



COLUSA COUNTY CONSERVATION

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WELCOME *by Mary Fahey, Watershed Coordinator*

Educating You, Educating Me...

Over the last couple of months, I've had the opportunity to facilitate and participate in several natural resource education activities for Colusa County youth. On April 1, the Colusa County Resource Conservation District brought a watershed education station to Colusa Farm Day and demonstrated the concept of a watershed to more than one hundred 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students. On May 7, we brought our soil painting booth to Cache Creek Discovery Day where kids of all ages created artwork with many different colors of local soil, and learned the value of this precious natural resource.

I have also had the opportunity over the past two years to participate as a mentor for the SLEWS (Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship) program. SLEWS is run by the Center For Land based Learning out of Winters. The goal of the program is to engage high school students in habitat restoration projects that enhance classroom learning, develop leadership skills and result in real habitat restoration. This year we worked with Environmental Science students from Colusa High School planting trees, shrubs, grasses, and sedges, and installing drip irrigation along Sycamore Slough. These efforts will help enhance riparian habitat, and begin creating a habitat corridor for wildlife between the Sacramento River and Colusa National Wildlife Refuge.

While it is always rewarding to share knowledge with local youth, it is equally rewarding to gain knowledge from the folks that live and work on the land in our watershed. For several months, I have been conducting stakeholder interviews in order to gain input for the Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan. With each interview, I learn a little more about current and historic natural resource conditions in our area. It has been fascinating and I am so thankful for all of the knowledgeable people who have been willing to take the time to answer my questions and share their views.

The more I am educated through my work and outreach efforts at the Colusa County RCD, the more knowledge I am able to share with others, and this is a truly rewarding part of my job.



photo by Jack Alderson

MISSION

The mission of the CCRCD is to assist local landowners to protect, conserve and restore natural resources through information, education, and access to technical assistance programs. In doing so the CCRCD will always take measures to protect the individual landowner's rights and fully support "from the ground up" conservation planning that promotes local, social, and economic sustainability through wise land use.

(Adopted: March 21, 2002)

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CONTACT US

Colusa County RCD
100 Sunrise Blvd., Suite B
Colusa, California 95932
Phone: 530.458.2931, ext. 3
Fax: 530.458.3683
info@colusarc.org

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.COLUSARCD.ORG

ABOUT THE COLUSA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT (CCRCD)

THE CCRCD FOCUSES THEIR EFFORTS ON:

- Promoting resource management and conservation practices that will improve the health of Colusa County Watersheds
- Supporting measures that provide for the best use of the land while sustaining our natural resources and local economy
- Providing conservation education to ensure Colusa County's natural resources will be valued and protected in the future

CCRCD'S NATURAL RESOURCE PRIORITIES:

- Identify natural resources issues and concerns within all Colusa County Watersheds
- Reduce erosion and sedimentation
- Work with all agencies of authority to reduce and control flooding
- Improve water quality and development
- Promote conservation practices for municipal, industrial and residential use
- Encourage the use of native vegetation and removal of non-native invasive species
- Improve Rangeland and Forest Resources
- Improve and Conserve wildlife and fishery habitat
- Reduce roadside pollution
- Protect agricultural viability
- Promote conservation education
- Promote director and staff development



photo by Jack Alderson

COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Stakeholder interviews continue in an effort to gather valuable community input towards the development of the Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan. In the Plan, we are addressing eight goals: Goal 1: Protect, Maintain and Enhance Water Quality; Goal 2: Promote activities to ensure a dependable water supply for current and future needs; Goal 3: Preserve ag land and open space; Goal 4: Manage invasive plant species; Goal 5: Reduce destructive flooding; Goal 6: Enhance soil quality and reduce erosion; Goal 7: Preserve and enhance native habitat; Goal 8: Address Unknown Future Affects of climate change.

If you have an interest in any or all of these goals, the CCRC Watershed Coordinator would like to hear from you and set up an interview. Interviews can be conducted in person, by phone or by email. During the interview process, stakeholders are asked a set of questions for each goal that they would like to address. Please contact Mary Fahey at the Colusa County Resource Conservation District: 530.458.2931 X117 or email: mary.fahey@ca.usda.gov.

MANAGEMENT PLAN WILL ASSIST LANDOWNERS

Once the Management Plan is completed, the Colusa County Resource Conservation District will begin work on projects to address the goals and objectives of the Plan. We are planning for new projects now. Do you have a natural resource issue on your land that you would like to see addressed, but need help? The CCRC is currently creating a database of potential projects and seeking funding opportunities for implementation. **Please let us know if we can assist you, or if you would like more information:** 530.458.2931 X3 or email: mary.fahey@ca.usda.gov.

