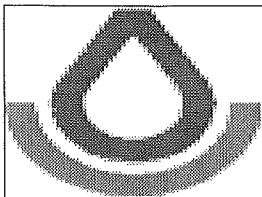




2003 ANNUAL REPORT

NEVADA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE



2003 Annual Report

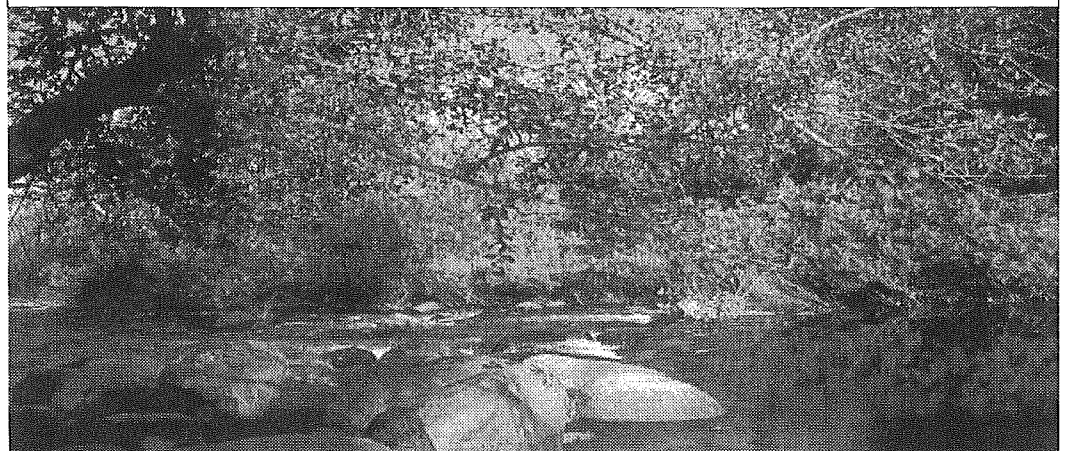
The Annual Report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) during 2003. The Nevada County Resource Conservation District, which covers all of Nevada County and Western Sierra County, was founded in 1943 to provide community leadership on resource conservation issues.

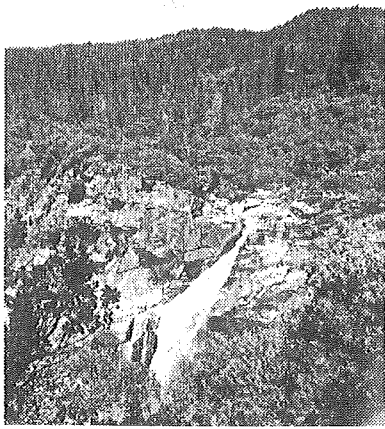
The mission of the NCRCD and the NRCS is to promote responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through leadership, education, technical assistance, financial assistance and facilitation. The vision of the NCRCD and the NRCS is to assist landowners and land managers to establish a balance 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, regional and statewide NRCS staff, and others in our community who actively promote the wise use and management of our natural resources.

The services provided to the local residents through the NRCS/NCRCD office are free and available to any landowner in our jurisdiction. The services, technical assistance and financial assistance programs provided in 2003 **valued over \$1,000,000. to the community.** In addition, through resource conservation, **over 5,000 acres were affected** by the following practices:

- Reducing the fuels for wildfire
- Improving forest health
- Tree thinning and pruning
- Improving rangeland health
- Reducing weed infestation
- Re-seeding rangeland
- Brush management
- Spring development
- Improving water conveyance
- Reducing soil erosion
- Improving water quality
- Monitoring stream sites
- Stream bank restoration
- Wildlife enhancement





NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program

In 2003, over \$600,000 was provided for landowner conservation support through the NRCS's incentive programs. Thirty-two projects were funded under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) this year consisting of seventeen forestry and fifteen rangeland agreements. Water quality was improved through these efforts in addition to engineering support staff providing designs for more efficient irrigation systems. Forest health was improved and competing vegetation was removed to aid in reduction of fuels for wildfire management. Pastures and range were re-seeded for better forage quality and reduction of weeds. Wildlife nesting habitats were improved or created and new feed plots were established.

