

Conservation Almanac

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Winter 2016

Vol. XXV No. 1

Weaverville Community Forest Update

The District's active stewardship role in the award-winning Weaverville Community Forest (WCF) resulted in a new 10-year agreement with the Bureau of Land Management with an additional 2,100 BLM acres being added to the WCF in 2015, and an approved Annual Financial and Operating Plan (AOP) for FY 2016.

The Weaverville Community Forest is a partnership between the BLM, the US Forest Service and the Trinity County RCD to manage 15,000 acres of federal land in the Weaverville Basin as a community forest. Using a federal contracting tool called Stewardship Contracting, our federal partners have entered into stewardship contracts with the District to actively manage these lands for forest health, resource management and recreation projects. Community involvement through the WCF Steering Committee and public participation plays a key role in the stewardship agreements.

The new 10-year BLM agreement expires in 2025 and will be guided by a strategic plan to be developed this year. The strategic plan could include specific projects such as selective timber harvest and biomass/community firewood sales, hazard fuels reduction, wildlife and botanical surveys, public outreach, and oak woodland habitat restoration.

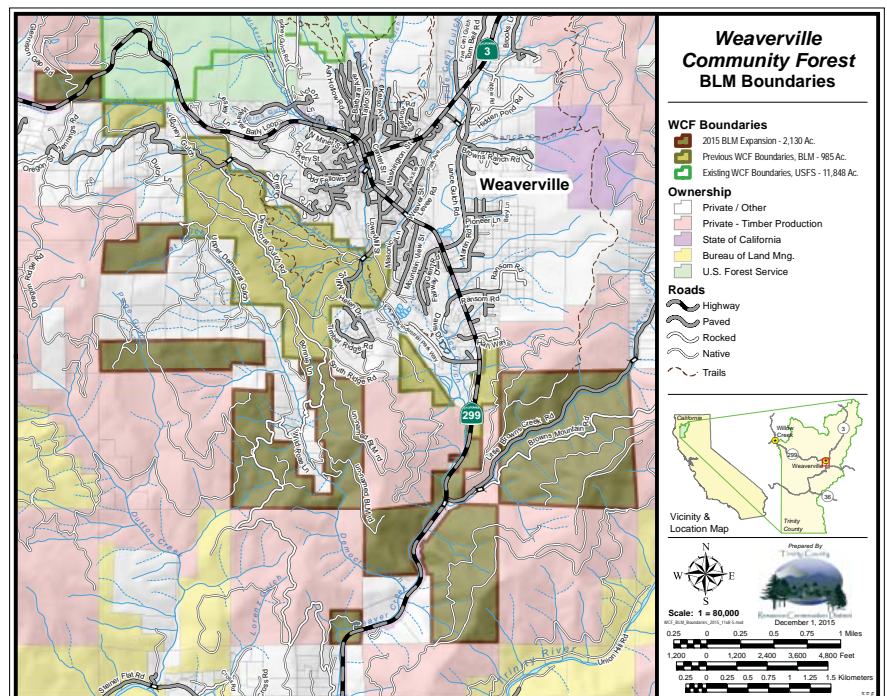
The additional BLM acreage is shown on the map (at right) as the brown areas with red borders.

With the signing of this new stewardship agreement, the economic benefits received from the sale of the forest products of the area, as well as the benefits of service work jobs related to the agreement, continue to improve the local economy. With the BLM's support, this agreement will help to better involve the community in the environmental review process, as well as incorporate public opinion into how public lands within the community are managed. The community brings a wealth of knowledge and history of the land to the table and with the BLM's support, can help land managers make better and more informed decisions.

Working with the WCF steering committee, members of the public and the stewardship partners, the AOP for FY 2016 gained approval at the December 2015 WCF meeting. The three emphasis areas in the AOP cover forest health, recreation, and monitoring and mapping. The AOP can be found at: http://tcrd.net/wcf/pdf/WCF_2016_AOP.pdf

If you would like to participate in the stewardship of the WCF, the annual WCF stewardship public meeting is scheduled for March 23, 2016. Please contact the District for time and location.

The WCF has evolved as a model for collaborative management between federal land managers, local government and the public. The WCF is included in two recent publications, *Stitching the West Back Together* (Charnley et. al., 2014) and *Forest Plans of North America* (Sirey, et. al., 2015). In addition, in 2009 the WCF was the recipient of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's 2009 Partners in Conservation Award.



