



# Nevada County Resource Conservation District & Natural Resources Conservation Service 2010 Annual Report

## Introduction

- The NCRCD and partner NRCS celebrate 66 years of conservation in Nevada County and western Sierra County.
- When first formed on January 4, 1944, the District originally comprised an area consisting of 20,000 acres in agriculture. Now, the NCRCD/NRCS assists landowners on over 936,924 acres of land.
- Responding to the 1930's "Dust Bowl" crisis, the federal government passed legislation and established the Soil Conservation Service. Created to manage soil and water resources for conservation, in 1971 their functions expanded to include fish and wildlife habitat. This expansion reflected the name change from 'Soil Conservation District' to the present 'Resource Conservation District'.
- We remain committed to conservation of our natural resources for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

The Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partner in assisting landowners and land managers in improving their land. The NCRCD and NRCS provide free assistance to many landowners regarding issues that include erosion control, pond management, invasive weed control, fuels management, wildlife habitat improvement, pasture, orchard and vineyard management.

The NCRCD was founded on January 4, 1944 with a mission to promote responsible resource management through education and assistance. The NCRCD is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. The NCRCD board is made up of local landowners who provide input for local resource management.

In addition, the NCRCD sponsors numerous seminars and workshops throughout the year and at the Nevada County Fair. NCRCD has received several grants such as the Nevada County Community Shaded Fuelbreak from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. This grant was developed with assistance from the U.S. Forest Service, CAL FIRE, the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County and NRCS to add fire protection to the

communities of Cascade Shores, the Scotts Flat Lake area and the cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City.



The NRCS is a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) emphasizing science-based assistance at the community level. Their purpose is to bring land users the needed technical and financial tools to plan conservation projects.

NRCS offers additional support through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This program offers eligible landowners financial aid and technical assistance to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on their land.



The Nevada County Resource Conservation District's (NCRCD) focus for 2010 was conservation through education.

The need for reduced fuel loads and increased forest health are demonstrated through our on-going Fuelbreak project for Nevada County citizens and urban communities.

We offered numerous

seminars, workshops and classes that were a benefit to landowners and homeowners in keeping with conservation planning and implementation on their land.

Our annual events such as Conservationist of the Year and Arbor Day consistently offer information regarding good land stewardship using conservation methods for water efficiency, planting with natives and proper

resource management.

Our partnerships with other organizations such as Sierra Foothills Audubon, Nevada County Fairgrounds, Master Gardeners, etc. demonstrate the common goal we have of educating local property owners to use best management practices to conserve the natural resources in Nevada County.

## Nevada County Community Shaded Fuel Break



Begun in 2004, the Nevada County Community Shaded Fuel Break project area consists of approximately 15 miles around Scotts Flat reservoir.

Developed in cooperation with local agencies, the fuelbreak provides education to area residents regarding the need to reduce fuel loads to add additional protection from a catastrophic fire event. In addition, the fuelbreak addresses other issue such as an overall improved watershed, improved forest health for public recreation and sustainability, and the enhancement of wildlife habitat and vegetation control.

As a public water source, Scotts Flat Lake receives added protection from the fuelbreak with the reduction of potentially hazardous fuel loads that would impact the area in the event of a catastrophic fire. The potential for serious soil erosion along with compromised water quality after a major fire are also reduced with this fuelbreak project.

## Rural Property Planning & Management Seminar

The Mission and Vision Statements for the NCRCD state that *"to promote responsible resource management...through education...and to assist landowners to establish...a high quality rural environment"* dictates that we coordinate workshops and seminars that benefit local landowners.

In 2010 we coordinated with NRCS and Green Acres 101 and offered a **Rural Property Planning and Management** workshop.

Keith Crabtree, Green Acres 101; Patricia Silva, Master Gardener; Ken Hart, NID; and Jason Jackson, with NRCS, presented an all-day workshop on available resources for new property owners in our area.

We offered information and hands-on field

Keith Crabtree speaking at the Rural Property Planning and Management workshop. →

work covering weeds, pastures, irrigation, drainage, wildlife habitat, ponds, erosion, soils and property development and management.

Various booklets, brochures and literature were provided and the speakers addressed various subjects. Attendees participated in discussions pertinent to their situations and concerns.

We then toured a small working ranch to view some of the practices discussed in the workshop and continued the discussion on ponds, pastures and irrigation.



## Conservationist of the Year

Nevada County Board of Supervisor's Nate Beason and Ed Scofield present the 2009 Conservationist of the year award to Scott Knies of Sunshine Valley Ranch.



Since 1974, the NCRCD has recognized conservationists for forest health improvement, improving water quality and irrigation efficiency, rangeland management, agriculture, fuel load reduction, wildlife habit and community volunteering.

The award for Conservationist of the Year for 2009 went to Scott Knies and Sunshine Valley Ranch. Scott

purchased his property in 2005 and cleared ladder fuels, installed fencing and improved access roads to the property. He installed both irrigated pasture and dry-land pasture for grazing.

Scott was recognized for his support of agriculture, water efficiency and dedication to conservation of natural resources.

In addition we honored Charles Fowler for his outstanding conservation efforts of managed forestland ;

Alan Haight in appreciation of his efforts with water quality research relating to agricultural production and

Chris White for his volunteer efforts, enthusiasm and dedication to conservation efforts of natural resources.

## Conservation Seminars at the Nevada County Fair

In 2010 the Nevada County Fair organized a new 'ag' area for ag-related organizations to group together with a common theme.

