

2006 Annual Report

2006 ANNUAL REPORT
NEVADA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Introduction

The annual report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) during 2006. The Nevada County Resource Conservation District, which serves 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 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 services provided to the local residents through the NCRCD/NRCS office are free and available to any landowner in our jurisdiction.

2006 Summary Statistics

- \$1,279,400 towards conservation from cost share incentives and landowner contributions
- over 2000 landowners assisted with natural resource issues
- 567 acres implemented conservation practices through NRCS programs
- 1,400 trees and plants given away to the public
- 40 educational seminars hosted with 838 landowners attending



NRCS employees Alyson Aquino and Kirsten Losse working with local land managers

National Forestry Committee Annual Meeting and Tour

The NCRCD was pleased to host this year's National Association of Conservation Districts' Forestry Committee meeting. In August, professional foresters and national conservation organizations met to discuss issues and collaboratively solve challenges throughout the U.S. The meeting was held at the Northern Queen Inn in Nevada City and included a tour of Sierra Pacific Industries' cogeneration plant and mill site in Lincoln, the Nevada County Shaded



Fuel Break project area, and a Sierra Pacific Industries plantation off Highway 20, east of Nevada City. The meeting was a great opportunity for conservationists from all over the country to see the issues facing California's forests today.

<= RCD Director and Professional Forester Robert Ingram speaking to members of the National Forestry Committee





Bluebird nest box

Wildlife Box Building Project

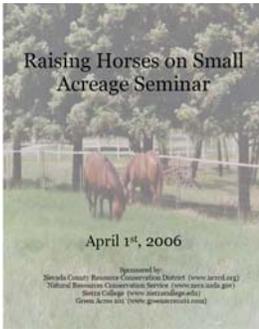
The Nevada County Resource Conservation District partnered with local businesses and volunteers to implement a wildlife box building project with the students and faculty of Nevada Union High School and, more recently, Scotten School. On October 5th the NCRCD received 27 bluebird boxes built by fifth grade students at Scotten School. Lesa Osterholm and Gordon Landon gave a presentation to the students explaining how artificial nesting structures benefit native wildlife. The wood for these boxes was donated by Hills Flat Lumber Company in Colfax, CA. Bluebird, bat, and wood duck nest boxes continue to be built by students in Nevada Union High School's wood shop program, and are available for purchase at the NCRCD office. Half of the money received for the boxes goes back to the wood shop program at Nevada Union, and the other half is placed in a fund to benefit local wildlife.



Western Bluebird

Educational Seminars

NCRCD hosted 36 educational seminars during the fair with a focus on resource conservation practices that benefit watershed health. The seminar topics included septic system maintenance, composting, managing livestock on small acreage, creating wildlife habitat, identifying local birds, pond design and management, and tree health and diseases. Approximately 700 people attended the seminars, which were presented hourly each day from 11am to 6pm.



The NCRCD/NRCS staff and directors and local experts provided additional education and outreach through the presentation of evening seminars, Sierra College classes, and workshops for landowners. A new all-day workshop was developed for landowners titled "Raising Horses on Small Acreage." The first presentation of the workshop, in April, reached maximum attendance, so another workshop was held in November. The workshops included a binder of resource information for each participant and individual maps of each landowner's property developed to encourage conservation planning.



Keith Crabtree at the November Horse Workshop



Fairgoers participating at a conservation seminar



<= Lesa Osterholm presenting information to horse owners

The NCRCD and NRCS office is stocked with an abundance of free literature that is available to the public. The staff can assist landowners with soil surveys and conservation planning and implementation on their property.

No-Till Range Drill

The no-till drill contributed to approximately 40 acres of conservation; both irrigated pasture and dry-land pasture were planted. The drill made several visits to landowners and a couple of visits to Keith Crabtree's Ranch Property Development and Management course. By planting seed and spreading fertilizer at the same time, the drill saves time, energy, and labor, and it is available to landowners in our district for a small rental fee. The drill also assists with controlling weeds, decreasing soil erosion, conserving water, and enhancing crop production. Landowners wishing to use the no-till drill should contact the NCRCD office at (530) 272-3417.



A local horse pasture planted with the no-till drill

Arbor Day



The NCRCD and PG&E partnership resulted in another fantastic Arbor Day. The NCRCD provided 400

native California Spice Bush

(*Calycanthus occidentalis*) seedlings,

and PG&E provided

800 Ponderosa Pine

seedlings. Staff and

directors enjoyed

visiting with mem-

bers of our commu-

nity and providing

them with resource

related assistance.



