

COLUSA COUNTY CONSERVATION

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WELCOME *by Mary Fahey, Watershed Coordinator*

We are all about watersheds, wildflowers and weeds in this issue of Colusa County Conservation (along with a few other topics that don't start with "W")!

Watersheds: The Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan continues to be developed. Input and information is being gathered and integrated into the writing of the plan. I have been fortunate to have gained much valuable information from local stakeholders through one-on-one interviews. A big thank you to Claudia Street at the Glenn County RCD and Heather Nichols-Crowell at the Yolo County RCD for interviewing stakeholders in their counties. See page 3 for more information on the progress and purpose of this Plan.

Wildflowers: It is wildflower season again and I wanted to remind everyone to take a look at the wildflower section of our website, on the "projects" page. There are lots of gorgeous photographs and interesting commentary on those pages, all contributed by Jack Alderson in our NRCS office.

Weeds: Invasive Weed Awareness Day at the Capitol takes place on March 16. More information about this event can be found on page 4. Even if you can't make it to the Capitol that day, it's a good reminder to do your part to help eradicate invasive weeds in your watershed.

I hope you enjoy this 3rd edition of the Colusa County RCD's newsletter, and I wish you all a productive Spring!



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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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 Doug Turner

COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

FROM MARY FAHEY, COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED COORDINATOR

The Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan is a locally-driven, voluntary plan intended to guide us in managing natural resource issues of concern in the watershed. Once completed, this “living” document will be updated as changing conditions in the watershed warrant. The Plan is being developed as a road map for the RCD and local landowners to utilize in order to maintain and enhance the holistic health of the Colusa Basin Watershed.

Although there are water management plans being developed around us, such as the Integrated Regional Water Management Planning efforts, the Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan is different. This Plan addresses a range of natural resource concerns, including water quality and supply, preservation of ag land and open space, invasive weeds, soil erosion, destructive flooding, wildlife habitat and the unknown future effects of climate change. This holistic watershed approach allows us to address a variety of issues that are of upmost concern to stakeholders in our local area. During the development of this Plan, I am integrating information from other planning activities so as not to duplicate efforts, and to provide an avenue for future cooperative project planning and implementation.

The vision, mission, goals and objectives of the Plan have been written, and I am currently identifying action items to address the goals and objectives, while also writing about current conditions and desired outcomes for each goal. With the help of the Watershed Coordinators in Glenn and Yolo Counties, stakeholder interviews focused on Plan goals continue to take place. This valuable feedback will help guide Plan development. Stakeholders include landowners, farmers, county government, water experts, natural resource workers, and others that live and work in the watershed.

If you are interested in participating in the development of the Colusa Basin Watershed Management Planning process, please contact Mary Fahey at the Colusa County Resource Conservation District: 530.458.2931 X117 or email: mary.fahey@ca.usda.gov.

WILDFLOWER REPORTS ON THE CCRCD WEBSITE

It's wildflower season! We live in an area that hosts an amazing variety of wildflowers and now is the time to start making plans to get out and enjoy them. Last year, Jack Alderson in our NRCS office, spent many weekends photographing our local wildflowers and writing up informative reports. All of those beautiful photographs and interesting commentary can be found on the CCRCD website. Check it out and get inspired for Spring!

Check out the Wildflower Reports and photos at:

www.colusarcd.org, Click on our [Projects](#) page and scroll down to [Colusa County Wildflowers](#)



Colusa County wildflower photos by Jack Alderson, NRCS

Invasive Weeds



Getting to the Root of the Problem

INVASIVE WEED AWARENESS DAY AT THE CAPITOL MARCH 16

(from the Cal-IPC website)

Each March, Day at the Capitol brings weed workers from across the state to Sacramento. The day features opportunities to educate state legislators and to learn about current policy initiatives. Attendees from previous years are credited with securing renewed funding for the state's Weed Management Area program.

There will be deep budgetary cuts in Sacramento this year. It's important that we let decision-makers know that strategic invasive plant control through the WMA program (and other CDFA weed programs) is a good investment. Two great ways to do that are attending the 8th Annual Invasive Weeds Awareness Day at the Capitol, and faxing letters of support. Letters of support from the range of organizations involved in WMAs can be very powerful in aggregate.

Day at the Capitol will feature policy updates, advocacy training, and visits to all 120 legislative offices in the Capitol! And, it's free!

9:00 am - 5:00 p.m.

Cal EPA, Sierra Hearing Room,
1001 I Street, downtown Sacramento

For more information on Day at the Capitol:

www.cal-ipc.org/policy/state/ciwad.php

For more information on invasive weeds and their impact on our natural resources, visit the "projects" page of the Colusa County Resource Conservation District website: www.colusarcd.org or the California Invasive Plant Council website: www.cal-ipc.org

COMMON INVASIVE PLANTS IN THE COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED

Past issues have featured Giant Reed, Saltcedar, Yellow Starthistle and Tree of Heaven.

