



2013 Annual Report



NEVADA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION
DISTRICT & NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

1944 TO 2014



"Many of the fertile valleys were early settled upon and brought under cultivation, the raising of vegetables for the thousands of miners being a large and profitable business. The hardships and privations of a life in the mines were great, and many an unfortunate miner, discouraged by the want of success that crowned the efforts of hundreds around him, abandoned the pick and shovel for the spade and the plow, to win from the fertile earth the wealth the sterile sands denied him." (Thompson and West history of Nevada County 1880).



The Soil Conservation Service was created in 1935 as a result of the Dust Bowl, (reorganizing under the Department of Agriculture in 1994 to become the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In an effort to bring together local ranchers and farmers



within district boundaries, grass roots support for local conservation districts began in 1937. Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) was formed in 1944 in partnership with the NRCS to develop and implement projects on public and private lands, and sponsor events for landowners and the public regarding resource conservation.



The NCRCD petitioned for organization to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, beginning with 54,600 acres in the Chicago Park area. Additional acreage throughout Nevada County was added in 1946, 1947, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1960, 1961, and 1965 totaling over 882,238 acres within the District.



"In 1892, 1,587 acres were under cultivation, producing 14,310 bushels of barley, 307 bushels of oats, 299 tons of potatoes and 50

tons of hay. The same year records 1,304 horses, 825 mules 7,814 cattle, 4,279 hogs, and poultry to the number of 2,678. By 1855, 3,200 fruit trees had been planted and by 1858, 271 ranches were under cultivation." (Histories of Placer & Nevada Counties by W.B. Lardner & M.J. Brock).

Initially the NCRCD, in conjunction with the Soil Conservation Service, assisted *cooperators* who requested assistance by preparing *Conservation Plans* that applied practices such



as brush control, fish pond stocking, irrigated pipeline installation, range seeding, tree planting, and woodland weeding.

In 1996, NRCS created the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that offered a cost-share solution to many of these goals.

The NCRCD continues to this day assisting landowners with information regarding erosion control, drainage issues, pasture and range management, forest health, road maintenance, livestock water development, cross fencing, nutrient management, and many other resource concerns.

In addition, the NCRCD offers year-round education & outreach events, partners with other agriculturally minded groups, funds projects for the community, sponsors a native plant giveaway, coordinates a wildlife habitat program, sponsors a local event for students to participate in speech contests and attend range conferences, and offers a no-cost *Advisory Visit Program* for anyone who requests personal assistance regarding resource conservation on their land.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT & FOREST HEALTH PROJECT



This project is a continuation of the Peabody Creek restoration project adjacent to Condon Park. The NCRCD began researching and planning this *Vegetation Management & Forest Health Project* in early 2012.



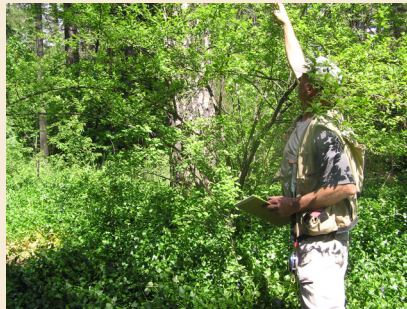
Evan Smith and Jason Jackson with the Natural Resources Conservation Service

In partnership with the City of Grass Valley, this project addresses the removal of invasive species, restoration of wildlife habitat, improvement of forest health, installation of



Condon Park project—before

interpretive signage, and access to the park through the installation of walking paths and fencing around the creek.



Robert Ingram of Sierra Pacific Industries marks vegetation for removal

The Condon Park Project fulfills the NCRCD's mission to promote responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through education, leadership, technical assistance, and project facilitation and our



Doug Plumbly of Grass Valley Weed and Pest performs initial spraying of invasives

vision to educate and assist landowners and land managers in establishing a balance between a high quality rural environment, a biologically diverse landscape, and a healthy economy for the community of resource



Dead and diseased trees marked for removal

conservation through education, recreational land restoration, soil and water management, urban resource conservation, wildlife habitat enhancement, and much more.



Ponderosa Pine with Western Gall Rust damage

The NCRCD works closely within our community to address all conservation issues and meet the educational needs of the residents of Nevada County.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT & FOREST HEALTH PROJECT

NCRCD worked with the City of Grass Valley, NRCS, Sierra Pacific Industries, and others.



A member of Trees Unlimited's crew removing vegetation

The project consisted of identifying invasive species and marking for removal; spraying the invasives; cutting down the dead and diseased trees; removing the vegetation; creating paths; controlling erosion; installing fencing; and creating interpretive signage.



Grading & contouring

The Condon Park project benefits the community of Nevada County. Due to the overgrowth of the invasive species in this portion of the park, the area was not accessible by the public. To enable people to learn about native and non-native plants, wildlife habitat, erosion, and



Erosion control and path construction

other resource conservation issues, interpretative and educational signage will be installed.



Kelly Weintraub, PRBO partner biologist with NRCS checks out fencing & erosion control measures

Wildlife habitat will be a large component of the project with attention to retaining existing areas and creating new ones.

Long term goals are to increase botanical diversity of native plants by removing competitive invasives, to improve wildlife habitat, to improve the forest stand for fuel reduction and forest health, to help stabilize erosion of Peabody Creek, and to increase the recreational value of Condon Park.



Erosion control and grading



Fence installation



Fencing & erosion control



Erosion control

'CONSERVATION SIDE-SHOW' AT THE NEVADA COUNTY FAIR

The theme for the 2013 Nevada County Fair was 'Under the Big Top' and the NCRCD got into the spirit with their *Conservation Side Show*.



We showcased a variety of natural resource concerns on issues ranging from insect pests, non-native invasive plants, water conservation, pasture management, and forest health.

