



Nevada County Resource Conservation District
2012 Annual Report
Natural Resources Conservation Service



2012 Annual Report



Until the formation of Soil Conservation Districts there was no organized mechanism for disseminating resource conservation information, expertise, and assistance. Farmers and ranchers often had no one to turn to for soil and water conservation information and assistance.



It took a crisis of national proportions, [the Dust Bowl](#), to bring this about. Farmers and ranchers still need up-to-date scientific information and techniques to manage the natural resources on their properties, and the need for ongoing conservation education and assistance among all sectors of the public is as great or greater than it ever has been.

RCDs in partnership with NRCS continue to render assistance to private landowners wishing to conserve soil and water and manage their resources on a sustainable basis. But RCDs also act as a focal point for local conservation efforts and RCDs throughout the state now function as leaders in the conservation community.

RCDs continue to sponsor educational efforts to teach children and adults alike of the importance of conserving resources. Though there are growing contributions by other groups and organizations in communities that raise public awareness of resource conservation, RCDs remain one of the primary links between local people and government on issues related to conservation.



With an ever dwindling base of resources and environmental pressures from a host of human activities, the work of RCDs will continue to be needed far into the future.

For more information on the Dust Bowl see: <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/dustbowl/>

Historic Ranching and Farming Families



Ranchers and Farmers Honored



Nevada County, California, has a long and rich agricultural history dating back several generations. Since the 1850's, settlers in Nevada County cultivated crops and raised livestock to supply the thousands of miners during the Gold Rush. By 1858 it was estimated that there were over 270 ranches throughout the county and by 1860 there were over 30,000 acres under cultivation (*Thompson and West 1880*). As mining declined, ranching and farming continued with Nevada County supplying fresh produce, stock, poultry, and dairy products throughout California and beyond (in 1910, 612 tons of fruit were shipped to markets-*Nevada County, Sunset Magazine 1911*). Today it is estimated there are some 700 farms in Nevada County raising food.

In February, 2012, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) honored those families who continue to ranch and farm on their grandparents (and sometimes great-grandparents) land. These families continue a tradition created by their ancestors in raising produce and livestock.



The evening provided these families the opportunity to get together and share their history and family stories, while encouraging others to keep their own heritage alive. Initial research done by the NCRCD and NRCS for this event made it clear that there is a vast amount of agricultural heritage, much of which is not written down.

The historical families who were able to attend the event were presented with a sign to place at their ranch or farm so everyone who travels throughout Nevada County will know when they have had the privilege of seeing a true slice of Nevada County heritage.



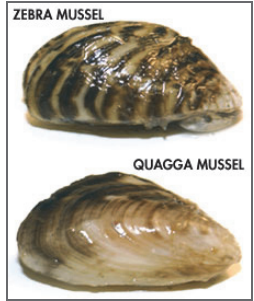
Recognized for their continued contribution to Nevada County's heritage were: Gary & Don Sweet from the **Sweet Ranch**; Darlene Moberg from the **Rolph Ranch**; Linda Miller from the **Miller Ranch**; Tom & Cindy Browning from the **Browning Ranch**; Debbie, Jim & Chris Bierwagen from **Bierwagen Farm**; Neil Robinson from the **Robinson Ranch**; Shannon & Jeannie Gleason from the **Gleason Ranch**; Rob Graham and Ron & Denise Koster from the **Brown Ranch**; Gaylene Collins from the **Nichols Ranch**; and Kathryn, Bill, Dylan & Ryan Tanner from the **Rondoni Ranch**.

Invasive Species Program

Quagga and Zebra Mussel Program

Quagga and zebra mussels are invasive freshwater mollusks that infest waters in extremely large numbers and attach to any hard surface. These species are from Eurasia and are so microscopic that they have been spread by boats trailered by the public or by commercial haulers. One adult female zebra mussel can release 1,000,000 eggs in a lifetime.