District Manager's Corner

The new year has arrived bringing with it fresh snow and rain for our drought stricken land. Looking up to Weaver Bally it is a comforting feeling to see the white winter blanket comfortably wrapped around the mountain, holding the precious water that is so vital during the summer months for fish, forest, farms and family. We have all gone too long without seeing our Trinity Alps covered in snow.

But as we rejoice over the bounty of water that we are receiving this winter, we, as a community, still need to prepare for the upcoming summer months and the eventual fire season. As the snow melts and the weather warms, fallen limbs and downed trees turn into fuel for fire. To help prevent future wildfire and clean up the mess of winter, the TCRCD, with funding from our partnerships with Trinity County, California Fire Safe Council, CalFire, USFS and others will be out in the community working on fuels reduction projects this spring. We also have a free chipping program available for landowners in Trinity County who are implementing fuels reduction work adjacent to or close to National Forest lands of the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests. Look for the full details in this issue.

The District is leading the process of updating the Trinity County Wildfire Protection Plan along with the Trinity County Fire Safe Council. This plan is vital to prioritizing fuels reduction projects and securing funding to get the work

completed on the ground. Even though it is now winter, we should be prudent like the Trinity County pioneers of the 1860's and use our time indoors to start planning for the coming spring and summer. For more information about any of these programs, please feel free to contact the District office at 623-6004 or check our website at www.tcrd.net.



In This Issue

Weaverville Community Forest Update.....	1
District Manager's Corner	2
Scotch Broom Control in Junction City.....	3
Trinity County Collaborative	4-5
CWPP Update Planning.....	6
Free Chipping Offered for Fuels Reduction Projects.....	7
Road Inventory and Water Reliability Programs.....	8-9
TRRP: Douglas City River Rehab	10-11



TCRCD Conservation Scholarship Fund Donation

TRINITY COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Make a tax-deductible donation today! We will mail you a receipt or you are welcome to stop by the office.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email: _____

Amount: \$ _____

Please return to: TCRCD Scholarship Fund,
PO Box 1450, Weaverville, CA 96093
530-623-6004 www.tcrd.net

TCRCD & USFS Joint Effort to Control Scotch Broom in Junction City

In partnership with the Shasta Trinity National Forest, the Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) is gearing up for a final season of Scotch broom removal in Junction City. Scotch broom, (*Cytisus scoparius*), is native to Europe and was brought to North America as an ornamental in the 1800s. Don't let the pretty flowers of Scotch broom fool you. This invasive shrub is capable of overtaking native plant communities and decreasing the quality of habitat for wildlife.

Scotch broom can grow to be ten feet tall, and the fast growing plants can form dense stands that crowd out other plants. Scotch broom is also a fire hazard. It is a "flashy fuel" that burns fast and produces a lot of heat, helping wildfire spread quickly. Scotch broom can colonize recently cut timberland and inhibit regrowth of forest, or replace grasslands that provide valuable forage.

In August of 2011, the TCRCD received funding from the Shasta Trinity National Forest west side botany program through a grant from the National Fire Plan. The goal of the grant is to remove broom on private property in Junction City near the National Forest, and in areas within, or near, the 2008 Iron Alps Wildfire Complex. Over the last five years the TCRCD has removed broom along highway 299 near Junction City, and along Red Hill Road, Hocker Meadow Road, Lake Road, Power House Road, Dutch Creek Road, and on several private properties.

Mechanical control of Scotch broom is done in the early spring or late fall when the ground is moist, as it is necessary to remove the large taproot to prevent the plant from re-sprouting. Scotch broom establishes by seed dispersal so minimizing soil disturbance and maintaining cover of desirable vegetation is helpful for control. Plants are removed by hand or with weed wrenches. Scotch broom has a long-lived seed bank, and requires persistent control of new plants.

According to the University of California Cooperative Extension, IPM News (Vol. 5, No. 2, July 2015) a recent discovery of the Scotch broom gall mite in California may provide some help for controlling this invasive plant. The mite is too small to be seen with the naked eye, but as the mites feed they cause galls which are easy to see. The galls are small, abnormal growths on the plant buds. The gall mite is native to Europe, and was first found in California in 2014. The Cooperative Extension is tracking locations of the mite, which has been found as close as Happy Camp. To report occurrences, visit: <http://ucanr.edu/broomgallmite>.