We had banners hanging from the front of our tent to entice fairgoers to come inside. Visitors were directed through the 'maze' where issues of concern were on display and literature was available for participants to take and learn more about resource conservation. NCRCD and NRCS staff were on hand to personally answer questions and to discuss any concerns people had regarding their property.

We addressed soil *Erosion* problems and issues regarding rural *Road Maintenance*. The NCRCD had a Road Maintenance Workshop this past year that included hands on experience with a variety of maintenance issues.



Forest health, wildfire, fuel loads, tree diseases, etc. are always a concern for Nevada County residents, especially in this current drought cycle. At the 'Conservation Side Show' we had examples of tree pests and diseases, and a variety of handouts that explained the causes and what a landowner could do to mitigate these problems. As the ever-present wildfire threat is a major concern for all Nevada County residents, the NCRCD encourages



everyone to clear their property of excess fuel loads and to limb-up and thin their trees. These practices could mean the difference between scorched land and a complete loss of your home in a wind-driven fire event.

The NCRCD, along with the Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, has been involved with educating Nevada County residents about the potential invasion of the Quagga & Zebra mussels in our lakes and waterways. To date, the invasive mussels have not been found in western Nevada County but in 2013 Tahoe RCD inspected over 4,200 boats and prevented 36 boats harboring the invasive mussels from entering Lake Tahoe.



Nevada County faces continued threat from other invasive species such as Scotch Broom and Star Thistle. At the fair, we offered information and solutions for residents in addressing these invasive pests.

The NCRCD offers assistance to any landowner regarding a variety of conservation issues and welcomes everyone to come into our office with their concerns. We also have a no-cost Advisory Visit Program that is available to all residents.



CONSERVATION DINNER “THE HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE IN NEVADA COUNTY”

Continuing our theme from the 2012 Conservation Dinner, *“Historic Ranching and Farming Families”*, the NCRCD held their annual dinner to honor the rich and diverse history of agriculture of Nevada County. Since the 1850’s ranching and farming has thrived as families continue to supply fresh produce, beef, poultry, fruit, etc. to people throughout California. These families continue the long tradition created by their ancestors. Nevada County continues to benefit from their efforts in keeping these traditions alive. We are honored to recognize these families and support agriculture in our county.



| NEVADA COUNTY HISTORICAL RANCHES & RANCHING FAMILIES | | | |
|---|-----------|------------|-------------|
| ***** | | | |
| ALDERMAN | FOWLER | MCKITTRICH | ROBBINS |
| AMARAL | FRANK | MILHOUS | ROBINSON |
| ANDERSON | GALLINO | MILLER | ROLPH |
| AULT | GASSAWAY | MURPHY | RONDONI |
| BALDWIN | GATES | NEISEN | SANFORD |
| BERRYMAN | GLEASON | NICHOLS | SILVER |
| BIERWAGEN | HAGERTY | OAKLEY | SONTAG |
| BLACK | HAMMOND | O'DELL | STEGER |
| BROWN | HEAD | ORZALI | STOCKDALE |
| BROWNING | HILLIARD | PARDINI | STURGILL |
| BUCK | HILLTOP | PASCOE | SWEET |
| BUTLER | HUGHES | PENDOLA | TRAUNER |
| CASCI | KEYSTONE | PINGREE | TILL |
| CHURCH | KIRKHAM | PERSONENI | VEISSI |
| DANA | MAGONIGAL | QUINN | AND MORE... |
| FALLON | MALONEY | READER | |



CAL-PAC RANGE CAMP AND THE CONSERVATION EDUCATION SPEAK-OFF CONTEST



The NCRCD sponsored two local high school students to attend the *CAL-PAC Range Camp* (Brianna Cebollero and Heath Mullen, both from Nevada Union HS) and hosted the annual *Conservation Education Speak-Off Contest*. Ellen Van Noy took 1st Place and Maxie Holmberg-Douglas took 2nd Place (both from NU). Nevada Union High School students continue to win at the regional and state level.



We hosted our annual “*Plant and Seedling Give-Away*” in April and handed out many hundreds of seedlings including *Douglas Fir*, *Sugar Pine*, *Incense Cedar*, *Ponderosa Pine* and *California Buckeye*. This year was a bit different in that Deer Creek School brought first and second graders to the event for their annual Earth Day event. The kids were great and each received a Ponderosa Pine seedling along with instructions on the care of the tree. In return, each student from the two classes wrote us a letter and included a drawing thanking us for the trees. Many thanks to our partners Sierra Pacific Industries and Pacific, Gas & Electric for their continued support of this event.



As part of our outreach effort we continued to offer *Deer Whistles* to the community and hosted eight seminars as part of our *Fall 2012–Spring 2013 Seminar Series*. Topics included:



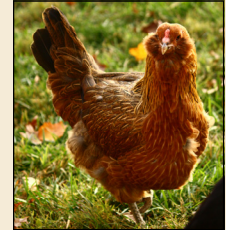
How to Test Your Soil



Where to Place Your Nesting Box



Tree Diseases and Forestry Health



Raising “City” Chickens



Forest Raptors of Nevada County



Northern California Bats



Using Native Grasses in the Meadow, Pasture, and Landscape



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Carol Hollingsworth

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Jan Blake, District Administrator
 Sabrina Nicholson, Administrative Assistant

NRCS Staff

Jason Jackson, District Conservationist
 Evan Smith, Forester
 Bobette Parsons, Soil Conservationist
 Kelly Weintraub, Partner Biologist

NCRCD / NRCS Office

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 NCRCD website: www.ncrcd.org
 NRCS website: www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov

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 2013 included the following practices:

- Pasture Management
- 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 implementation of these best management, conservation practice projects significantly improved the health of forests, cropland, grasslands and watersheds.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program



NRCS Photo