

Trinity County Resource Conservation District Fall ~ Winter 2025 Conservation Almanac

Trinity County Resource Conservation District Quarterly Newsletter

Fall - Winter 2024-25 Vol. XXXIII No.3



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Botany Conservation Technician Maryann Perdue transplanting Showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) at the Parks Creek Road restoration site along the Trinity River in northern Trinity County



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Trinity County RCD
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Revegetation Projects throughout Trinity County



Botany Conservation Technicians Tim Robertson (left) and Tyler McKinley (right) hauling mulch to new plants at the Ditch Gulch revegetation site along Highway 36

Botany Conservation Technicians were kept busy this fall as they continued to plant trees and shrubs at our existing and new restoration sites throughout Trinity County. Across our revegetation projects - including assisting with Roads department projects - we planted nearly 1,000 plants in October and November before the planting window closed. We are all excited to wrap up a successful fall planting season!

As you travel throughout Trinity County, you may notice new roadside revegetation projects. In partnership with Caltrans, we have planted a total of 137 trees at Post Mile markers 24.97 and 25.24 along Highway 3. These projects support riparian restoration near newly constructed culverts along the highway. We also continue to partner with Caltrans to address impacts from the Big French Creek slide.

One of our new revegetation sites is along Corral Bottom Road near

Burnt Ranch, where we have planted a total of 72 trees in a disposal area. We will continue to plant at this site in Spring.

We are also in the process of restoring pollinator habitat along the Trinity River in northern Trinity County. We have begun planting at our Parks Creek Road restoration site along Forest Route 41N17 (also known as IP Road/Parks Creek Road). A total of 132 plants have been planted to help support Monarchs and other pollinators. Planting will continue in the spring, with up to 400 plants to be planted at this site.

As we enter the spring months, keep an eye out for exciting opportunities to volunteer and get involved, as well as resources for supporting Monarchs and pollinators in Trinity County!

Scotch Broom Removal in Junction City

One of our key strategies in preserving native plant communities in Trinity County is removing invasive species and the Trinity County RCD is a proud partner of the Trinity County Weed Management Area (WMA). One of our high-priority noxious weed species is Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). Scotch broom on the landscape is detrimental for several reasons:

- Dense, highly flammable branches increase fire hazards
- It alters soil nutrients, encouraging further weed growth
- It competes with or completely displaces desirable species

This plant is highly persistent and must be manually removed by wrenching it out of the soil to prevent regrowth. When invasive plants like Scotch broom move into an area, they outcompete native plants and fail to support local wildlife.

The Botany Program is working to control Scotch Broom at several locations throughout Trinity County, and are currently offering a program in 2025 to manually remove Scotch Broom free of charge for private residents in Junction City. Availability of these services will be dependent on the number of homeowners that sign up. If you have questions or would like to sign up for this service, please call or email Alyson DeNittis at the Trinity County RCD:

Alyson DeNittis

Botany Program Manager

Phone: (530) 623-6004 ext. 221

Email: adenittis@tcrccd.net

Find more information about Scotch broom:

<https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profile/cytisus-scoparius-profile/>



Blooming Scotch broom. Photo by Anne Tanne

Watersheds: Our Fall Season

As the seasons change and flows begin to come up, the Watershed Program wrapped up the last of our instream monitoring with retrieval and redeployment of temperature loggers, water discharge measurements, and assisting WRTC with salmon redd surveys on the South Fork Trinity. Data was compiled and sent to the USFS for storage and reporting, and we all nestled in for the planning phase of deep winter.

Dreaming of sunny, wet meadows and slow-moving water, we started collaborative efforts in the pursuit of CEQA and Programmatic coverage for restoration efforts initially in the North Lake Region, and the dream grew to cover the entire Trinity River Watershed. Finding the nexus of meadow, instream, and road restoration allows for a multifaceted approach to habitat restoration and improvement of stream health. Within the Weaverville Community Forest, we are collaborating on NEPA compliance for select sites where instream restoration utilizing beaver dam analogue (BDA) techniques can be helpful to increase water storage in anticipation of hot, dry summers.