2003

NRCD

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Taylor, President
Ken Roberts, Vice-President
Craig Combes, Secretary/Treasurer
David Vertin
David Gallino

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Mark Hicks
Carol Hollingsworth
Robert Ingram
Jon Shilling

NRCD STAFF

RESOURCE CONSERVATIONISTS

Tamara Gallentine
Cyndi Brinkhurst
Gail Bakker
Lesa Osterholm

NRCS STAFF

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

Ron Zinke

RESOURCE AND SOIL CONSERVATIONISTS

Allison Bettencourt
Paul Lake

FIELD ENGINEERS

Dave Kretemeyer
Kirsten Losse
Paul Olson

Ron Zinke Retires After 32 Years of Service to NRCS

Ron Zinke said good bye to the NRCS after spending 25 years in the Grass Valley field office and 7 years previous to that in Weaverville, Livermore, Colusa and Merced. Ron was project coordinator for restoring salmon and steelhead in the Trinity River. He spent a great deal of his time in the field with landowners pointing out resource concerns and how to manage them. His knowledge of plants, wildlife and erosion control techniques helped conserve the natural resources in the county. Ron was instrumental in establishing many programs including the Yuba Watershed Council and Bear River Watershed Group. He had a significant impact re-establishing local rangeland. We wish Ron, Charlynn and his family the best of luck!

Technical Assistance Proves Worthwhile

Our office partnered with the North San Juan Fire Protection District and their Proposition 204 grant for fuels management. Staff provided technical assistance for fuel load reduction projects within the community. Twenty-one residents participated. The project treated 328 acres and provided over \$125,000 for clearing brush and improving forest health. Landowners attended workshops and learned first hand the "how to" for creating defensible space and contributing toward a fire safe community.

Arbor Day and Tree Giveaway

This annual event just keeps on growing! For Arbor Day in 2003, the California Fuchsia, a colorful native was chosen and over 600 plants were given away to residents. PG&E partnered with us and contributed hundreds of Sierra Redwood and Incense Cedar seedlings for the promotion.

The annual Tree Giveaway in June provided over 14,000 seedlings for "new homes" in our community. The type of seedlings were Jeffrey Pine, Sugar Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir and White Fir.

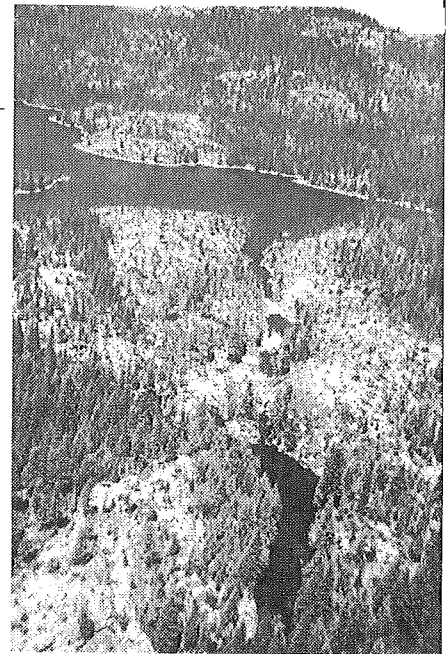
Sierra Pacific Industries provided over 4,300 seedlings with the US Forest Service providing the balance of over 9,000 seedlings. Landowners were given instructions on how to plant and care for their new seedlings. We wished the people luck and hoped to see the seedlings as big trees one day.



Bear River Watershed Project

The Proposition 204 grant on the Bear River Watershed continued this year. A sampling of the benthic macro-invertebrates were taken and the species were identified. The diversity of the species present and number of species are an indicator of the health of the river. The big focus was on water quality throughout the watershed. The type of tests performed for water quality were temperature, turbidity, ph, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, presence of nitrates, phosphates and ammonium. Water quality monitoring data was completed and approved by the technical advisory committee which includes the State Water Resource Control Board. Last year, monitoring was performed on 20 sites ranging in geographic area from Hwy 20 to Highway 70. The disturbance inventory of the watershed and resource guide were also completed. The report for the presence of mercury in Greenhorn Creek was finalized and the results showed the benthic macro invertebrates and amphibians tested had the highest levels of mercury recorded in the county. The NCRCD is working with the USGS through Charlie Alpers for conducting further mercury studies near Lake Combie .

Monitoring continues on 2 sites on the Bear River with volunteers. Teacher, Geri Stout at Sierra Foothill High School, and students are continuing the water quality monitoring program of the Bear River on four additional sites. Two of those sites are on Peabody Creek which runs through Condon Park and two are on Wolf Creek at the North Star Mine and Loma Rica Ranch areas.