Nevada County has over 90 lakes and a multitude of water courses. At the present time western Nevada County does not have this infestation but confirmed live sightings have been found in eastern Nevada County. Once they invade local waters, they clog power-plant and public-water intakes and pipes; ruin boating equipment by clogging the cooling systems, foul hulls, and jam centerboard wells under sailboats.



The Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner (AC) and the Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) partnered on a multi-phase outreach program to educate and alert Nevada County residents of the potential environmental and economic disaster that these mussels can cause.

The NCRCD worked with the AC to develop flyers, brochures, and media ads with funding provided by the NCRCD. Distribution of these printed materials throughout Nevada County will be a large component of this project during boating season. Our targets for distribution will be boat shops, bait shops, gas stations, boat dealers, boating equipment and supply shops, maintenance shops, and any other businesses or agencies that may have affiliations with boaters.

Rural Property Management Workshops

We continued our year-round seminar series that began in 2011. The NCRCD hosted seminars and workshops on a variety of subjects: **Soils, Raising 'City' Chickens, Tree Diseases and Forestry Health, Northern California Bats, Fire Ecology, Native Grass Meadows, Forest Raptors, and Wildlife Impacts of Brush Control.**



Fire Ecology



Native Grass Meadows

These seminars promote responsible resource management on the land. The NCRCD and the NRCS are committed to assisting large and small landowners of Nevada County and western Sierra County with technical and educational assistance on issues regarding forestry health, vegetation management, wildlife habitat, livestock grazing, pasture planting, soils information, and much more.



Forest Raptors of Nevada County



Tree Diseases & Forestry Health



How to Test Your Soil

We continue to offer individual site visits to any landowner to assess their property and to lend a hand on planning or answering any questions they may have.

Alta Sierra Elementary School Erosion Control Project

The Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) was contacted by the Alta Sierra Homeowners Association to see if the NCRCD could assist Alta Sierra Elementary School regarding an erosion problem at the bottom of their playground area. A site visit by Jan Blake, NCRCD District Administrator and Jason Jackson, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist was held with Mike Menezes, school representative.



The main playground was eroding down a very steep hillside due to water runoff, lack of adequate drainage, and a bare slope below the area. Jason and Jan identified several processes that could be done to help stabilize the hillside that would incorporate a low retaining wall and additional drainage. Based on this assessment, the project proposal was presented to the NCRCD board of directors for discussion. The board approved the project and NCRCD staff contacted four retaining wall contractors, met with each at the site to review the project, and requested proposals. The contractors submitted written proposals. NCRCD selected Weiss Landscaping Inc. to install a block retaining wall with drainage. Work began on this project on July 12, 2012 and the retaining wall was completed on July 18, 2012.

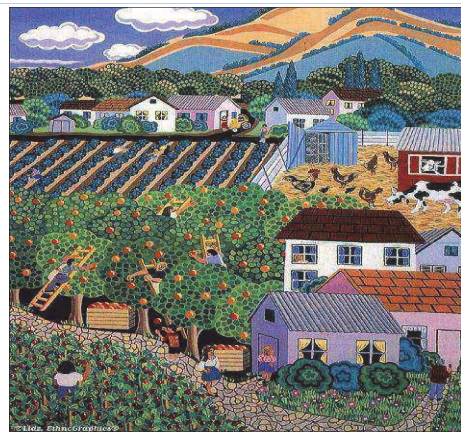
At the recommendation of Weiss Landscaping, the NCRCD had bark mulch delivered to the school to be spread on the hillside below the new wall for further erosion control measures. In addition, the NCRCD worked with Quinn McCay on his Eagle Scout project, to replace the steps and pathway from the playground to the lower field at Alta Sierra Elementary School, to further mitigate the eroding hillside.



The NCRCD was very pleased with the opportunity to assist in this erosion project. The NCRCD provided the school with a brief report of the project to share with the students as well as an online lesson plan regarding erosion.