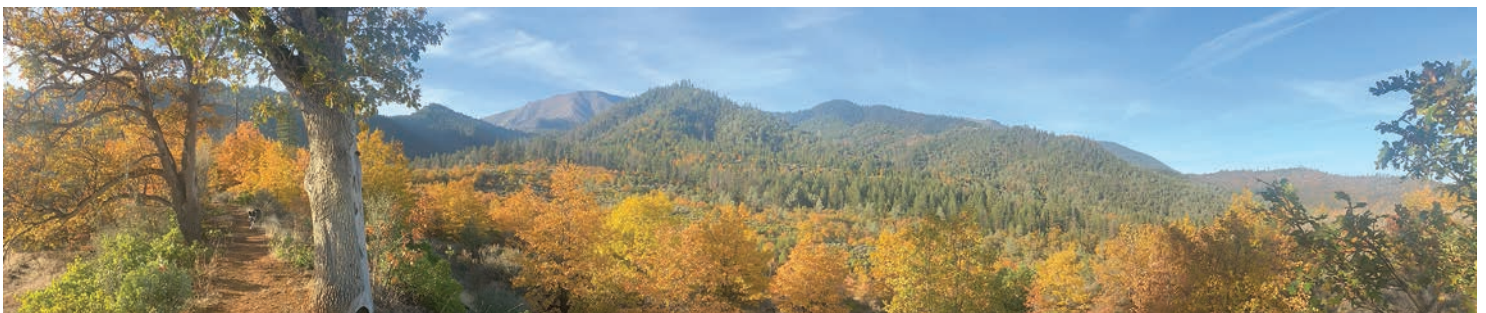
With Spring rains and returning salmon on the horizon, we are preparing for stream crossing surveys of culverts in the Weaverville Basin to identify barriers to salmonids and other species that prevent them from reaching productive habitats in tributaries to the Trinity River.



GrizzlyCorps Fellow, Clay Groetsch, assists with the final discharge measurements of the season for West Weaver Creek below the West Weaver Restoration Site



Cindy Buxton (WRTC), Annyssa Interrante (RCD) and Ben Sparks (WRTC), take a break on a cobble bar during a salmon redd survey on the South Fork of the Trinity River



View of the fall colors from the McKenzie Gulch Trail in the Weaver Basin Trail System

Fall work in the Woods

Fuels Projects worked on this fall and winter include acres completed of thinning, piling, community chipping, and burning.

Fall Chipping:



In our fall round of Community Chipping, we served 105 Landowners in Poker Bar

Thinning our Forests:



In our fall season we completed approximately 60 acres of thinning in the areas of Shasta Springs, Junction City Park, Suzy Q Rd, Trinity Village, Upper Democrat, Strope Creek, and Trinity Dam Blvd.

Fall Burning:



Thanks to the BLM, USFS, CalFIRE, SPI, and WRTC our Fall burning season included approximately 200 acres of pile and broadcast burning in the areas of Indian Creek, Hayfork Basin, Jackass Ridge, Browns Creek, Bar 717 Ranch, and Browns Mountain



Pictured here: L to R. Eric Bruce, Matt Bellistri, Emily Acer (Grizzlycorp), Skylar Fisher, Clay Groetsch (Grizzlycorp), Gracie Hilinski, and Jessica Tye at the 2024 Healthy Forest Alliance

Forestry

This year, our Forestry crew hit some impressive numbers in supporting USFS, CAL FIRE, BLM, and internal TCRCO projects. This season Matt Bellistri (lead), Eric Bruce (former lead), Gracie Hilinski (former crew member), Jessica Tye (crew member), and Brandie Lee (former crew member) finished off the season strong with the following numbers: 150 miles of unit layout for various fuels projects, 3,500 acres of treatment designation, nearly 900 acres of painting, 200 acres of unit reconnaissance, and 179 parcels flagged for the Trinity County Wildfire Mitigation Project (TCWMP).

Additionally, the District has been preparing for the implementation of the TCWMP scheduled for implementation from this spring through the fall of 2026.

The goal of the project is to reduce the risk of wildfire along certain critical corridors within high-priority wildland urban interface (WUI) areas by reducing hazardous fuels. The Forestry Division of the Forest Health Department looks forward to a new year of growth for our forestry division and to diversify projects that future Forestry crews will work on.

Weaverville Community Forest

Forest Health continues to facilitate projects and meetings for the Weaverville Community Forest (WCF) including the quarterly Steering Committee meetings and the annual public meeting with support from AmeriCorps Grizzly Member Clay Groetsch. The public meeting was held on October 30th with 24 people in attendance who discussed the latest projects, future planning, and other goals for the WCF.

