

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

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 2008. 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 natural resource conservation issues.

The mission of the NCRCD is to promote responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through leadership, education, technical assistance, financial assistance and facilitation. The vision of the NCRCD 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 local residents through the NCRCD/NRCS office are free and available to any landowner within our jurisdiction.



Conservationist of the Year Awards

The Nevada County Resource Conservation District hosts the Conservationist of the Year event annually to recognize landowners of Nevada and western Sierra County for their good land stewardship and natural resource conservation. In 2008, we recognized and presented six awards to those who displayed exemplary roles in conservation and land stewardship. The **Conservationist of the Year** award went to Ananda Dhiira, an ashram located adjacent to the South Yuba River state park at Bridgeport. They successfully restored a riparian area on the lower reaches of Kentucky Creek. They are truly stewards of their land with a great conservation ethic and a compassion for their community and the world at large. Other award recipients included Rita de Quercus, M & M Reforestation, Jim Tryon, Jim Bratt and Joanne Drummond.

2008 SUMMARY STATISTICS

- ◆ \$1,204,836 in conservation dollars were made available for natural resource projects from cost share incentives and landowner contributions
- ◆ 8,215 acres implemented conservation practices
- ◆ Over 3,000 landowners were given assistance with natural resource issues and questions
- ◆ 40 educational seminars were offered with 1,090 landowners in attendance
- ◆ Over 42 acres were planted with the No-Till Drill



Nevada County Board of Supervisor Hank Weston presenting Ananda Dhiira Ashram the 2008 Conservationist of the Year Award

Environmental Benefits of Grazing Grant



The Resource Conservation District received a \$68,000 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to coordinate an educational tour throughout the Sierra Nevada region entitled:

“Working Landscapes-the Environmental Benefits of Grazing”

These seminars offered agency staff, environmental groups, ranchers and the public an opportunity to come together for a dialogue about grazing and ranching, and to discover common goals toward preserving these important working landscapes.

Ten seminars in all were planned for the fall of 2008 and for the spring of 2009. In addition to discussion about the multiple benefits of managed grazing, the NCRCD produced a short, ten-minute video that demonstrated the environmental, cultural economic and social benefits that are provided by local “working landscape” ranches.

Featured speakers for the fall series were Dan Dagget, author of *“Beyond the Rangeland Conflict”* and *“Gardener’s of Eden”*, Michel Meuret, Research Director for the National Institute for Agricultural Research, France and UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors.

Shaded Fuel Break Grant

The Nevada County Community Shaded Fuelbreak project encompasses approximately fifteen miles and up to one quarter mile in width, consisting of mostly large, privately owned parcels. This project began in 2004 and is approximately 70% completed with the assistance of private landowners, USDA NRCS and CalFire cost share incentive programs.

NCRCD received a \$406,000 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Several meetings were held with Cascade Shores Homeowners Association, Lightning Tree Road Association, Nevada Irrigation District and the US Forest Service to coordinate land treatments and develop cooperation in order to complete the fuelbreak project.



Aquatic plant samples

Watershed Coordinator Grant

For the second time, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District was awarded a \$235,000, multi-year, watershed coordinator grant for the Bear River Watershed. Monthly watershed meetings and tours are held with stakeholders in the region. Watershed concerns and issues are addressed and potential projects are prioritized. The meetings are open to the public and everyone is encouraged to attend. Watershed projects included the Scotch Broom Challenge, Aquatic Plant ID Day, River Clean-Up Day and more.

On December 17, 2008, the State of California suspended all grants that had derived their funding from Propositions. Previous invoices were not paid and many projects ceased.

Educational Seminars at the Nevada County Fair

NCRCD hosted our annual watershed educational seminars at the Nevada County Fair in August 2008. Topics included raising horses and animals on small acreage, planting for pollinators, all about oak trees, invasive weeds, bees, birds, water conservation, creeks, organic farming, energy efficient homes and many more.

Presenters such as Mark Fredericks, Roger Ingram, Linda Nowack-Carlson, Randy Oliver, Marney Blair, Chris Navo, Camy Arnold, Ray Darby, Lesa Osterholm and Doug McCreary made this year's seminar series an outstanding event. 916 fair goers attended the seminars and gathered printed literature.

The RCD continues to build partnerships with local landowners and organizations. Increasing the awareness and understanding of local issues helps further the conservation of natural resources in our area.



NCRCD District Manager, Lesa Osterholm, speaking at the Nevada County Fair NCRCD seminar series



Arbor Day Plant Give-Away

Arbor Day

Thanks to PG&E for generously donating over 200 Giant Sequoia seedlings and the NCRCD for donating 400 Azure penstemon native seedlings. We had another highly successful Arbor Day Plant Give-Away on April 25, 2008 with over three hundred residents coming out for the annual event.

PG&E provided information about compatible planting choices near power lines, reminding customers to plant the "right tree in the right place".

Wildlife nesting boxes, built by high school students, were also available for purchase, as was free information on many resource conservation topics for landowners.

Speak-Off Contest

Nevada Union High School student Maddison Easley, won the NCRCD local Speak-Off Contest which is open to all Nevada County high school students. Maddison won first place in the Nevada County contest and then went on to compete at the RCD regional contest in Mariposa County where she again took first place, earning her an opportunity to compete at the state-wide contest in Riverside. She received third place there on November 21st for her speech entitled "Is That Smoke I Smell?" Her public speaking ability and her outstanding speech earned her \$550.00, several awards and a summer internship with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Nevada Union High School continues to win at the regional and state levels, thanks to teacher Karen Henderson. Ms. Henderson has had more Speak-off contest state winners than any other teacher in California!



Nevada Union High School student Maddison Easley, winner of the 2008 Speak-off Contest



NCRCD Board Director Robert Ingram removing scotch broom

Scotch Broom Challenge

The NCRCD partnered with the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County, California Native Plant Society, CA State Parks, Lake Wildwood Homeowners Association, Master Gardeners of Nevada County, USDA Forest Service, Penn Valley Rotary, North San Juan Fire Department and many more local groups to coordinate a county-wide Scotch Broom Challenge, aimed at educating landowners, businesses and organizations about the highly aggressive, non-native invasive weed and how to reduce infestations.

Four events were scheduled for community groups and neighborhoods to participate in a workshop and weed-pulling day. Presentations by resource professionals and training on identification of broom varieties were offered as well as techniques for removing the plant.

In response to the challenge, Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner, Jeff Pylman, issued a letter prohibiting the importation, propagation and/or sale of broom varieties as ornamental landscaping in Nevada County. Over 100 people participated in the events.



The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) 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 2008 included the following practices:

- Tree Thinning & Pruning
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Brush Management
- Agricultural Water Conservation
- Water Quality Improvement
- Green Manures & Cover Crops
- Rangeland Improvement
- Integrated Pest Management
- Soil Erosion Reduction
- Wildlife Enhancement



The Grass Valley NRCS office provided 22 local landowners with a total of \$602,418 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 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 \$1,204,836 in local Nevada County business and the implementation of conservation practices.

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