

COLUSA COUNTY CONSERVATION

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WELCOME!

by Mary Fahey, Watershed Coordinator, CCRCD

Welcome to the first edition of the Colusa County Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) Newsletter. We are pleased to share with you the work we are doing here at the CCRCD.

RCDs come in many shapes and sizes. Here in rural Colusa County, our RCD staff consists of one District Manager, one Watershed Coordinator and one subcontracted Watershed Coordinator through U.C. Davis working on Bear Creek Watershed. With support from our Board of Directors and our county NRCS office, our small staff is able to make a big difference in our county by assisting local landowners with their natural resource issues.

CCRCD, along with RCD's across the nation, are doing great work to preserve and enhance the natural resources that our communities depend on to thrive. So, why is it that more often than not, when I tell someone where I work, the response is either "huh?", or just a blank stare back at me? It's truly perplexing, and a little frustrating. And, it's the reason for this newsletter. Since part of my job involves community outreach, I decided that a newsletter would be a good tool. I know the idea of an RCD newsletter is nothing new, but it's new here at the CCRCD, and I hope it will help spread RCD awareness in our county and beyond.

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All photos on this page by Jack Alderson, NRCS Colusa Field Office

ABOUT THE COLUSA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT (CCRCD)

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:
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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 insure 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, NRCS Colusa Field Office

COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Colusa County RCD was granted funding through the Department of Conservation's Watershed Coordinator Grant Program to hire a watershed coordinator whose main task is to complete a Management Plan for the Colusa Basin Watershed. The goal of the Management Plan is to improve the holistic health of the Colusa Basin Watershed by increasing Watershed knowledge, reducing invasive species, preserving open space and ag lands and promoting conservation practices that improve water quality.

The Colusa Basin Watershed spans the counties of Colusa, Glenn and Yolo. CCRCD is working in cooperation with the Glenn County RCD and the Yolo County RCD on this project. CCRCD has taken the lead role and the Glenn and Yolo County RCD Watershed Coordinators are assisting with outreach in their respective counties, as well as giving valuable input during the planning process. It is just this type of collaborative effort that makes planning on a watershed scale so unique and effective.

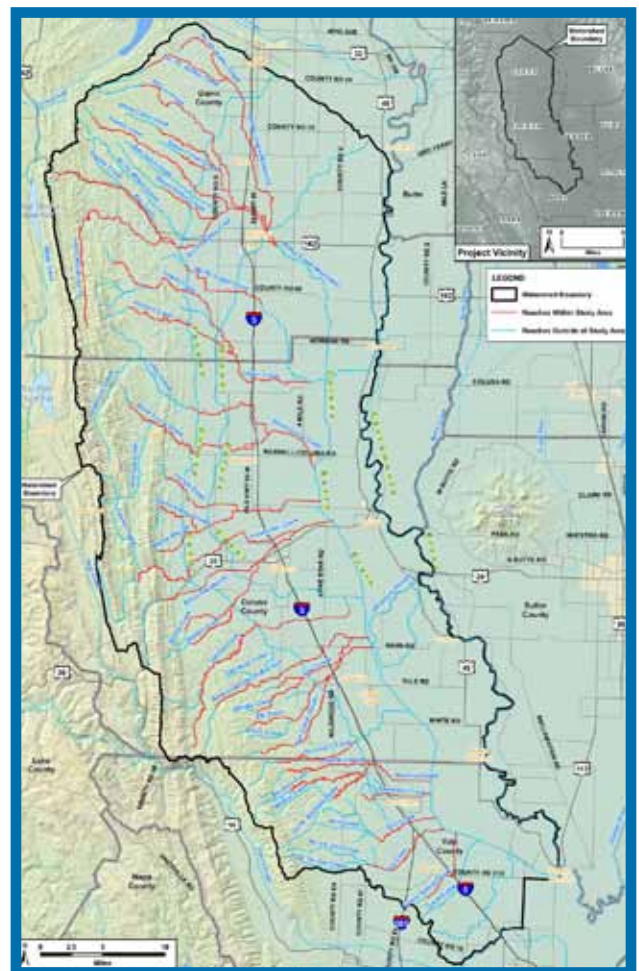
Work on the Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan began in March of 2010. Our first order of business was to form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Community Advisory Group (CAG), and to host a series of meetings to gain stakeholder input and support for the Management Plan.

Our kick-off meeting was held on April 21, 2010. The purpose of this meeting was to provide some basic information about the Colusa Basin Watershed and the watershed management planning process, answer questions, and obtain stakeholder input on issues of concern in the watershed. We had a great turnout at this first meeting, with a wide variety of interests represented in the audience. We also received very valuable feedback from meeting attendees.

The second stakeholder meeting was held on June 8, 2010. The meeting was an opportunity for stakeholders to give input on the Vision, Goals & Objectives of the Management Plan. Again, we had a great turnout at this meeting, and there was a great deal of discussion. In fact, there was so much discussion that we did not have time to address most of the goals and objectives during the meeting. We followed up with email feedback and from there we were able to solidify the language of the Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives of this Plan. Input from the CCRCD Board of Directors was also key in completing this task.

The next step in the process is to conduct personal interviews with key stakeholders in the watershed. These stakeholders will have expert knowledge on the issues that have been identified as concerns in the watershed. Interviews will be conducted throughout the month of September, and the valuable information will then be compiled and worked into the Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan.