Additionally, in partnership with the Watershed Research and Training Center, as well as state and federal partners, a broadcast burn was implemented on Jackass Ridge that burned 36 acres. Furthermore, trail work continues throughout the WCF, with just under 60 miles of trails available throughout Weaver Basin. Furthermore, the Annual Operating Plan has been signed with an emphasis on forest health, recreation, and watersheds.

Finally, the WCF's biggest accomplishment this year was the completion of the Oregon Mountain Timber Sale in partnership with the BLM. The project removed 1,149 tons of biomass to improve the understory health of the forest. The sale made around \$160k, and profits will be used for the next stage, which will involve fuel reduction throughout.

In other news, the WCF, Trinity County Fire Safe Council (TCFSC), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) gave a presentation at the California Association of Resource Conservation



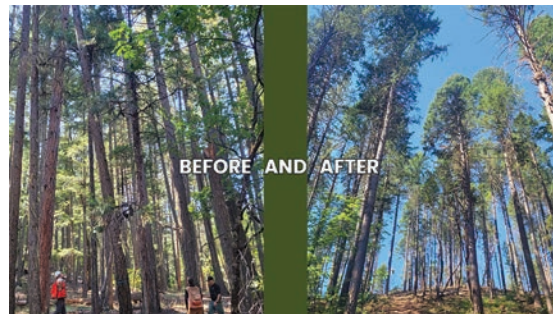
District Annual Conference. The presentation was "The Weaverville Community Forest and Trinity County Fires Safe Council – Showcasing the Important of Community-Driven Land Management". This presentation highlighted the latest sale on Oregon Mountain. The revenues from the sale will be used towards future clean up, burning, and monitoring of the stand.

The WCF looks forward to celebrating 20 years in 2025 along with new growth – to join in on planning efforts join our next Steering Committee meetings, held quarterly on the first Wednesday of every third month at the TCRCO Conference Room from 10 am to noon.

Pictured here: L to R. Jess Paoli Forster for BLM Redding, Skylar Fisher Program Manager TCFSC, and Adriana Rodriguez Forest Health Project Coordinator at TCRCO



October quarterly WCF Steering Committee meeting



The Oregon Mountain Timber Sale

Fired Up for Safety: Trinity County Fire Safe Council Expands Team

The Trinity County Fire Safe Council (Fire Safe Council) is a program dedicated to increasing wildfire resiliency in Trinity County through promoting agency and community collaboration, coordinating multiple volunteer programs, promoting fire safe education and outreach, and maintaining the Trinity County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

This Fall, we added two new members to our team. In September, we were joined by Emily Acer, a GrizzlyCorps Fellow who will be supporting the Fire Safe Council in increasing our outreach and hazard mitigation planning capacity for the next ten months. In November, we were joined by Emily Drain, a project coordinator who will be coordinating the maintenance of the Firewise USA® communities within Trinity County and the implementation the Blue Dot program, which supports the marking of available water sources on private properties to support firefighting.



Two new Fire Safe Council members, Emily Drain (left) and Emily Acer (right)

Local Volunteer Fire Personnel Home Assessment Trainings

Our education coordinator, Miles Raymond, organized and led Wildland Fire Assessment Program (WFAP) home assessment trainings with the Kettenpom-Zenia Volunteer Fire Department and Downriver Volunteer Fire Company. Six participants were trained at the Kettenpom-Zenia training and 6 participants were trained at the Downriver training. Each volunteer fire department trained under the WFAP are under contract with the Fire Safe Council to provide free home assessments and receive a stipend for each assessment performed.

Stay Engaged with the Fire Safe Council

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/FireSafeTrinity or on Instagram at @FireSafeTrinity, join our monthly newsletter through our website at firesafetrinity.org, or attend our monthly meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month at 1PM, available on Zoom or at the TCRCD conference room at 30 Horseshoe Lane.



Miles leading the WFAP classroom training



Downriver (left) and Kettenpom-Zenia (right) training participants showing off their certificates

Fall Salmon Festival, Trinity River Float & Welcome Clay!

2024 Salmon Meets Harvest Festival

The 2024 Salmon Meets Harvest Festival, held on October 5th, was a vibrant celebration of community and the return of the salmon.

With over 300 attendees, the event united the Trinity River Salmon Festival and the Harvest Festival, once again showcasing the collaboration between the Trinity River Restoration Program and the North Fork Grange.

