierras" and "Preparing for Wildfires in Western Nevada County."

Our video library contains taped workshops on a variety of subjects. This year we added two — "Conifer Bark Beetle Workshop" and a double tape with "Hold On To Your Dirt—Preventing Erosion From Construction Sites" and "Keep It Clean—Preventing Pollution From Construction Sites." Residents are welcome to check out

these videos and learn more about topics that interest them.

We also have aerial photos from 1939, 1948, 1952, 1962, 1971, 1984, and 1993 available for the public to view.

NRCS/NCRCD staff continued to meet with Fire Safe groups, Farm Bureau, Yuba Watershed Council, and other community groups to address the concerns related to the protection and conservation of Nevada County's natural resources.

The NCRCD board meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm at the NRCS/NCRCD office, 113 Presley Way, Suite 1, Grass Valley, CA, 95945. Phone (530) 272-3417 for more information.

Our agencies prohibit discrimination on the basis of national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

VOLUNTEERS

Many people kindly donated over 1,000 hours of time and talent this year to help out the office with renovations and organization, Bear River Monitoring, the no-till drill, and mosquito fish. Volunteer efforts allowed us to offer as many programs as possible to benefit the community.

On December 5, 17 Bear River Water Quality Monitors were honored with a volunteer appreciation dinner. Good fun, good food, and friendship filled the evening. Four volunteers: Gail Bakker, Geri Stout, Lisa Carle, and Steve Ford each had over 100 hours of dedicated monitoring. Volunteers received resolutions, certificates of

appreciation, and gift bags filled with goodies donated by NRCS, NCDOTS, SWQCB, NSAQMD, and NCRCD. The dinner was followed by a PowerPoint slide presentation highlighting some of the volunteers' efforts.

ENGINEERING ASSISTANCE

Engineering assistance was available for inventory and survey of irrigation systems, as well as restoration of stream banks and river banks after extreme storms and floods. We assisted several landowners with preliminary surveys, field surveys, and cost estimates for bringing piped agricultural water to rural properties.

THANK YOU GOES TO . . .

Gail Bakker, Steve Ford, David Rosseau, Marlee Chamberlin, Lisa Carle, Jonathan Keehn, Avila Lowrance, Marilyn Yerkes, Craig Combes, Lauren Drutz, Ray Thomas & NID, Mike Watson, Lloyd Harvego, Scott Savoie and students at Bear River High School, Leslie Smith and students at Nevada Union High School, Geri Stout and students at Sierra Foothill High School, Jeff Speas and students at Magnolia Intermediate School, Chris Pennington, Kevin Braton, Jim Brinkhurst, all the landowners who gave us permission to sample on their land, John Taylor, Margo Tressler, John and Justin Bettencourt, Mitch Pendo, Neil Robinson, Charlynn Zinke, Pamela Keeshan, and Karen Brown.

The office was renovated and obtained new furniture in 2002. It has a much newer and more professional look now. ***Come in and check out the office!***



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