RECOMMENDED VIEWING: SLOW THE FLOW - MAKE YOUR LANDSCAPE ACT LIKE A SPONGE

This half hour high definition documentary features a Sacramento landscaper who shocks his neighbors by pulling out his traditional front yard lawn and cement driveway, and putting in rain gardens, swales, native landscaping, and permeable paving; a suburban community that votes in a bond measure to pay for their school district to move to green multi-benefit watershed landscape practices and low impact development at all their schools; and a non-profit which is helping an urban neighborhood remove concrete and put in sidewalk gardens and median parks. The projects and approaches highlighted are very low-tech, green, habitat-enhancing, and beautiful – making a good argument for kicking back and not raking the leaves or watering the lawn.

The film educates viewers on how storm water is created, and the associated problems. While the statistics peppered throughout the film are sobering, *Slow The Flow* offers solutions that any homeowner or municipality can put into place, and shows that individuals can make a difference.

I found this video very interesting. Hope you will enjoy it too!
You can find it on the web at: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/stormfilm/>

Invasive Weeds



Getting to the Root of the Problem

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT INVASIVE PLANTS

(from the Cal-IPC website: www.cal-ipc.org)

If you own a farm or ranch:

Invasive plants crowd out crops and rangeland forage. These invaders can be low in nutrition or even toxic to livestock. Invasion can cause land values to drop, and management is often costly. Nationwide, invasive weeds in pastures and farmland cost an estimated \$33 billion per year.

If you enjoy the outdoors and watching wildlife:

Invasive plants can blanket waterways, trails, and scenic landscapes, making boating, hiking and biking difficult, and lowering the land's value for photography and wildlife viewing. Invasive plants can significantly degrade wildlife habitat. Nationally, invasive species are the second-greatest threat to endangered species, after habitat destruction.

If you hunt or fish:

Invasive plants reduce habitat for game species. This stress on wildlife reduces hunting and fishing resources. Invasive aquatic plants form dense mats that restrict boat access and kill fish by reducing oxygen in the water.

If you live in the city or suburbs:

Invasive ornamentals such as Scotch broom, pampasgrass, and eucalyptus increase fire fuel loads and are dangerous near homes. Plants like giant reed (*Arundo donax*) clog creeks throughout California, reducing their water-carrying capacity and increasing the risk of floods during winter storms.

If you're a public official:

Some invasive plants generate higher fuel loads than native plants. When these plants invade, wildfires can be more frequent and sometimes catastrophic. Towns and wildlands may need decades to recover from these dangerous, costly fires. Some invasive plants consume enormous quantities of water. This water is lost to wildlife, agriculture, and drinking supply, at a high price. For example, saltcedar trees along the Colorado River cost southern California over 68 billion gallons of water per year.

COMMON INVASIVE PLANTS IN THE COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED



Purple Starthistle, Yellow Starthistle, Saltcedar, Tree of Heaven, Perennial Pepperweed, Giant Reed, Barbed Goat Grass

UPCOMING MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

COLUSA COUNTY RCD BOARD MEETINGS

CCRCD Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of every month at the Colusa Industrial Park conference room. **Our July and August meetings will be the first THURSDAY (July 7 & August 4)** due to scheduling conflicts. Meetings start at 5:00 p.m. The public is welcome to attend these meetings.

For more information, visit our website: www.colusarcd.org

JUNE 6 - NORTHERN SACRAMENTO VALLEY INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Next meeting is June 6 in Red Bluff. For more information visit the Water and Resource Conservation section of the Butte County website.

JUNE 9 - STATE OF THE SACRAMENTO RIVER WATERSHED FORUM: INVESTING IN CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

This Forum will share the latest news on the hottest topics affecting the Sacramento River and its Watershed. California Natural Resources Secretary John Laird will kick off the day with his thoughts on the future of California's water and natural resources. Location is the Sheraton Grand Hotel, 1230 J Street in Sacramento.

For more info: www.sacrriver.org

LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS OPEN IN JUNE

Glenn County Certified Farmers Markets:

Willows Market: Opens June 1, held Wednesdays 4-7 pm

Orland Market: Opens June 4, held Saturdays 8 am-noon

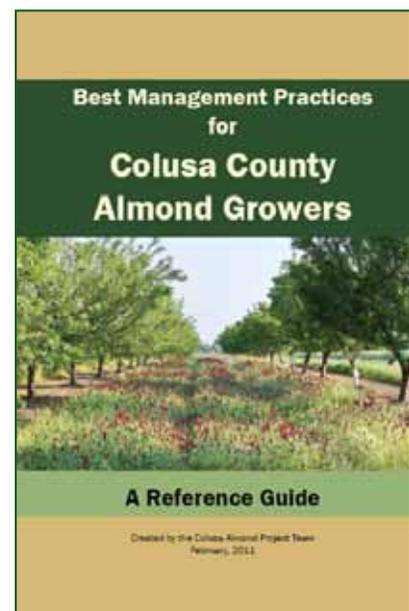
Colusa Certified Farmers Market: Opens June 6, held Mondays 5-8 pm