Ranchette Conservation Was The Theme For 2003's County Fair Booth

As part of the public outreach effort of the NCRCD and NRCS, a colorful, educational booth was designed with the small acreage owner in mind. The booth exhibited a barn with an irrigated pasture system, small pond, trees and native plants, and identification of noxious weeds. The booth was manned around the clock as staff and directors answered questions about getting conservation on the ground. There were more than 100 pieces of helpful literature available and a sign-up sheet for individuals that wanted more information or preferred a site visit from the resource conservationists. The top questions by fair goers were how to eradicate star thistle, how to manage ponds and how to establish pastures on small acreage. There are more and more horse owners buying property in the county and a Small Landowner -horse pilot project is being developed by the NCRCD, High Sierra RC&D, Farm Advisors from 7 counties and the NRCS. The result will be a workshop that covers raising animals on small acreage and the associated challenges. Topics will include soil erosion and run-off, soil compaction, establishing pastures and eradicating weeds, grazing management, buffer zones near riparian areas, fencing off live-stock from water bodies, animal care and nutrition.

Additional educational efforts from staff was evident by setting up booths at various community events, Earth Day, presentations at Sierra College's ranch management classes, hosting workshops and creating new "how to" literature. The NCRCD and NRCS office is stocked with lots of free literature available to the public. The staff can assist landowners with soil surveys, conservation planning and implementation on their property. The office has numerous "how to" video for free rental, in addition to seeding equipment that can be loaned out.



CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR



Bob Erickson

This prestigious award is presented each spring to those that have implemented conservation on the ground and are an inspiration to others. No one is better deserving of that title than Bob Erickson from North San Juan, CA. Bob and his wife, Liesa own 118 acres with other shareholders in the forest since 1970. Bob worked with the USFS in Colorado straight out of college. After purchasing this property, he worked with a forester in the early 1980's to develop a conservation and management plan for the land. He has used prescribed burning, mastication, hand pruning and thinning to manage the trees. There are no fences so wildlife can roam freely and some burn piles are left for wildlife habitat. Bob has monitored Spotted Owls and Piliated Wood pecker's activities in the area. He is President of the Yuba Watershed Institute. There is an impressive workshop, kiln and storage area on site for his woodworking and furniture business. Bob builds exquisite pieces of furniture and his works are displayed in the Smithsonian, Mendocino, Sante Fe and Healdsburg art galleries. Liesa has used Norwegian Fjord horses to log some of the area for low impact reasons and also worked for the Soil Conservation Service in the past. We are proud to recognize and honor Bob Erickson!

VOLUNTEERS

We couldn't have done it without you! A big thank you to all the dedicated volunteers and their conservation efforts!

Gail Bakker
Lisa Carle
Steve Ford
Jean Pliska
Karen Brown
Chris Pennington
Barbara Gearhart
Lynn Harrell
Pam Keeshan
Charlynn Zinke
Craig Combes
Jan Sanders
Julie Herrlinger
Larry Schmidt
Jim Brinkhurst
John Bettencourt
Justin Bettencourt
Margo Tressler

MOSQUITO FISH

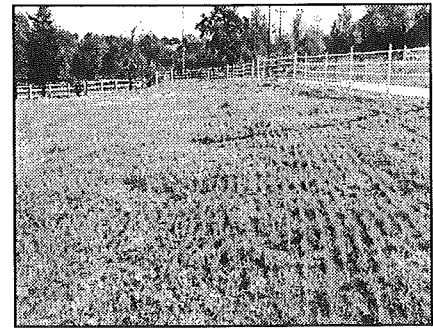
Mosquito abatement/vector control is a growing concern in this county because of the numerous ponds and the presence of the West Nile Virus in California. Over 200 ponds received hungry mosquito fish from our office in 2003. These voracious and fecund fish helped to control mosquito populations in private ponds. During the mosquito season, Karen Brown, a local pond-owner, raises these fish and provides them free to the NCRCD/ NRCS for distribution to the public. Residents should call in advance and schedule picking up the fish from our office.

NO-TILL RANGE DRILL

The No-Till Drill was used several times by landowners this year. The purpose of using the no-till drill is to prevent soil loss from tilling the ground and to increase seed-soil contact for better germination. Approximately 45 acres were treated this year.

The no-till drill is available to landowners in our district for a low rental fee. This implement can drop seed and fertilizer at the same time. 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 for more information.



3 WEEKS AFTER USING THE
NO-TILL DRILL



7 WEEKS AFTER PLANTING WITH
THE NO-TILL DRILL



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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Grass Valley, CA 95945
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NCRCD Web Site: <http://www.ncrcd.org>
NRCS Web Site: <http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov>