Technical Assistance and Outreach / Deer Whistles



The NCRCD in partnership with the NRCS continued to offer assistance to landowners and land managers on a variety of resource concerns:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ◆ forest health | ◆ water conservation |
| ◆ vegetation management | ◆ pasture planting |
| ◆ wildlife habitat | ◆ soils information |

According to Grass Valley CHP, in the last 4 years there have been a total of 166 reported collisions between deer and vehicles in Nevada County with 59 people injured. Approximately 65% of those collisions occurred on Highways 20 and 49. The NCRCD gave away hundreds of deer whistles to residents of Nevada County.



Conservation Seminars at the Nevada County Fair



The NCRCD hosted free seminars during the annual Nevada County Fair. This annual series addressed landowner issues ranging from oak trees, pastures, and ponds to organic gardening, sustainable farming, and composting. Additional topics of interest to the fairgoer were landscaping with native plants, bird identification, septic systems, and others.



Local, regional, and statewide experts presented information about our natural resources. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions when attending these presentations.

Our seminar tent is in the new 'Ag-Sperience' area next to the Cowbelles barn behind Treat Street. Seminars were from 11:00 am to 3:30 pm Wednesday through Saturday, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm on Sunday. The full seminar series schedule is always available in the Fair Program as well as the NCRCD web site at www.ncrcd.org.



Since 1944, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District has worked with private landowners, agencies, and organizations to conserve and restore Nevada County's rich and varied natural resources. The NCRCD and the NRCS offer landowners free consultations regarding issues with their property. In addition, numerous educational and outreach events are provided throughout the year.



Plant & Tree Give Away

Each year the NCRCD partners with Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) and Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) in a native plant and tree seedlings give-away to commemorate National Arbor Day. This past year we offered:

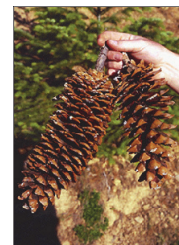


Ponderosa Pine

Red Twig Dogwood



- ◆ Red Twig Dogwood / *Cornus stolonifera*
- ◆ Variegated Red Twig Dogwood / *Cornus alba 'Elegantissima'*
- ◆ Yellow Twig Dogwood / *Cornus s. 'Flaviramea'*
- ◆ Cardinal Flower / *Lobelia cardinalis*
- ◆ Fiber Optic Grass / *Scirpus cernus*
- ◆ Ponderosa Pine / *Pinus ponderosa*
- ◆ Incense Cedar / *Calocedrus decurrens*
- ◆ Sugar Pine / *Pinus lambertiana*
- ◆ Douglas Fir / *Pseudotsuga menziesii*



Sugar Pine

Fiber Optic Grass



The variety of seedlings are chosen to encourage native plantings, attract pollinators, birds, and other wildlife and to allow landowners the practice of developing water efficient landscaping and wildlife habitat.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

On April 27, 1935, Congress passed Public Law 74-46, in which it recognized that "the wastage of soil and moisture resources on farm, grazing, and forest lands . . . is a menace to the national welfare" and established the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) as a permanent agency in the USDA.



*In 1994, SCS's name was changed to the **Natural Resources Conservation Service** to better reflect the broadened scope of the agency's concerns. In doing so, Congress reaffirmed the federal commitment to the conservation of the nation's soil and water resources, first made 75 years ago, that continues to this day.*

NRCS has expanded to become a conservation leader for all natural resources, ensuring private lands are conserved, restored, and more resilient to environmental challenges, like climate change.

Seventy percent of the land in the United States is privately owned, making stewardship by private landowners absolutely critical to the health of our Nation's environment.

NRCS works with landowners through conservation planning and assistance designed to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals that result in productive lands and healthy ecosystems.



NCRCD Board of Directors

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Evan Smith, Forester

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Associate Directors

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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 2012 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

In 2012 the Grass Valley NRCS office provided 45 landowners with a total of \$1.2 million in cost share incentives to implement conservation projects in Nevada County and western Sierra County. The implementation of these best management, conservation practice projects significantly improved the health of forests, cropland, grasslands and watersheds. The funds provided through the USDA cost share programs combined with the 10-50% provided by the landowners resulted in total expenditures of over \$2.4 million in local Nevada County and western Sierra County businesses in the implementation of conservation practices.