This plan is locally-driven and stakeholder input is key to its success. If you are interested in participating, or if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact the CCRCD's Watershed Coordinator, Mary Fahey: phone: 530.458.2931, ext. 117, email: mary.fahey@ca.usda.gov



Colusa Basin Watershed

THE IMPACTS OF INVASIVE PLANTS IN OUR WATERSHED

According to the California Invasive Plant Council, invasive weeds cost California \$82 Million each year just for control efforts, monitoring and outreach. Estimates of actual impacts of invasive weeds reach into the billions of dollars. Invasive weeds are defined as non-native plants that are able to grow unassisted in our natural areas and have a negative impact on these places by causing economic harm, environmental harm or harm to human health. In California, invasive weeds interfere with ranching, farming, recreation, and habitat conservation. The effects on our natural resources include: increased wildfire potential, reduced water resources, accelerated erosion and flooding, threats to wildlife habitat, reduction of desirable native vegetation, and degraded range and crop land.

There are several ways that invasive weeds are introduced and spread. Seed from invasive weeds can travel via wind, water, vehicles, clothing, and animal activity. Plants and seeds can travel across states and countries on automobiles, planes, trains and ships. Sometimes, invasive species are introduced purposefully and then they spread accidentally. An example would be a homeowner who unknowingly plants an invasive weed in their landscape. From that one plant, an invasion can begin through seed dispersion and/or underground shoots. Invasive weeds are able to thrive because they usually have no natural predators, they are very adaptable to new environments, and they grow and spread aggressively, outcompeting native species.

In the Colusa Basin Watershed, which spans the counties of Colusa, Glenn and Yolo, several invasive species have taken root. Of particular concern are the following: Giant Reed (Arundo), Tamarisk, Perennial Pepperweed, Yellow Starthistle, Barbed Goat Grass, Tree of Heaven and Purple Starthistle. As part of the Colusa County RCD's dedication to watershed health, controlling the spread of invasive weeds is one of our goals.

CONTINUED - SEE "INVASIVE WEEDS" ON PG. 5

TWO COMMON INVASIVE PLANTS IN THE COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED



Arundo donax, Giant Reed

- Displaces native plants and wildlife
- Reduces habitat and food supply for wildlife
- Uses a great deal of groundwater
 - Obstructs stream flows
 - Fire hazard
- Can promote bank erosion



Tamarisk, Saltcedar

- Grows aggressively along streams
- Chokes waterways, causing flood issues
- 1 plant can use up to 200 gal. of water/day
 - Very difficult to control
 - Spreads by seed and roots

FARM & RANCH CLEANUP PROJECTS

The Colusa County RCD has been working to clean up two illegal dump sites in Colusa County this year. CCRCD received a grant from the California Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) for their Farm and Ranch Solid Waste Cleanup and Abatement Program. The CCRCD identified two sites in the County that were eligible for cleanup.

Work on the first site, located in Arbuckle, has been completed. A large pile of illegally dumped waste was cleaned up, along with other illegally dumped items that were scattered throughout a creek bed. To deter further dumping at this site, gates were installed and “No Dumping” signs were put in place.

CCRCD is currently working with contractors to arrange cleanup of a second site located near Colusa. Once this site is cleaned up, “No Dumping” signs will be installed and the CCRCD will be working with a local high school class to plant a vegetative border consisting of native plants which will prevent access from vehicles and deter further dumping.

The Farm and Ranch Solid Waste Cleanup and Abatement Program requires that its grantees recycle as much of the illegally dumped waste as possible, and that recycled products are used whenever possible during project implementation. CCRCD has worked with local steel recycling companies and investigated wood chipping companies to help fulfill these requirements, and recycled materials are used when available.

If you know of a site in Colusa County that may be eligible for cleanup through this CalRecycle grant program, or if you have any questions, please call the Colusa County RCD at 530.458.2931 X3



Fence and “No Dumping” sign installed



Illegally dumped items at a Farm & Ranch Cleanup site



After Cleanup

INVASIVE WEEDS *continued*

The first and best line of defense is to learn to identify these invaders so you can monitor for them and remove them immediately. Other strategies to control the spread of invasive weeds include being wary of what you plant in your landscape - never plant an invasive plant, working to restore native species populations, and sharing your knowledge of invasive weeds with family, friends, neighbors and local schools.

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

WILDFLOWERS IN OUR COUNTY

Colusa County hosts an amazing array of beautiful wildflowers, but little information is available for folks who are interested in getting out and viewing these natural wonders. During the Spring of 2010, Jack Alderson in our NRCS office came up with the idea of adding a local wildflower section to the CCRCD website. Little did he know that his bright idea would result in a tremendous amount of volunteer hours on his part dedicated to the project. Every weekend for 13 weeks, Jack travelled from his home in Butte County to Colusa County to photograph wildflowers and write about his observations for our website. Not surprisingly, the Wildflower section has been a huge hit. We are very grateful for Jack's selfless dedication to the people and landscape of our County.



Seep monkey flower, Mimulus guttatus
Photograph by Jack Alderson
NRCS, Colusa Field Office

If you are interested in learning about Colusa County's wildflower population, and seeing some amazing photographs, please take a look at the Wildflower section of the CCRCD's website:

www.colusarc.org, click on "projects", then click on "Colusa County Wildflowers"

A FEW OF CCRCD'S PROJECTS

COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

We are currently working to produce a locally-driven, user-friendly Management Plan for the Colusa Basin Watershed. See page 3 for more information on the Plan.

COLUSA ALMOND PROJECT

The Colusa County Resource Conservation District in conjunction with the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), and Audubon California's Landowners Stewardship Program is currently working with local almond growers on a demonstration project to reduce sediment and pesticides in runoff from their orchards.

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