This new idea was a group effort by Sandy Woods, Chief Executive Officer and Robin Hauck, Deputy Manager of the Nevada County Fairgrounds, NCRCD, Master Gardener's, Nevada County Farm Bureau, local 4H groups, local high schools and others.

This new area was called "Ag-Sperience" and proved to be very successful for all involved. The NCRCD hosted

their annual conservation seminars that included Landscaping with Natives, Local Birds, Ground Water, Fruit Trees, Pond Management, Oak Trees, Chickens, Bats, Bees, Organic Gardening and Composting and Living Among Wildlife.

We had several displays for the fairgoers such as Grazing, Forestry and Wildlife. We also had a display of tree rounds that demonstrated various environmental conditions that effected healthy forests versus un-healthy forests.

Our presenters brought numerous educational tools including literature, photos, plant materials, live bats, live raptors and a wealth of information regarding a variety of topics pertinent to local Nevada County landowners and urban homeowners.

Our dozens of volunteers make this annual series our best event for communicating to the public our goal of conservation of natural resources for Nevada County. We are proud to be a part of the Nevada County Fair each year.



## Arbor Day Plant Give-Away



NCRCD Associate Director Carol Hollingsworth handing out plants for Arbor Day

In addition to donating the seedlings, SPI employees offered tips and information on the trees to people who came by for the event.

Each year we choose plants that attract pollinators, encourage native plantings or allow landowners to try planting with drought tolerant species.

Volunteers for this event include the NRCS staff and the NCRCD board of directors. Our goal is to educate the public on suitable plantings that thrive in our Mediterranean climate, thus reducing water usage, the unwanted spread of non-native invasives, and wildlife enhancement.

Educational materials were on hand regarding resource conservation, soil conservation and water quality.

Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) donated Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine seedlings this year when the NCRCD hosted our annual Arbor Day plant give-away.



NCRCD Associate Director Lynn Lorenson offering information and plants to a homeowner

## Wildlife Habitat / Wildlife Nesting Boxes



Over the past five years, the NCRCD has partnered with numerous organizations to make available to homeowners, hand-made wildlife nesting boxes for placement on their property.

In 2010 the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society joined our efforts in offering these boxes and in providing educational information on local birds, their

habitats and nesting requirements to local residents.

The Audubon Society began supplying us with blue bird, wood duck, barn owl, kestrel, screech owl and bat nesting boxes. In addition they offered information on proper placement of these boxes, care and cleaning requirements and bird house or nesting box dimensions for those who

wanted to build their own box.

Members of the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society also identified at least 7 different water birds that could be seen off Highway 20 in the rice fields for those who drove out to bird watch.

Proceeds from the donations of these nesting boxes are split between the Audubon Society for more materials and a wildlife fund.



## A Legacy of Conservation in Nevada County

This year, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) celebrates 75 years of helping private landowners help the land in the United States. NRCS – first called the Soil Conservation Service – was formed in 1935 during the Dust Bowl, when valuable agricultural land in Nevada County and across the country was severely eroding, farmers and ranchers were struggling, and private landowners were gaining a new understanding of their critical role caring for the land and the environment.



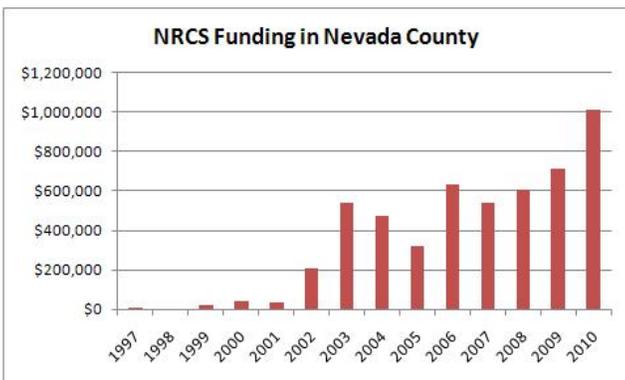
Nevada City, 1849 ↑

Since then, farmers, ranchers and other private and tribal landowners have relied on NRCS' technically trained conservationists to help them protect and improve natural resources on their property. Every day, landowners come to our Grass Valley office for free, voluntary conservation assistance. **In the past fourteen years alone, NRCS has helped local landowners develop customized strategies to protect natural resources on more than 30,000 acres. That's approximately 5 percent of the county's private lands.**

Such strategies, along with NRCS financial assistance, over the course of this 75-year history have enabled local people to **save tons of valuable topsoil, conserve vast amounts of irrigation water, protect critical habitats for fish and wildlife, and improve forest health across the county.** This legacy of conservation has resulted in profound benefits to the productive working lands, pristine landscapes, and quality of life enjoyed in Nevada County.

In celebration of this historic, 75-year public-private conservation partnership, NRCS would like to recognize the hard work and innovative spirit of natural resource professionals and private land managers and celebrate our joint history of land stewardship in Nevada County.

NRCS District Conservationist Jason Jackson reviewing project with Scott Knies ↓



### NCRC Board of Directors

Robert G. Ingram, President  
Eric Carr, Vice-President  
David Gallino, Secretary/Treasurer  
David Vertin  
Janey Powers

### Associate Directors

Carol Hollingsworth  
Keith Crabtree  
Lynn Lorensen

### NCRC Staff

Lesa Osterholm, District Manager  
Jan Blake, Administrative Assistant

### NRCS Staff

Jason Jackson, District Conservationist  
Tony Sunseri, Soil Conservationist  
Fanny Ye, Soil Conservationist  
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