Arbuckle Certified Farmers Market: Opens June 8, held Wednesdays 5-8 pm

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR COLUSA COUNTY ALMOND GROWERS NOW AVAILABLE

A Best Management Practices (BMP) manual for Colusa County almond growers is now available. This manual provides descriptions and photographs of the BMPs that were implemented on eight Colusa County almond orchard sites over the past three years. The manual also contains a list of resources for further information, technical assistance, and sources for seed and other project supplies.

Contact the Colusa County Resource Conservation District to get your **free copy!**



WATERSHED EDUCATION

FARM DAY

Staff from the Colusa County RCD provided watershed education activities at two local events recently. The first was Farm Day which was held on April 1st at the Colusa County Fairgrounds. CCRCDC borrowed a watershed tarp from the Center For Land based Learning in Winters. The tarp was painted to resemble our local watershed, complete with the Sacramento River, the Sierras and the coastal range. We used yarn balls to represent rain, ping pong balls for snow, and colored foam balls to represent pollutants. The kids made it “rain” and “snow” on the tarp with the yarn balls and ping pong balls. They were able to see how runoff flows from the mountains down into the river, carrying with it sediment and chemicals that have accumulated in the watershed. Approximately 115 kids from 3rd through 5th grade came through our station during Farm Day. None of the children knew what a watershed was before visiting us, so we were able to spread watershed knowledge to many Colusa County youth.



CACHE CREEK DISCOVERY DAY



Back by popular demand, the CCRCDC once again brought our soil painting booth to Cache Creek Discovery Day, which was held on May 7th at the Cache Creek Nature Preserve near Woodland. Cache Creek Discovery Day is a fun-filled family event that celebrates our watersheds during Watershed Awareness Month.

While visiting our booth, children and adults alike marvelled at the many striking soil colors we were able to collect in and around Colusa County.

Children created masterpieces with the paints we prepared using soil, water and a small amount of clear acrylic. Two of our visitors, a brother and sister, created Mothers Day cards with soil paints, and it just so happened that their mom once worked as a Soil Conservationist with NRCS. Dad was certain she would appreciate the hand-made soil paint cards!



If you would like to create your own soil paints, you can find all the information you need at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/lewisandclark/paintingwithsoil.html. You will also find some amazing soil artwork by Janis Lang on that site.



2010-2011 SLEWS Program
COLUSA HIGH SCHOOL
 AT THE DAVIS HOME RANCH

CHANGING HEARTS, MINDS, AND LANDSCAPES
 A PROGRAM OF THE CENTER FOR LAND-BASED LEARNING

PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION:

Students from Colusa High School's Environmental Sciences class spent four days restoring native habitat along Sycamore Slough. Restoration activities included planting native trees, shrubs and sedges, and installing a drip irrigation system.

The restoration project is part of a larger vision to implement a whole farm conservation plan as well as create a corridor of native habitat between the Sacramento River and Colusa National Wildlife Refuge.

- ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**
- 650 trees and shrubs planted
 - 9,500 feet of irrigation line installed
 - 1,000 rushes planted



PROJECT PARTNERS

FIELD DAY SUMMARIES:

FIELD DAY 1

Theme: Understanding Ecological Restoration
Restoration: Planted trees and willow cuttings
Learning: US Fish & Wildlife Service guest speaker, Site Exploration
Reflection: Field Journaling

FIELD DAY 2

Theme: Pacific Flyway
Restoration: Planted native trees and shrubs along Sycamore Slough
Learning: Native Plant ID, Audubon California guest speaker
Games: Steal the Native Plant

FIELD DAY 3

Theme: Water Conservation
Restoration: Installed drip line
Learning: Partners for Fish & Wildlife guest speaker
Games: PVC golf

FIELD DAY 4

Theme: The Big Picture
Restoration: Finished and checked the irrigation system, and planted sedges
Learning: Comparison of local soil types, water conservation demonstration, native mammals discussion
Reflection: Video documentary, nature photography, and watercolor painting

ENHANCING HABITAT ALONG THE PACIFIC FLYWAY

Each year, millions of waterfowl depend on the Colusa Basin for breeding habitat, or as an area to feed during their migration along the Pacific Flyway. The native trees and shrubs that students planted along Sycamore Slough will enhance habitat not only for these birds, but also for pollinators, amphibians and mammals that are native to the area.