The District is planning work for broom removal in early spring. Please contact the TCRCD if you have Scotch broom on your property in the vicinity of the project. The District also has weed wrenches available for loan to anyone in Trinity County. Contact the District at: 530-623-6004.

By: Amy Livingston TCRCD and Lusetta Sims USFS



TCRCD crew members using a weed wrench to mechanically control and remove Scotch broom.



©2009 Zoya Akulova (CC BY-NC 3.0)
http://calphotos.berkeley.edu/cgi/img_query?enlarge=0000+0000+0609+1148

Scotch broom flower.

Trinity County Collaborative: Moving Projects Forward

After three years of facilitated meetings and working to find shared values, the Trinity County Collaborative Group is demonstrating momentum and consensus as its members strive to shape a better future for the County. The group recently voted unanimously to submit a 743,000-acre project proposal to compete for special USDA funds. Members also gave unanimous support to a separate proposal that offers the two national forests in Trinity County a way to remedy hazardous post-fire conditions along miles of roads, provide firebreaks and increase economic benefits to communities.

In the fall of 2012, the Trinity County Board of Supervisors agreed that there was a need for a natural resources and economic development advisory team to work towards improving economic, social and ecological conditions in the County by focusing primarily on issues related to land stewardship. After meeting with federal, state, and regional agencies, including U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, to discuss ways to remove roadblocks to progress, the Trinity County Collaborative (TCC) was formed in spring 2013.

Based on active, committed participation by personnel from Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and representatives from local and regional conservation groups, timber industries, recreation interests, businesses and land owners, the TCC submitted a proposal to the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership grant last October. The grant is awarded by the agency heads of NRCS and USFS.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service works with TCC to engage private landowners in forest health projects through its cost-share conservation programs. NRCS collaboration provided an essential component of the Trinity Community Protection and Landscape Restoration Project proposal.

As proposed, the Trinity Community Protection and Landscape Restoration Project's area is in southern Trinity County and encompasses 743,000 acres of national forests interspersed with private timberland, ranches and six rural communities. The main goals are community wildfire protection and the restoration of ecological processes. The project would span three years and has a total budget request of \$3.7 million. Award announcements will be made in early spring 2016.

In the wake of the wildfires that swept the County last summer, TCC members in September gave unanimous endorsement to a proposal to rehabilitate burned-over roadsides by removing fire-killed trees and establishing shaded fuelbreaks. The purpose of this proposed project is to keep public roads safe by removing adjacent dead trees and heavy fuel loading. The project, if implemented, would provide shaded fuelbreaks along more than 200 miles of public roads and establish a ridgetop fuelbreak on South Fork Mountain. The project could be cost-effective if implemented in the near-term while affected timber is still merchantable.

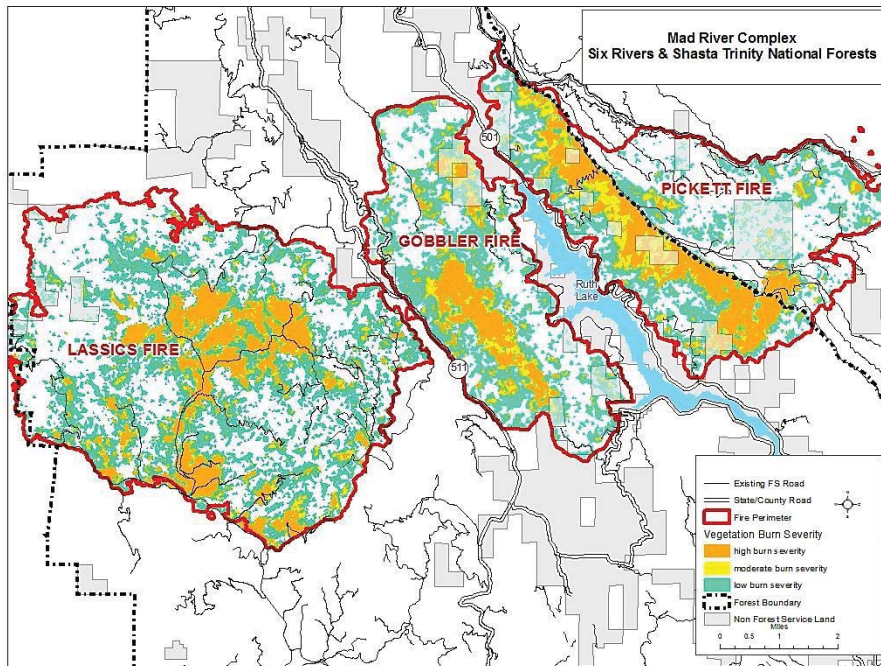
Six Rivers NF and Shasta-Trinity NF each took up the proposal quickly, refining and adapting it to their specific conditions. Six Rivers named its version the *From Fire-Kill to Fuelbreaks Project*. Shasta-Trinity is calling its version the *Trinity Post Fire Hazard Reduction and Salvage Project*. Both Forests have issued public scoping documents for 30-day comment periods.

