



# 2001 ANNUAL REPORT NEVADA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**THIS ANNUAL REPORT** summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Nevada County Resource Conservation District during 2001. This report illustrates the many diverse activities coordinated by the RCD that benefit the natural resources and the community within our area of jurisdiction. The activities described reflect the efforts of the RCD staff, the RCD Board of Directors, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and others in our community who actively promote the wise use and management of our natural resources.

The mission of the Nevada County Resource Conservation District is to promote responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through leadership, education, technical assistance, financial assistance and facilitation.

The vision of the Nevada County Resource Conservation District is to assist educated and responsible landowners and land managers establish a balance between a high quality rural environment, a biologically diverse landscape and a healthy economy for the community. The services provided through the NRCS/RCD 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 calculated that the existence of this office including staff salaries, services, and reference materials are valued at \$700,000 per year.

## CONSERVATION SERVICES STAFF

The three Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff and the three Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) staff work together as a team. They share office space, vehicles, equipment and supplies. They are here to serve you on agricultural and resource concerns and issues.

Cyndi Brinkhurst is the new Resource Conservationist with the District as of October, 2001. Cyndi was raised on a grain and cattle farm in Canada. Her education encompasses degrees in biology, park management, and communications. Her specialty is aquatic resources.

Tamara Gallentine has been a District Resource Conservationist since July 2001. She grew up on a small farm in Washington state. Tamara has an educational background in environmental science, soil science, and horse management. Her main projects are the Bear River Watershed Study and managing the No-Till drill.

Diane Emmett works in our front office as Administrative Coordinator/Bookkeeper. She will greet you with a smile and introduce you to one of our staff members who will assist you with your resource conservation needs and questions. After graduating from Nevada Union, she developed her administration skills through years of classes and training while working for the Grass Valley Group.

Paul Olson is our new Field Engineer who moved to California from Nebraska in June 2001. He has worked for NRCS for 2.5 years with irrigation systems and management as one of his specialties. We share him with 2 other NRCS offices.

Allison Bettencourt is the NRCS Soil Conservationist and has worked with them for 10 years. She has a soil/irrigation production management degree and has a background in row crops, dairy/beef cattle, and horses.

Ron Zinke is the District Conservationist for NRCS and has served Nevada and Sierra counties for 23.5 years. He has a wildlife biology degree but also specializes in erosion control and pasture, rangeland, and timber management. In addition, he serves as the RCD manager and team leader for the combined staff.



Left to right—Diane Emmett, Tamara Gallentine, Ron Zinke, Cyndi Brinkhurst, Allison Bettencourt. Paul Olson absent (see photo back page).

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.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**John Taylor**  
President

**Ken Roberts**  
Vice President

**Craig Combes**  
Secretary/Treasurer

**David Vertin**  
Director

**David Gallino**  
Director

### ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

**Mark Hicks**  
**Carol Hollingsworth**  
**Robert Ingram**  
**Marta Kravech**  
**Willie Whittlesey**

### STAFF RCD

**Diane Emmett**  
Admin. Coord./Bookkeeper  
**Tamara Gallentine**  
Resource Conservationist  
**Cyndi Brinkhurst**  
Resource Conservationist

**NRCS**  
**Ronald Zinke**  
District Conservationist  
**Allison Bettencourt**  
Soil Conservationist  
**Paul Olson**  
Field Engineer



From right to left—Mark Hicks, Craig Combes, Cyndi Brinkhurst, Ron Zinke, Tamara Gallentine, Ken Roberts, Allison Bettencourt, Dave Vertin, Diane Emmett, and David Gallino.

### TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

On June 8, our office gave out approximately 17,000 surplus trees that were left from the USFS spring planting operations. The majority of these seedlings were red fir with some ponderosa pine, Jeffery pine, sugar pine, and Douglas fir. We provided planting and care instructions, helping to make one hundred extremely pleased landowners.



### ARBOR DAY

Our office celebrated Arbor Day on March 2 by giving away 400 blue butterfly bush. The event was very successful and the public was very excited to receive free seedlings of native shrubs. The office celebrates Arbor Day each year by giving away free seedlings to the public with each year more popular than the last. The RCD chooses a different plant each year to distribute.



### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

NRCS/RCD staff provide technical assistance to private landowners upon request. In 2001, we assisted about 1200 landowners and groups with natural resource problems, including erosion control, pond

management, star thistle eradication, fuels management, wildlife improvement, pasture, orchard and vineyard management, and rangeland and forest improvement.

### COST SHARE PROGRAMS

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 as well as more productive each year through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) which is funded by NRCS. The focus of this program is to improve natural resources in the Yuba River Watershed. Cost share assistance is provided to help landowners become better land stewards.

### NO-TILL RANGE DRILL

Good conservation practices on pasture and rangeland start with using the No-Till drill. The least amount of soil disturbance is accomplished when establishing vegetation with the No-Till drill. The drill creates a seed bed, drops seed and fertilizer in one application—saving time and money. The RCD rents the No-Till drill for a minimal cost to landowners in our area. During the two seeding periods of 2002, 11 landowners utilized the drill to get about 120 acres of on the ground conservation.



## CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Each year the District selects individuals or groups to honor for their conservation efforts. The award winners for 2001 are John & Janey Powers, Laurie Beacock, Ron & Nancy Knaus and the John and Mark Paye Families.

The Power's have a park-like 25 acre horse ranch on Kentucky Flat Road. Two years ago, they used the RCD drill to plant 4 acres of irrigation. It turned out to be the top planting that year. They also planted dryland pasture, put in cross fencing and managed their timber with direction from NRCS. In addition they have 15 acres of woodland and streamside land that serves for recreation and wildlife. They recently added solar power to their barn and irrigation to conserve energy.



Ms. Beacock has a 1 acre plus parcel near the end of Grove Street, Nevada City with 430 feet of frontage along Deer Creek. We gave her technical assistance after the 1997 flood concerning clean-up of debris, bank stabilization, fuel reduction, and plantings for erosion control and beautification. She got busy and cleared out brush, thinned trees, planted the slopes, and did practices to encourage wildlife. She is a good neighbor, a steward on Deer Creek, and makes her land available for scouts and school groups to learn watershed management.

The Knaus Family owns and manages 120 acres of timberland on Harmony Ridge bisected by Hwy. 20. They have worked with us the past four years to improve their land. With forest stand improvement funds, they have reduced brush, thinned and pruned trees, and planted conifers as needed for proper forest management. They

love wildlife and have worked to encourage song birds, wild turkey, and wildlife in general. They also have a trout pond which adds to their enjoyment and is an improvement to the wildlife habitat.

The Paye families were chosen for the many improvements on their 1,000 acre timber farm on Jones Ridge Rd. near Red Dog Road. This highly productive property has been in the family for years. Their



father was a dedicated timber manager and producer and planted many stands of trees. John and Mark more recently have implemented proper forest practices like thinning, pruning, brush removal, and planting. The trees their father planted are now used for forest products. They have gone the "second mile" to beautify the area by planting ornamental trees and flowers along the forest roads. A beautiful monument to their father was created on the property.

## MARTIS FIRE

Ron Zinke partnered with the Forest Service and CA Dept of Forestry officials on rehabilitation of the Martis Fire. This 14,500 acre wildfire started June 17 just east of Truckee and with strong winds and very steep slopes burned across the state line into Nevada. Over 3,000 fire fighters fought this early season fire. Ron worked with Forest Service officials on the B.A.E.R. team (watershed rehabilitation) and he was also selected to represent NRCS for both states on possible Emergency Watershed Protection programs for rehabilitation on private lands.

The USFS and CDF fire crews implemented key erosion control practices like water-barring roads after the fire was controlled. Federal funds became available to

private landowners to replant lost trees, and reseed critical areas to control erosion and help wildlife.



## BEAR RIVER WATERSHED STUDY PROP. 204 GRANT

The Bear River Study continued this year. Monitoring began this year with help from Dominic Gregorio of SWRCB and the Yuba Watershed Council. Teachers and students from 4 local schools (Bear River, Sierra Foothill and Nevada Union High Schools and Magnolia Intermediate School) are assisting the RCD in water quality data collection.

The Disturbance Inventory document contracted out to UC Davis and the USGS Mercury Study are in draft form. Both will be completed in 2002. The draft disturbance inventory can be viewed at <http://snepmaps.des.ucdavis.edu/snner/bear/>, please send comments to the office. The RCD was a sponsor of the very successful Mercury, Mines, Rivers, & You conference which 250 people attended.

The RCD was awarded a \$100,000 Packard Grant this year. The Bear River Watershed Group, formerly the Bear River Coordinated Resource Management Project, is working on acquiring restoration projects to use these funds. The RCD Board of Directors will award project funding in March 2002 and projects should be completed by spring 2003.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

We are continually striving to increase community awareness of NRCS/RCD.

We had a tremendous response to our 2001 Nevada County Fair booth, featuring materials on agriculture and wetlands.

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

The office stocks educational materials, we have a new brochure "Livestock on Small Acreage".

Our video library contains taped workshops on a variety of subjects. This year we added two— "Irrigated Pasture" and "Rangeland and Dryland" Planting and Management Workshops. Residents are welcome to check out these videos and learn more about other topics that interest them. We also have aerial photos from 1952, 1971, 1984, and 1993 available for the public to view.

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

The RCD board meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm (during daylight savings) otherwise 6:00 pm at the NRCS/RCD 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.

## ENGINEERING ASSISTANCE

Engineering assistance is 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 homeowner associations and small water districts with preliminary surveys, field surveys, and cost estimates of bringing piped agricultural water to rural landowners.



Paul Olsen, (2nd from left) NRCS engineer provides training to staff on irrigation systems.

## THANK YOU GOES TO...

- ✪ *Mitch Pendo & Neil Robinson* for making urgent no-till drill repairs.
- ✪ *Gale Bakker* for her office and water quality monitoring assistance.

Soil and Water  
Conservation is  
where it's at!



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