

# 1999 ANNUAL REPORT

This Annual Report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Nevada County Resource Conservation District during 1999. This report illustrates the many diverse activities of 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 the responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through leadership education, technical assistance, coordination, and facilitation.

The vision which guides our efforts is having a balance between 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 the County. 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 \$600,000 per year.

## WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

The Yuba Watershed Council was officially formed September 15, 1999 with the signing of a memorandum of understanding by twenty five members. Since September the council membership has grown to nearly forty. The council had its beginnings in the fall of 1997 when a group of local, state and federal agencies, conservation and environmental organizations, and neighborhood associations began meeting at the NRCS/RCD office in Grass Valley. Their purpose was to discuss the application for Proposition 204 grant funds, a ballot initiative known as the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Water Act approved by California voters in 1996.

The Proposition 204 Steering Committee unsuccessfully applied for phase I funding in January of 1998. In May of 1998, the reorganized Prop. 204 Committee met again for several months to apply for phase II of the state allocated funding.

The efforts of the Prop. 204 steering committee proved successful. In January 1999, nearly \$1.2 million was awarded for watershed planning and implementation projects on the Yuba River, Deer Creek, and Bear River. Through the coordinated efforts of the RCD and NRCS, the Yuba Watershed Council, formerly known as the Prop. 204 Committee, has continued to meet on a monthly basis in order to establish a long term commitment toward watershed restoration and conservation.

The RCD has assumed the lead role in establishing the Bear River Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP). This group, under the umbrella of the Yuba Watershed Council, currently includes about twenty  
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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**  
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Vice President  
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Director

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## STAFF

### RCD

**Curtis Davidson**  
Resource Conservationist  
**Chad McDonald**  
Resource Conservationist  
**Joyce Donnelly**  
Admin. Coord./  
Bookkeeper

### NRCS

**Ronald Zinke**  
District Conservationist  
**Allison Bettencourt**  
Soil Conservationist  
**Paul Lake**  
Soil Scientist  
**Loren Schilder**  
Ag Engineer

## WATERSHED MANAGEMENT CONT

local, state, and federal agencies, conservation organizations and private individuals cooperatively establishing a management plan for the Bear River.

If you are interested in attending the monthly meetings of the Yuba Watershed Council of the Bear River CRMP, please contact our office.

### TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

On June 17, our office gave out approximately 5,000 surplus trees that were left from the USFS spring planting operations. Ponderosa pine, jeffrey pine, sugar pine, and douglas fir trees were distributed to more than forty landowners. Planting and care instructions were also provided, helping to make forty extremely pleased landowners.

### ARBOR DAY

Our office celebrated Arbor Day on March 5 by giving away 200 spicebush seedlings to the public. The event was very successful and the public was very excited to receive free seedlings of a native shrub. 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 native plant to distribute each year.



### WILDLIFE HOME ASSISTANCE

Hundreds of Backyard Conservation booklets were given to homeowners to foster ideas on practices and projects benefiting wildlife. The Union promoted this booklet with two articles in August. Booklets are still available. Free wildlife habitat improvement advice is available to any property owner willing to implement changes.

## CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE YEAR

Each year the District selects individuals or groups to honor for their conservation efforts. The award winners for 1999 are Pat and Nita Browning, Eric Carr, and Karen Brown.

Pat and Nita Browning are ranchers in the French Corral area. They have both timber and rangeland. For years they have been converting brushland to rangeland forage. In 1999, under the EQIP program, they cleared thirty five acres of brush and planted a mixture of grass and clovers. Not only are they making their land more productive for livestock and wildlife but they are also making a more fire safe community.

Eric Carr, California Department of Forestry forester and resident of Nevada City, is honored for his forestry work and leadership. Eric owns and manages about 500 acres of timber near Malakoff State Park. He does what he preaches—making improvements utilizing the latest forest management practices. His holdings are excellent examples of timber management. In 1999, he assisted NRCS staff with his expertise in the FIP and EQIP programs.

Karen Brown, Grass Valley native and Greenhorn Road resident, is honored for her resource outreach to the community. Karen has two ponds that produce an abundant supply of mosquito fish. She generously donates them to pond owners needing mosquito control. Hundreds of people have benefited from this free and thoughtful service.