Biologists from US Fish and Wildlife Service have participated in field trips with TCC committee members during early planning stages of these projects in order to provide insight on potential environmental constraints. That guidance has helped TCC and agency planners avoid sensitive habitat in shaping their proposed projects intended to improve forest health.

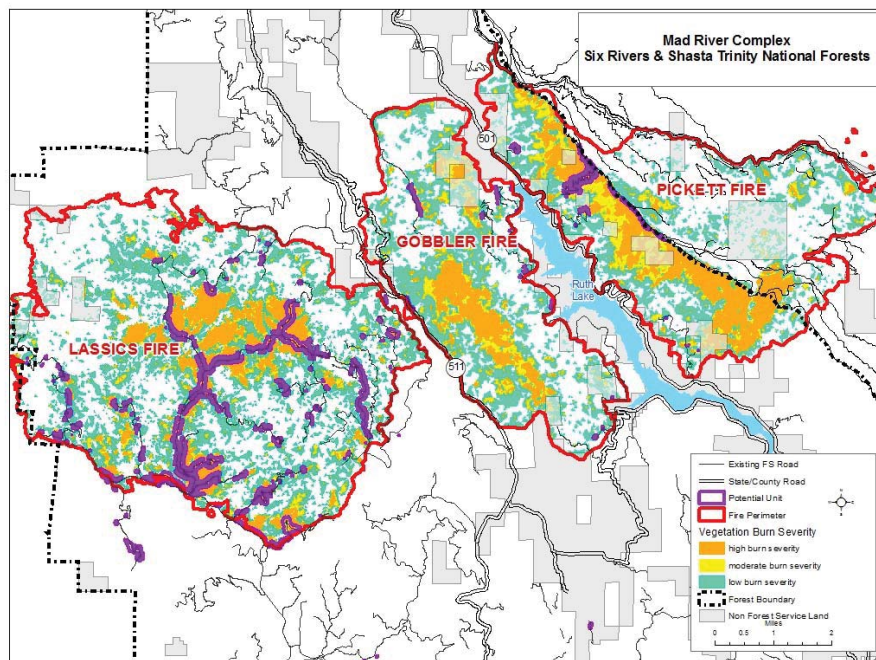
Projects endorsed by the TCC, such as the Joint Chiefs' proposal and post-fire fuel reduction proposals, come with the backing from a broad-based group of participants. Timber-related stakeholders in TCC include registered professional foresters, Sierra Pacific Industries and Trinity River Lumber Company. Environmental and conservation concerns include members of the local grassroots organization Safe Alternatives for Our Forest Environment (S.A.F.E.) and local citizens.

The next meeting of the full Trinity County Collaborative will be March 18 in Weaverville. For further information visit www.trinitycollaborative.net. To be placed on the TCC email list, please email collaborativefacilitation@gmail.com.

Trinity County Collaborative, cont.



Lightening strikes ignite forest fires in summer 2015



Working with the TCC, the USFS identifies potential treatment areas as outlined in purple.

Documents, maps and other details of these projects can be found online at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=48060>

http://www.trinitycollaborative.net/pdf/documents/TCC_scoping_newsletter.pdf

http://www.trinitycollaborative.net/pdf/documents/From_Fire_Kill_to_Fuelbreaks_1-21-15.pptx

CWPP Update Planning

The TCRCD will be scheduling meetings this spring to gather community input on updating the Trinity County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Funded by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), the CWPP provides direction and prioritization for county-wide fuels reduction projects with input from community members and local, state and federal agencies.