The Center for Land-Based Learning • 5265 Putah Creek Road • Winters, CA 95694 • 530.795.1544 • www.landbasedlearning.org



FUNDING FOR THIS SLEWS PROJECT PROVIDED BY:



OUR MISSION

The Center for Land-Based Learning inspires and motivates people of all ages, especially youth, to promote a healthy interplay between agriculture, nature and society through their actions and as leaders in their communities.

BARN OWLS ON THE FARM

(Excerpts taken from the Colusa Almond Project BMP Manual)

CCRCD recently completed the Colusa Almond Project. This project was a collaboration between CCRCD, Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), Audubon California's Landowner Stewardship Program and NRCS. As part of this project's Best Management Practices, Barn Owl nest boxes were installed at several of the project sites.

Much of the Barn Owl's natural nesting habitat has been altered due to land use changes. Constructed owl boxes are used to mimic a natural cavity that a dead tree or broken tree limb would provide a Barn Owl for roosting and raising its young. A nest box with the right dimensions and diameter entrance hole will attract Barn Owls which will readily utilize man-made structures.

Barn Owls are useful to have in a farm setting because they are a great tool for pest management. Adult Barn Owls will typically eat one rodent nightly. When they are feeding their young during the spring nesting season, which can be as many as 8 chicks, adults will catch up to 5 rodents per chick per night. This equates to an adult and owlets successfully utilizing a box eating nearly 300 rodents in a given week.



photo by Megan Sabato, CAFF

As long as there is an adequate food source, Barn Owls are not territorial. This means you can erect as many Barn Owl boxes as the food resources permit. The boxes should be placed in areas with relatively low human activity, so a farm edge is preferable to a frequently used barn or farm house. The dimensions of the box are essential. The hole needs to be no greater than 6 inches in diameter; this ensures that Great-horned Owls, a predator to the Barn Owl, can't access the box.

WILDFLOWERS!

People can't get enough of these beautiful photos taken by Jack Alderson from NRCS! Find the names of the flowers pictured here, read the Wildflower Reports and view many more photos on the CCRCD website at: www.colusarcd.org, Click on our [Projects](#) page and scroll down to [Colusa County Wildflowers](#)



Colusa County wildflower photos by Jack Alderson, NRCS

A FEW OF CCRCD'S PROJECTS

COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives for the Colusa Basin Management Plan have been identified. We are currently conducting stakeholder interviews to help shape the Plan, and we are identifying voluntary actions to achieve the plan's goals.

BEAR CREEK WATERSHED

A cooperative effort to enhance the ecological, agricultural and recreational conditions in the Bear Creek Watershed in Colusa, California.

COLUSA ALMOND PROJECT

The Colusa Almond Project was completed in April, 2011. To wrap up the project, the team facilitated a site tour that showed off our work on five of the eight project sites. Site maintenance guides were provided to the participating landowners, and a new BMP Manual was produced and is being distributed to growers throughout Colusa and Yolo Counties. Thanks to the landowners, CAFF, Audubon's Landowner Stewardship Program and NRCS for being great partners on this project!

COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED STREAMBANK ANALYSIS

Completed in February, 2010, The Streambank Analysis contains mapping and reporting on erosion potential, riparian habitat and invasive weeds on 32 important foothill streams in the Colusa Basin Watershed. Each of these streams drains into the Colusa Basin Drain, affecting water quality in the Sacramento River and the Bay Delta region.

COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED ASSESSMENT

Completed in December, 2008, The Colusa Basin Watershed Assessment can be characterized as a "current conditions report" for the watershed, and was the first step to developing a Management Plan for the Colusa Basin Watershed.

NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

Recently, several trees were cut down in the garden area in front of our office building at Colusa Industrial Park (CIP). CCRCD District Manager, Patti Turner, thought this might be a good opportunity to put in a native plant garden. CCRCD Watershed Coordinator, Mary Fahey, took it from there and contacted the building owner, Ed Hulbert. Ed generously agreed to allow us to install the garden and to pay for all materials.

The CIP landscape crew pulled out the remaining tree stumps and roots and added a load of mushroom compost from our local mushroom plant. Meanwhile, Mary took measurements, drew up a plan for the garden, ordered plants and installed the new garden. We look forward to the plants growing and adding beauty and biodiversity to our office landscape!

Plant species include: California Wild Rose, Western Red Bud, Dwarf Coyote Bush, Ceanothus Blue Blossom, Yarrow, California Fuschia, Seep Monkey Flower, Cleveland Sage and Deer Grass. All plants were purchased from Floral Natives Nursery in Chico.



For more information on our projects, please visit our website at www.colusarc.org