Speak-Off Contest

Annually, the Nevada County RCD sponsors a speech contest open to all local high school students. The topic for the 2006 contest was "Biofuels: The Energy of the Future." Karen Henderson, a local teacher, inspired her class to compete in a preliminary Speak-Off contest. The top 3 students were contestants in NCRCD's local event, where all of them exceeded expectations. The winner, Alicia Jones, from Nevada Union High School, went on to compete at the Central Sierra Regional RCD Speak-Off contest, and then the California Association of RCDs annual meeting in Santa Rosa last November. The focus of Alicia's speech was her family's experience with harvesting timber on their property to be used as biofuel. She did a lot of research and packed her speech full of information about how biofuels can be important as an energy source and an efficient use for forest wastes. The NCRCD is proud to acknowledge Alicia and her hard work in developing a great speech that educated many people.



Alicia Jones, Speak-off winner

Bear River Watershed Coordinator Grant



The Bear River from Highway 174 (Nevada-Placer County Line)

The Bear River Watershed Group meets monthly and is made up of agencies, local businesses, environmental groups, and concerned citizens. The meetings are open to the public and everyone is encouraged to attend. The watershed group is always looking for volunteers to assist with water quality monitoring and watershed assessment, website design and maintenance, and watershed related events.

Community watershed educational events included several tours, over 40 seminars, River Clean-up Day, Eco Kids Day, Forest and Land Stewardship Courses, Ag Water quality courses, and community fuel load reduction collaborative meetings. Lesa Osterholm, the Bear River Watershed Coordinator, continued to attend over 100 meetings throughout the year. A new group called CABY (Consumnes/American/Bear/Yuba) was formed and held over 20 meetings throughout the year to develop an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP)

across four watersheds. The water districts, RCDs, environmental and conservation groups, recreational users, agriculture and agencies participated in developing goals and strategies for water management. The primary goals addressed water quality, water supply and environmental habitat. Several grants proposals were submitted to CABY to show greater collaboration and communication among the groups and to reduce duplication of efforts throughout the region. The Bear River group submitted a grant proposal through the NCRCD to reduce the mercury contamination in

the Bear River.

<= Agency personnel, USGS and private consultants discussing mercury contamination in the Bear River



USGS taking flow measurements on Greenhorn Creek =>



Water quality monitoring is on-going in the Bear and Yuba watersheds. Currently, 25 sites are being monitored monthly in the Bear River by NCRCD staff, Wolf Creek Community Alliance, and the very dedicated volunteers Geri Stout, David Rosseau, Chris White, and Alex Ezzell with several students from Grass Valley Charter School.

Nevada County USDA Office Funds Conservation Projects

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service, has been providing technical conservation assistance to private landowners since the 1930's. In addition to conservation technical assistance, the NRCS administers the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP). The services, technical assistance and financial assistance programs provided in 2006 included implementation of the following practices:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree Thinning & Pruning Forest Health Improvement Brush Management Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Agricultural Water Conservation Water Quality Improvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green manures & cover crops Rangeland Health Improvement Stream Bank Restoration Spring Development Soil Erosion Reduction Wildlife Enhancement |
|--|--|

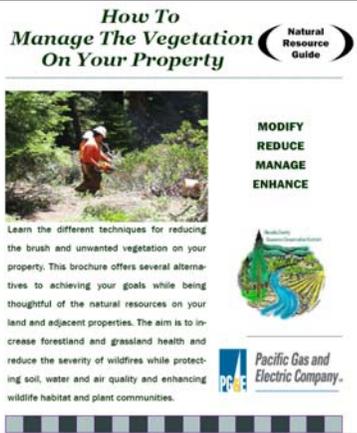
The Grass Valley NRCS office provided 22 local landowners with a total of \$639,698 in cost share incentives to implement conservation projects in Nevada County. The implementation of best management practices during the conservation projects significantly improves the health of the surrounding forests, grasslands, and watersheds. The funds provided through the USDA cost share programs and the 10-50% provided by the landowners will result in total expenditures of over \$1,200,000 in local Nevada County business and the implementation of conservation practices.

NCRCD and PG&E

co-sponsored the production of a brochure titled "How to Manage the Vegetation on Your Property."

The brochure explains different techniques for reducing brush and unwanted vegetation. The emphasis is on methods that will improve forestland and grassland health as well as reduce the severity of wildfires.

5,000 copies of the brochure were distributed to local landowners



NRCS employees inspecting an irrigation line

NCRCD and NRCS staff



NCRCD

Board of Directors

David Vertin, President
Ken Roberts, Vice-President
David Gallino, Secretary/Treasurer
Robert Ingram
Eric Carr

Associate Directors

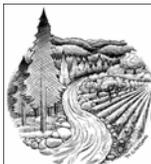
Carol Hollingsworth
Keith Crabtree

NCRCD Staff

Lesa Osterholm
Gordon Landon

NRCS Staff

Jason Jackson
Erin Foreman
Alyson Aquino
Kirsten Losse



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