A key component of this “living” plan is to receive input from the community regarding fire risks and priority projects. The plan increases public awareness of the consequences of living in a wildfire prone environment and provides residents with clear steps to take to reduce their risks. The CWPP also helps to coordinate fire protection strategies across property boundaries (both public and private); and provides a tool to help coordinate grant funding and federal program budgets to achieve the most effective results with limited funding.

Working with local volunteer fire departments and the Trinity County Fire Safe Council, community meetings will be scheduled starting in March in the following locations: Burnt Ranch, Coffee Creek and/or Trinity Center, Douglas City, Hayfork, Hyampom, Junction City, Lewiston, Mad River and/or Ruth, Post Mountain, Weaverville, and Willow Creek.

The existing 2010 CWPP can be found on the Fire Safe Council website at <http://www.tcrd.net/fsc/index.html>.

If you would like to be notified of a CWPP update meeting in your area, please contact the District at 530-623-6004. The CWPP update will also be on every agenda of the Trinity County Fire Safe Council through 2016, which meets every month on the 4th Thursday at 7:00 p.m. in the TCRCD conference room.



Photo: Robin Stocum

Free Chipping Offered for Fuels Reduction Projects

TCRCD is offering free chipping for homeowners and landowners who are involved in fuels reduction projects. The project will provide chipping services during 2016 to landowners in Trinity County who are implementing fuels reduction work adjacent to or close to National Forest lands of the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests.

The U.S. Forest Service provided funding under Title II of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act after the project was first endorsed by the Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee.

The project is intended to support and encourage fuels reduction work by private landowners that will increase the resilience of their communities to wildfire. Work will begin immediately and continue until funds are depleted.

Certain criteria must be met to qualify:

- Due to limited funding this service will be limited to situations where active fuels reduction projects have been, or are being conducted.
- The project will provide chipping services to landowners in Trinity County who are implementing fuels reduction work adjacent to, or close to, National Forest lands of the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests.

- Branches must be stacked with all cut ends facing in the same direction. Piles not stacked in this manner cannot be chipped.
- Stacks may be no more than 4 feet high. Try to make them 4 feet wide and about 8 feet long. Ideally, stacks should be approximately 4x4x8.
- Stacks must be entirely free of nails, wire, rocks, roots and root wads, mud, poison oak, scotch broom, and berry vines.
- Stacks must be placed in an accessible area and situated so chipping equipment can be placed next to the cut ends of the branches. This expedites work and means more people can be served by the program.
- Unpaved driveways over 16% grade are inaccessible to the truck and chipper.

If you are unable to accomplish the work necessary to prepare for this free chipping service, the RCD may be able to provide a crew to perform thinning, limbing, moving and stacking of materials under a fee-for-service contract, plus travel time.

Remaining wood chips, which will not be hauled away, make great mulch and ground cover to prevent erosion. Please contact the TCRCD at (530) 623-6004 for a chipping request form or to receive more information. Further information is available at www.tcrd.net.



Good Stacking



Unacceptable Stacking

5C Road Inventory and Water Reliability Programs

The Five Counties Salmonid Conservation Program (5C), a 501(c)3 non-profit, recently received two grant awards to work exclusively with private landowners with the objectives of reducing sediment loads and increasing summer flows in local watersheds.

The first program, funded by the Trinity River Restoration Program, will assess private roads within the Weaver Creek watershed including East Weaver Creek, West Weaver Creek, Sidney Gulch, Little Browns Creek and Democrat Gulch. The goal is to locate and assess problematic sediment sources to Weaver Creek from private roads.

Excessive sediment loads to Weaver Creek and the Trinity River can negatively impact salmon and steelhead populations by reducing the survival rate of eggs and young fish before they have a chance to out-migrate to the ocean. Studies have shown road improvements can reduce sediment loads significantly.

This inventory will be performed at no cost to the landowner. The funding covers inventory, assessment, and prioritization of private roads. Implementation of sediment reducing projects based on the inventory - such as upgraded stream crossings, installation of rolling dips, and modifying the shape of the road - would be part of a future project.

Landowners participating in this program benefit from having experts identify sediment sources on their roads and will receive treatment recommendations. The 5C is partnering with the Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC), a 501(c)3 non-profit, on this program. Staff from both organizations will work with private landowners on an individual basis. Neither organization has any regulatory role or authority.