We now introduce you to two more noxious invaders:

PERENNIAL PEPPERWEED



Impacts:

- Highly invasive herbaceous perennial
- Can invade a wide range of habitats including riparian areas, wetlands, marshes, and floodplains
- Adapts readily to natural and disturbed wetlands
- Displaces native plants and animals
- Impacts alfalfa and pasture production

BARBED GOATGRASS



Impacts:

- Rangeland and dry land crop invader
- Dominates dry land pastures in California
- Readily crosses with wheat, producing sterile seed and unmarketable wheat
- Closely related to wheat, making selective control difficult in cereal crop production
- When mature, it is unpalatable for livestock
- In grasslands, it reduces the abundance of native perennial grasses and competes with desirable plants as well as native forbs

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. Meetings start at 5:00 p.m. For more information, visit our website: www.colusarc.org

COLUSA COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE MEETINGS

Two joint workshops with the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission will be held in March, 2011. For more information, visit the General Plan Update website at: www.countyofcolusageneralplan.org

MARCH 16 - INVASIVE WEED AWARENESS DAY AT THE CAPITAL

See article on page 4 of this newsletter for more information

MARCH 25 - HEDGEROW FARMS GROWERS TOUR

Take a tour of this innovative farm in Winters, CA. For more information, please contact Liz Goebel, Product Operations and Outreach Coordinator, Hedgerow Farms: 530-662-6847 or email: egoebel@hedgerowfarms.com

APRIL 1-3 COLUSA WESTERN DAYS

CCRCD will be on hand with a watershed education station!

APRIL 15 - HEDGEROW FARMS FIELD DAY

An excellent opportunity for practical, hands-on learning about native grasses and grassland restoration. Participants will learn from expert instructors, be immersed in a wide variety of grassland projects, and enjoy networking with a diverse group of people who share a common interest in California grasslands. For more information: www.cnga.org/workshop_signup.html

APRIL 17-23 IS CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT WEEK!

Promoting the conservation, restoration, and appreciation of California's native plants. For more information, visit: www.cnps.org



MAY IS WATERSHED AWARENESS MONTH!



CCRCD AT THE COLUSA FARM SHOW

The Colusa County Resource Conservation District is a regular participant at the Colusa Farm Show. This year's Farm Show was held February 1-3. Each year, CCRCD designs and staffs an informational booth at the show. CCRCD's booth this year featured information on the negative impacts of invasive weeds and the benefits of native plants in the landscape. The booth also featured information about the work that the CCRCD is doing in the Colusa Basin Watershed. We had a steady stream of visitors to our booth this year. Folks seemed most interested in our display of live native plants. We brought in cuttings of Toyon, Coyotebrush, Silver Bush Lupine and Manzanita. John Anderson from Hedgerow Farms generously donated flats of native grasses, lupine and Goldenrod to add to our display. RCD staff and Directors were on hand throughout the three-day event to answer questions and disseminate fact sheets, brochures and other informational materials.



On the first day of the Colusa Farm Show, CCRCD, along with Audubon California, facilitated a seminar titled: ***Farming For Wildlife: Opportunities and Incentives***. Speakers included Paul Buttner - California Rice Commission, Khara Strum - PRBO Conservation Science, Miles DaPrato - Audubon California Landowner Stewardship Program, Mike Wolder - US Fish & Wildlife Service, Tim Hermansen - Natural Resources Conservation Service, Joe Navarri - Ducks Unlimited, and Matt Hamman - US Fish & Wildlife Service. Buttner and Strum both spoke about the latest research and work that California rice farmers are implementing to improve habitat for migrating water fowl. DaPrato spoke about and showed examples of farm-edge habitat restoration projects being implemented locally. Wolder discussed trends in migrating goose populations and some of the associated crop depredation issues. Hermansen, Navarri and Hamman each discussed their agencies' available financial incentive opportunities.

The seminar outlined the opportunities available for agricultural producers to integrate wildlife-friendly practices into their farming systems as enhancements to their current operations. Such practices can aid in improving the overall health of the land through water quality improvements, soil quality enhancement and enriched biodiversity, while also providing much needed habitat for local wildlife populations. Financial incentives and technical assistance options to help facilitate these practices were also presented.

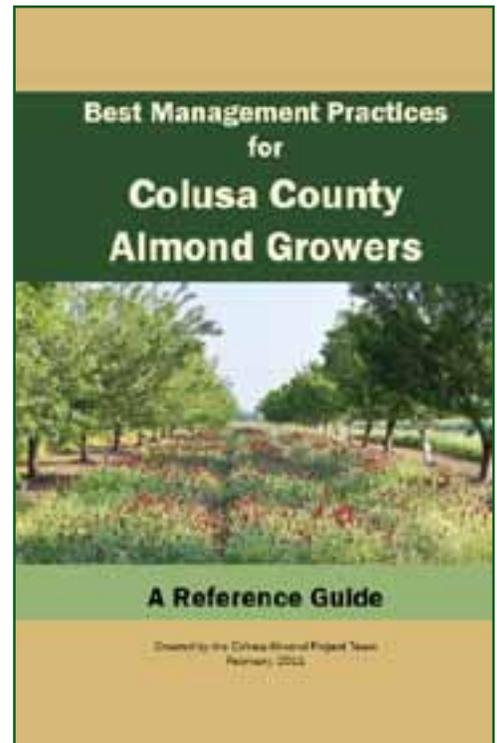
Despite chilly conditions, the seminar was well attended by a wide variety of interests, including mostly farmers, agency employees and university employees.



BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR COLUSA COUNTY ALMOND GROWERS

A Best Management Practices (BMP) manual for Colusa County almond growers will be available in late March/early April, 2011. This manual is being developed as part of the **Colusa Almond Project: Best Management Practices for reducing Sediment and Pesticides in Runoff from Colusa County Almond Orchards**. The Colusa Almond Project team consists of employees from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, the Colusa County Resource Conservation District, Audubon California - Landowner Stewardship Program, and the Colusa office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. 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.

For more information on the Colusa Almond Project, visit:
www.colusarc.org (click on our “projects” page)
www.caff.org/programs/colusaalmonds.shtml



A FEW OF CCRCDC'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 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.

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