The day began with a blessing by Sonny Hayward of the Nor-Rel-Muk Wintu Nation, followed by a live animal show from Turtle Bay Exploration Park featuring a porcupine, a king snake, a barn owl and a skunk. The festival also hosted the 19th annual Chili Cook-off, where Adam and Avalon Koeller claimed victory for the second year in a row.

Entertainment included Mojito's Latin beats and Damentation's rock classics, while children danced with Super Salmon mascots, explored the Salmon Tent, and participated in activities hosted by local organizations. This festival beautifully united community traditions while honoring the salmon and our connection to the Trinity River.



Trinity River Public Float

Despite early morning rain, the Trinity River Public Float was a fantastic day on the water.

Participants explored riverine ecology and learned about the Trinity River Restoration Program's efforts to rehabilitate the river from the impacts of historic mining and damming. Huge thanks to Trinity River Rafting for their expert guides and delicious meal!

To everyone who braved the weather—thank you! Did you miss it this year? Don't worry, this annual event will be back, and we'd love to see you next time!



Welcome Clay Groetsch!

Clay Groetsch is a second-year GrizzlyCorps fellow serving with the Trinity County Resource Conservation District by working with the Forest Health, Watershed, and Education/Outreach departments. Clay is originally from Louisiana and North Carolina. However, they have spent several seasons working in California, including a previous GrizzlyCorps term in Mariposa with Mariposa Trails. Clay received a Bachelor of Science in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management from North Carolina State University and a Master of Science in Natural Resources from Auburn University. As GrizzlyCorps' first "gap year" fellow, they spent their time between their first and second GrizzlyCorps term hiking the Appalachian Trail. Clay's projects at the RCD this year include GIS road realignment, organizing the Weaverville Community Forest field trip series, and creating a new event for the RCD called "Mardi Gras Parade de Salmon". Clay also helps out with outreach events, watershed and forestry field work, and prescribed burning throughout the county.