It is important to note that the inventory is focused on private road related sediment and is not intended to identify sediment sources from any other land-use activities.

5C has assessed and implemented improvements on private roads within the Browns Creek watershed (see photos) and on county roads in Weaverville, Douglas City, Junction City, and Lewiston. Landowners interested in participating in the inventory who have not already responded to the January mailing should contact Cindy Buxton at (530) 623-3967 x115 or by email cbuxton@5counties.org.

The second program, funded by Proposition 84 through the North Coast Resource Partnership, will allow the 5C to assist landowners in key watersheds to make their surface water diversions more sustainable while increasing the reliability of their summer water supply. The “Trinity River Water Reliability and Drought Resiliency Project” program will be available in late spring.

By using “slow-flow” pumps such as trickle fill or solar powered, water can be diverted sustainably during the winter and early spring when supply is plentiful and stored for use over the summer. Using this system, landowners would not have to draw down the creeks during critical summer periods when fish kills and other wildlife impacts occur.

State water law requires landowners to acquire a Small Domestic Use Appropriation Registration in order to legally store diverted water. This program will cover the vast majority of costs for designing, permitting, and building improved diversion systems. The 5C will work with partners WRTC and the Trinity County Resource Conservation District to execute the program. A minimum of 30 landowners will be enrolled. If the first 30 landowner systems are not overly complex and costly, additional landowners may be assisted. Interested landowners should contact the 5C at staff@5counties.org. For information on all 5C programs, please visit www.5counties.org.



Pre-storm conditions in Browns Creek on private culvert.

5C Road Programs, cont.



Culvert inlets following large rain event.



Culvert outlets after significant storm damage - early February 2015.



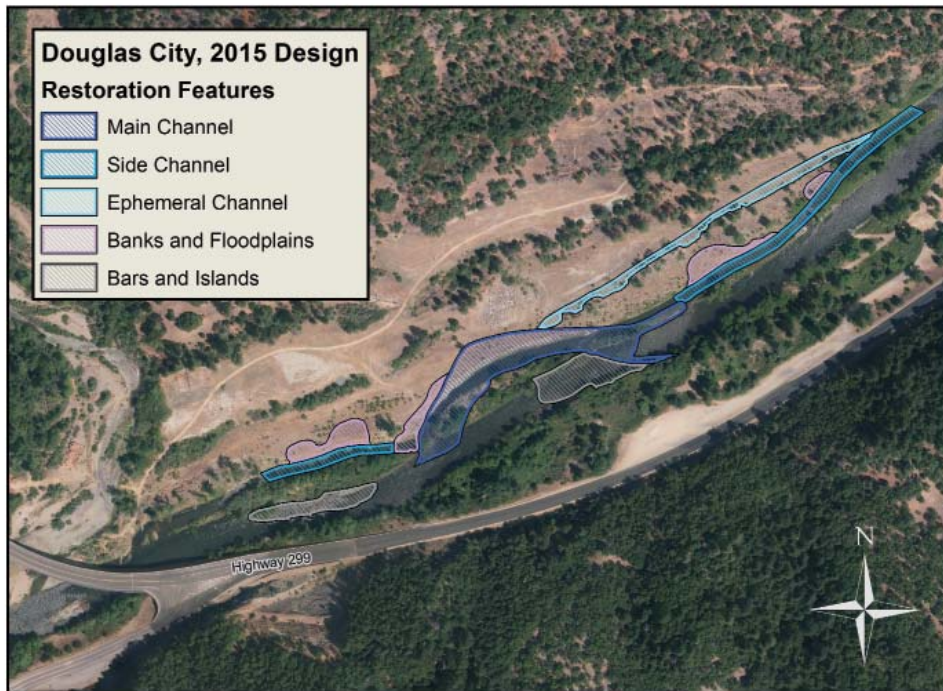
Culvert outlets looking downstream after repair.

Environment Responds to Upper Douglas City River Rehab

In 2015, the Trinity River Restoration Program partnered with the Hoopa Valley Tribe and constructed the Upper Douglas City project, just downstream of Indian Creek. This project is part of the Program's effort to restore the Trinity River to a more natural, dynamic river system using both channel rehabilitation and varied water flows.