The recipients will be awarded at a ceremony this spring among their peers

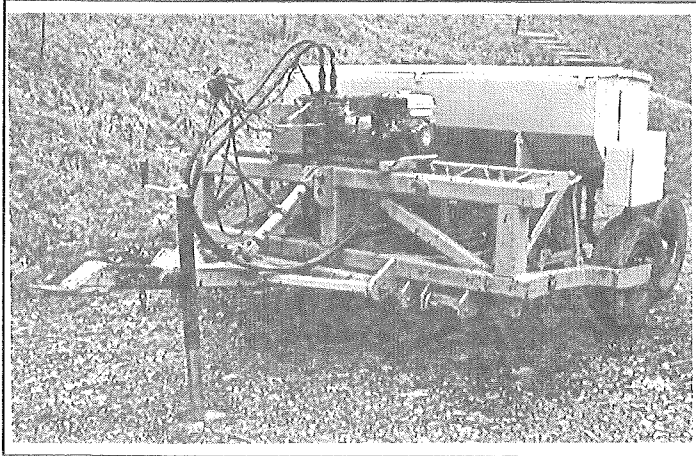


## **RCD IMPLEMENTS RECYCLING GRANT**

This year the RCD implemented a recycling grant that was funded by the state Department of Conservation. The grant was used to purchase and distribute twenty three beverage container recycling units. These were placed throughout Nevada County in Western Gateway Park in Penn Valley, Pioneer Park in Nevada City, and State Parks including Malakoff Diggins, Empire Mine, and Bridgeport as well as South Yuba River crossings at Purdon's and Edward's.

## **NO-TILL DRILL**

The RCD rents out a no-till range drill to Nevada County residents to help establish or improve good range and pasture land. This tractor pulled machine is designed to plant seed and fertilizer in one application, thus saving the landowner time and money. Using the no-till drill cuts down on weed competition by minimizing the amount of soil disturbance.



## **EROSION CONTROL**

RCD staff reviews and makes erosion control recommendations on development plans submitted to us by the City of Grass Valley. This ensures that proper erosion control measures are taken on every new construction site. Our staff also provides assistance to the city through periodic erosion control monitoring visits to construction sites.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

NRCS/RCD staff provide technical assistance to private landowners upon request. In 1999, we assisted over 1000 landowners 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.

## **ENGINEERING ASSISTANCE**

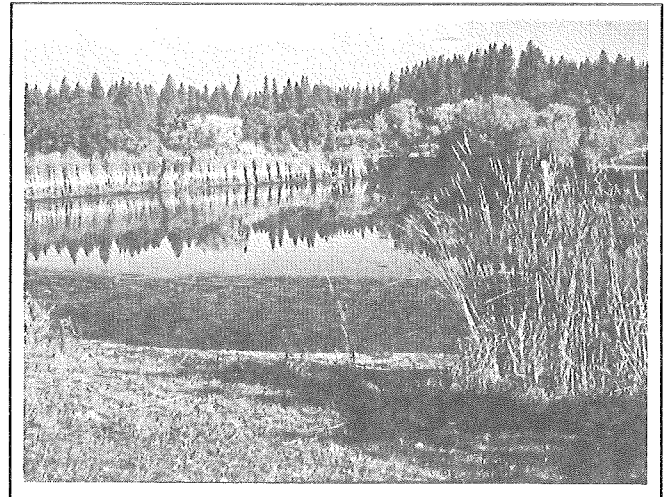
An engineering survey and design is planned for three subdivisions near Lake of the Pines. Other services given in 1999: a ranch irrigation system design and evaluation; small dam location; and river and stream bank stabilization using wire gabions, rock riprap, and vegetation.

## **FORESTRY INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

NRCS administers the Forestry Incentive Program in cooperation with California Department Of Forestry. During 1999, twelve landowners have received cost-share assistance treating 300 acres of forestland in Nevada and Western Sierra Counties. More landowners were assisted due to 1999 emergency funds.

## **EQIP EDUCATION PROJECTS**

Nevada County Farm Bureau completed two Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) education projects in 1999. One project produced the booklet Livestock on Small Acreage. This colorful and information packed publication is an excellent management tool for improving fire safety in Nevada County. The second project completed three informational composting workshops and developed an educational video.



## **EQIP**

Hundreds of acres of range and forestland are made fire safe as well as more productive each year through programs such as Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). In 1999, ten local landowners received cost share assistance to help them become better land stewards. This program was targeted to improve natural resources in the Yuba River Watershed

## PUBLIC AWARENESS

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

We had a tremendous response to our 1999 Nevada County Fair booth, featuring materials on backyard conservation.

The staff writes a bimonthly newspaper column for The Union entitled "Conservation Corner", where local residents can read backyard conservation related educational materials.

Our video library contains taped workshops on a variety of subjects. Residents are welcome to check out these videos and learn more about the topics that interest them. We also have aerial photos from 1952, 1984, and 1993 available for the public to view.

NRCS/RCD staff continues 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.

## NEW EMPLOYEES

In January the hiring process was completed for a new administrative coordinator. Joyce Donnelly, an eight year resident, was selected.

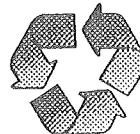
Also being added to our staff is Chad McDonald. Chad comes to us from Humboldt State University where he completed a double major in environmental economics and environmental policy, specializing in water resource issues.

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

The RCD board meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm at the NRCS/ RCD office, 113 Presley Way, Suite 1, Grass Valley, CA, 95945. Phone (530) 272-3417 or email: nrcrd@jps.net. Please contact the office for more information.

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