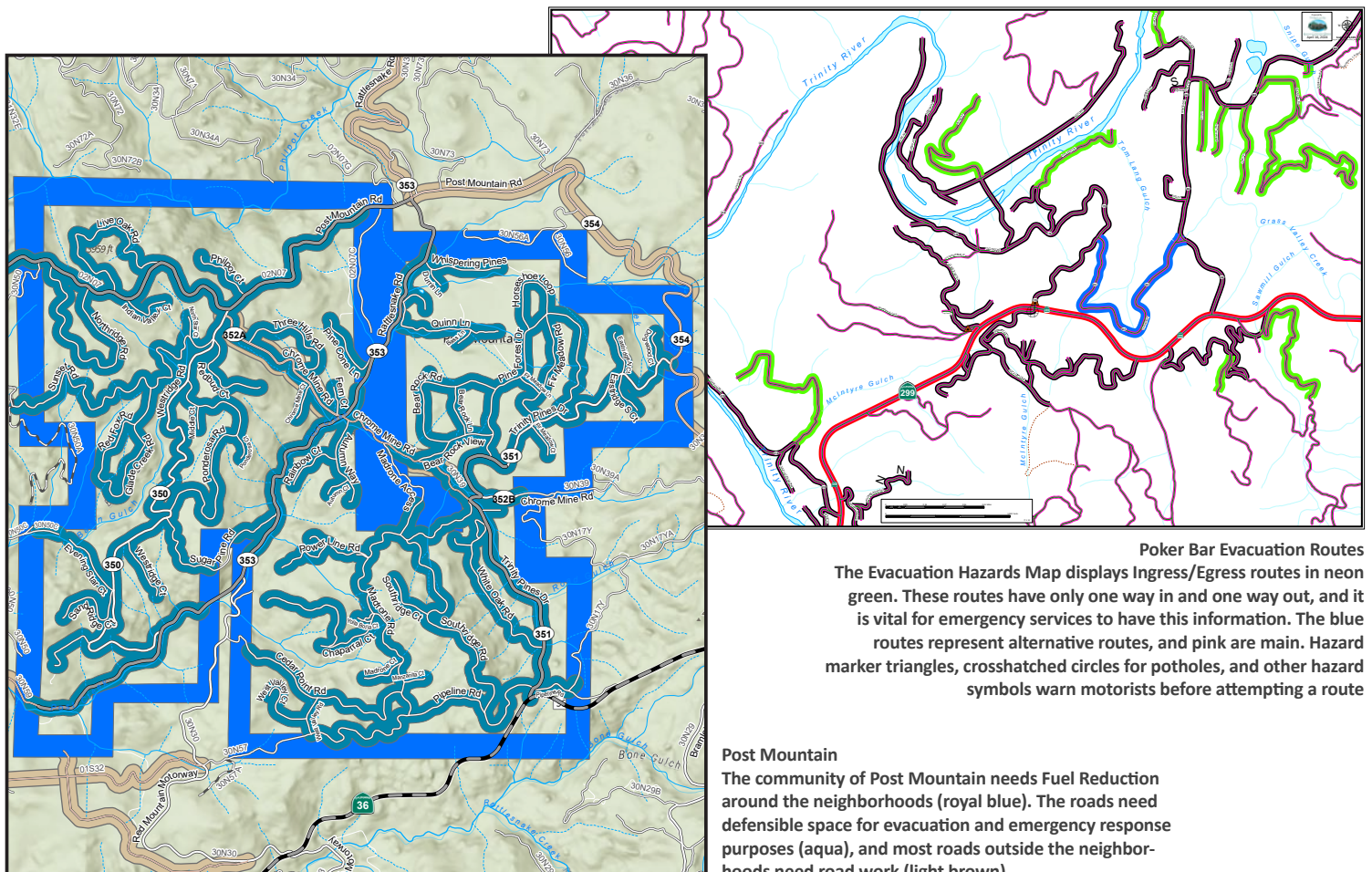
Communicating with Maps

GIS (Geographic Information Systems) is intertwined with every department of the Trinity County Resource Conservation District. Shareable and updatable maps are crucial for communicating in land management. At the TCRCD, we maintain dozens of layers of accurate geographic data in multiple geodatabases. We make these data layers accessible to workers and department managers for their various projects on a shared server. This enables the different departments to create maps to meet their needs as those needs shift through the seasons.

The GIS department continues assisting with the Trinity County Wildfire Mitigation Project. Currently, the GIS department is working on creating mobile mapping surveys that the forestry crew utilized in the field for data collection and verification. The Wildfire Mitigation Project, through FEMA and the McConnell Foundation, is the largest project the District has ever taken on and we are excited to provide the community with this much-needed support. GIS is honored to assist the boots on the ground crews to communicate more effectively and streamline workflow.

The GIS department helped the Fire Safe Council translate handwritten notes from the community meetings into a digital map of evacuation routes and hazards. This map will serve to provide route information to residents that could face emergency situations, and the reported hazards of each route. Those hazards include potholes, slip-outs, and high or low clearance. If a rockslide, for example, blocks a main evacuation route, Highway 299 for instance, residents may need to use an alternative route that we've lined out. We also outlined the planned and requested fire fuels management projects for the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Using GIS to advocate for wildfire prevention in my hometown, where I once evacuated for the Oregon fire, is really important for me. The fuel reduction work that our crews do year-round prevents wildfires, and reduces severity, making it more likely for trees to survive even if the brush burns.

The County has been working with the RCD GIS department recently to improve the data synchronization between our systems. It has been exciting working with County IT to get installations of the latest version of Arc GIS Pro to County employees. I am looking forward to doing some parcel fabric editing soon to update our County and improve accuracy. The importance of the Trinity County government having accurate geographic information cannot be overstated, since it is central to their tasks.



Poker Bar Evacuation Routes
The Evacuation Hazards Map displays Ingress/Egress routes in neon green. These routes have only one way in and one way out, and it is vital for emergency services to have this information. The blue routes represent alternative routes, and pink are main. Hazard marker triangles, crosshatched circles for potholes, and other hazard symbols warn motorists before attempting a route

Post Mountain
The community of Post Mountain needs Fuel Reduction around the neighborhoods (royal blue). The roads need defensible space for evacuation and emergency response purposes (aqua), and most roads outside the neighborhoods need road work (light brown).