Like all project sites, the Upper Douglas City site looked a little "raw" after being completed in September. The rehabilitation work done here is only the first step toward

re-establishing natural conditions. After construction is complete, conditions will continue to change over time as natural processes take over and vegetation returns and begins to thrive. However, some areas return to functionality more rapidly than others. The in-water features can respond especially quickly. At some sites, fish have been seen spawning right after project construction is complete. At Upper Douglas City, the side channel provided such irresistible habitat that native river frogs were found there soon after construction.



Foothill Yellow-legged Frog (*Rana boylei*), a frog native to the Trinity River, in Upper Douglas City side channel, September 2015.



Steelhead caught at the downstream (river right) constructed bar of the 2015 Upper Douglas City rehabilitation project, just upstream of the Highway 299 bridge, January 10, 2016.

In addition, anecdotal reports from fishermen reveal steelhead fishing at Upper Douglas City is on an upswing.

Seasonally high water flows are essential for maintenance and creation of suitable fish habitat. This winter has seen more rain than in recent years, thanks to El Nino, and we are hoping for lots more! More rain will give the Program more water to work with and more flexibility in how the water can be released from the dam. The U.S. Department of the Interior's 2000 Record of Decision (ROD) for Trinity River Mainstem Fishery Restoration described a strategy in which river flows would interact with and transform the landscape around them to create fish habitat. High flows create and change gravel bars, initiate side-channels, scour vegetation, move large wood (important for habitat) and clean the river bottom for spawning. All this helps to increase the available habitat for young fish, and to deposit fine sediment along the river's edge where vegetation may grow... and eventually provide habitat for wildlife and shade for the river.

The Upper Douglas City project design features an Ephemeral High Flow Channel (shown on map in light turquoise) that will only be wetted when flows reach approximately 2,000

cfs. The purpose of this high flow channel is to increase groundwater elevations in the floodplain which can increase planted and volunteer vegetation survival, and to provide off channel rearing opportunities for juvenile fish. The channel is intended to dry out at low flows to reduce habitat for non-native species, such as bullfrogs which can feed on smaller native frog species.

The TRRP's first channel rehabilitation project was constructed on the Trinity River in 2005. Ten years later the Program continues the practice of adaptive management, taking lessons learned from previous restoration efforts to create better, more functional project sites and listening to local knowledge provided by the public. Through a combination of variable flows, gravel augmentation, and channel rehabilitation, the Program endeavors to provide more complexity to which the river can - and does - respond. Over time, the interaction of these elements is meant to create and maintain a diversity of habitat for all life stages of native fish and wildlife.

Trinity County



Resource Conservation District

Established 1956

Trinity County Resource Conservation District
P.O. Box 1450
Weaverville, CA 96093



District Board Meetings

Third Wednesday
5:30 PM
Open to the Public

TCRCD Office

Number One
Horseshoe Lane
PO Box 1450
Weaverville, CA 96093

Telephone

(530) 623-6004
FAX 623-6006

E-mail: info@tcrcd.net

Internet: www.tcrcd.net

The Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) is a special district set up under state law to carry out conservation work and education. It is a not-for-profit, self-governing district whose board of directors volunteer their time.

The TCRCD Vision

TCRCD envisions a balance between utilization and conservation of our natural resources. Through economic diversity and ecosystem management our communities will achieve and sustain a quality environment and healthy economy.

The TCRCD Mission

To assist people in protecting, managing, conserving and restoring the natural resources of Trinity County through information, education, technical assistance and project implementation programs.

TCRCD Board of Directors are
Mike Rourke, Rose Owens, Patrick Truman,
Colleen O'Sullivan, and Greg Lowden.

The RCD is landowners assisting landowners with conservation work. The RCD can guide the private landowner in dealings with state and federal agencies. The RCD provides information on the following topics:

- Forest Land Productivity
- Watershed Improvement
- Water Supply and Storage
- Educational Programs
- Erosion/Sediment Control
- Wildlife Habitat
- Soil and Plant Types
- Fuels Reduction

This issue of the *Conservation Almanac* is funded in part by grants from the Trinity River Restoration Program, Young Family Ranch Trust, CalFire, California Fire Safe Council, Trinity County Title III Fund, US Forest Service and the Trinity County Resource Advisory Council.

Printed on Recycled Paper with Vegetable Inks



This institution is an equal opportunity provider in accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.