TCRCD Roads Crew Projects this Fall



Hole from separated culvert



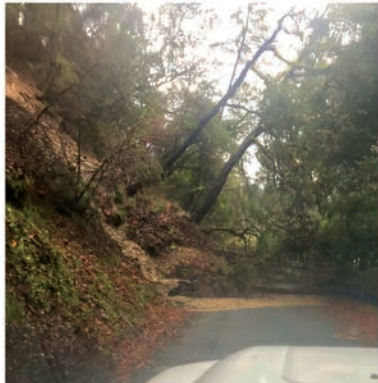
1506 mm 0.95
First section of road
removed, channel armored
and culvert bottom
repaired
October 2024

The Road crew finished the 2024 work season on Six Rivers National Forest in late October, we were addressing several sites on West Lake Road (1506) along the west side of Ruth Lake. The last project we completed was to address a failing culvert that had become separated under the road near the inlet and the bottom of the culvert was rusted thru. The repair involved removing the first 20 feet of culvert, rock armoring the new inlet area, addressing a large spring adjacent to the stream crossing using a perforated drain, and the repair of the bottom of the culvert.



Work inside Culvert to repair rusted out bottom

As a part of our agreements with the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests, between fall and spring, the TCRCD road crew conducts storm patrol on the main roads after larger rain events. This particular site on the 29N76 road is located in the Smoky Creek watershed of the South Fork Trinity, the road was cleared of trees and additional work will be needed to stabilize the road later this summer.



Fill failure on 29N76 in Smoky Creek December 2024

This photo is of a slide that was activated in early January blocking a USFS road with private residences just outside the town of Willow Creek; the slide was cleared and the material was hauled to a safe disposal site nearby.



Slide removal from Horse Linto Road 7N02 January 2025

New road projects funded for 2025, in addition to our ongoing road maintenance projects, are the Mainline Road Improvement Project funded by Caltrans on BLM managed lands in Upper Grass Valley Creek. The project is to excavate and replace undersized culverts at multiple stream crossings that experienced plugging and erosion in 2023. We also have RAC-funded trail work on the Weaver Basin Trail system in Weaverville.

The Language of Flow

Rivers are vital parts of our ecosystems, and they behave differently depending on the climate they flow through. In a Mediterranean climate, which is characterized by hot, dry summers and variable, wet winters, river flow can be particularly interesting. Let's explore some important terms and concepts related to river flow that is represented in our unique climate and system.

What is River Flow?

At its most basic, river flow, or discharge, is the volume of water that moves through a river over a specific period of time. On the Trinity River, flow is typically measured in cubic feet per second (CFS). Currently, flow rates are measured in a few locations above and below Trinity and Lewiston Dams. Discharge on the Trinity River at Lewiston has been measured daily since 1911, when Model T's were just rolling off of the assembly line!

There are very few rivers in California that experience full natural flow. Most Northern California rivers are managed through dams that generate power, create water diversions, or hold back water for later use. Dams block upstream deposits of water, wood, and sediment and when managed narrowly have caused significant harm to riverine ecology downstream.

Understanding river flow both pre-dam and post-dam helps river ecologists to compare current management with the pre-dam natural conditions that species and their ecology developed within. This strategy aims to deepen understanding of the natural environment to provide favorable conditions for plants, wildlife, and people that depend on the river.

Why is River Flow Important?

The Trinity River's flow is crucial for many reasons:

- **Ecosystems:** Flow influences the types of plants and animals that live in and around the river.
- **Water Supply:** The Trinity River provides drinking water, supports economic development, supplies irrigation for agriculture and generates power for millions of Californians.
- **Recreation:** The Trinity River supports activities like fishing, boating, hiking, gold panning, wildlife viewing, and swimming.

Key Terms Related to River Flow: Managed vs Natural

Natural Seasonal Flow: Although highly variable from year to year, undammed rivers in a Mediterranean climate, tend to exhibit seasonal patterns. During the rainy winter months, flow rates typically increase due to precipitation, the size and magnitude of that increase depends on seasonal patterns and the frequency of storm events. In the spring, snow in the mountains melts adding flow to the Trinity River and its watershed. Conversely, in summer, flow rates tend to slowly decrease as the dry season progresses.

Natural Base Flow: This is the normal level of water flow in a river during dry periods. It usually comes from groundwater and keeps the river flowing even when there hasn't been rain for a while. In a Mediterranean climate, base flow can be low during the summer months due less water in the system and high evaporation rates. Baseflows are important for cold-blooded aquatic species like foothill yellow legged frogs who utilize slow water for rearing and then populate riverside riparian areas as adults.

Hydrograph: A graph that illustrates how the flow of water in a river changes over time. It shows time on the horizontal axis and the flow rate, usually measured in cubic feet per second, on the vertical axis. As the line on the graph rises, it indicates an increase in river flow (like after rain), and when it falls, it represents a decrease (such as during dry periods). Hydrographs are important for managing water resources, studying weather patterns as well, and ensuring that environmental flow needs are met in regulated river systems.

Natural Surface Runoff: After it rains, water flows over the land and enters rivers. This is known as surface runoff. Winter rains in the Trinity watershed typically lead the tributaries and the Trinity River (below Douglas City) to a spike in flow. However, the impact is highly dependent on the water year, ground saturation, and snow accumulation. Surface runoff provides additional wood, leaf litter, and sediment to rivers which are the building blocks for healthy habitat creation in the Trinity system.



Over-bank floods: When there is a lot of rain in a short period, rivers can overflow their banks, causing over-bank floods. On the Trinity River over-bank floods are more likely to occur during the wet season and provide important ecological functions, including to Trinity River fish. These flows improve soil quality, provide prime growing grounds for aquatic insects and other fish food, and help to reset the form of the river's main channel through scour.

Environmental Flow: Is a management term that identifies the quantity and timing of water needed to sustain the health of river ecosystems, particularly downstream from a dam. Managing environmental flow is important for maintaining habitat for Trinity River salmonids and other wildlife that depend on the river. Within the environmental flows framework there are many methods for implementation. Since 2004, the Trinity River Restoration Program's method for environmental flows was based on functional implementation of three periods, a summer baseflow (450 CFS), a fall/winter baseflow (300 CFS), and a spring snowmelt mimic hydrograph. Since 2016 local scientists have advocated to adapt this method by adding variable flows to the wet-season months (December – April) for the benefit of growing healthier juvenile salmonids.

Recommended Periods within the Environmental Flow Timeline for Water Year 2025

1. December 15 – February 14

Synchronized Storm Pulse

A dam release synchronized to a natural storm event. The release is triggered by a CNRFC forecast for the Trinity River above North Fork that rises to 4500 CFS or more. Once triggered, the release would be triggered even if the forecast is reduced. The primary purpose is to reduce redd smothering by preventing fine sediment accumulation from tributaries, to maximize the synchrony between tributaries and the mainstem of the river, as well as recondition the streambed, and align the ecology for salmon food production.

2. February 15 – April 14

Wet Season Flood

Depending on forecast water year type in the California Department of Water Resources February B120 forecast and whether a synchronized flow has occurred, the Program may schedule flows above baseflow in the Feb. 15 to Apr. 15 timeframe. Depending on the March B120 forecast, the schedule may be adjusted as of March 15. The primary purpose of this is to inundate floodplains for aquatic food production and habitat for juvenile salmonids at the right time of year – similar to natural wet season flooding.

3. April 15 – Variable

Snowmelt Peak and Recession

The spring snowmelt peak and recession are an important annual migratory cue for both adult and juvenile chinook. The Program has implemented a spring snow-melt mimic release annually since 2004. CDWR April B120 forecast determines total volume of restoration flow releases. Water that has not been released for Storm Pulse Flows or Wet Season Flooding is scheduled for release during the Snowmelt Peak and Recession period. This schedule encompasses many purposes for river ecology and the salmonid life cycle.

4. Managed Base Flow

Baseflows released from Lewiston Dam to the Trinity River are currently managed at 450 CFS through the summer, shifting to 300 CFS on Oct. 15 through the subsequent spring. This management strategy is a relic from the 1999 Flow Study and was put in place with the mindset that increasing baseflow in the summertime could help with river temperature management for migrating adult spring chinook. Flows reduce in the fall because temperature objectives are no longer needed. In addition, water managers leaned on water savings during the fall through the wet season so that accumulation in the system could be understood prior to use for diversions or river ecology. Fish biologists hypothesize that if current summer and fall management were adapted to a more natural hydrograph it may serve Trinity River salmonids and other wildlife better.

Link to article: <https://www.trrp.net/featured-article-the-language-of-flow/>

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Trinity County RCD Board Meetings
Third Wednesday
5:30 PM
Open to the Public

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- Marla Walters - Office Manager
- Cari deJong - Bookkeeper
- Annie Barbeau - Grants Manager / Biologist
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- Emily Drain - Fire Safe Council Project Coordinator
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- Jessica Tye - Conservation Technician III

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- Tyler McKinley - Conservation Tech III
- Timothy Robertson - Conservation Tech II
- Thomas Asgerisson - Conservation Tech II

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 led by a volunteer board of directors.

The Trinity County RCD Vision
The Trinity County RCD 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.



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