

Conservation Almanac

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Fall 2011

Vol. XX No. 2

Large Wood Benefits River Life

Logjams, the piles of fallen trees, branches and other woody debris that accumulate along the Trinity River provide many benefits to the river and all creatures that live in or near it.

Large wood - logs, snags and root wads - trap smaller wood and organic debris moving downriver. Wood and other plant material provide nutrients and encourage growth of macro-invertebrates (organisms without spines, such as stoneflies, caddisflies, mayflies, beetles, worms and crayfish) plus many other life forms. These serve as food for fish, amphibians, reptiles and water birds, supporting and increasing biodiversity throughout the entire watershed.

Logjams and large wood also offer shaded hiding places for adult and juvenile fish and serve as habitat for many other animal species. Logjams help slow the flow, stabilize riverbanks and limit erosion, and by keeping sediment in place improve water quality. Logjams create river channel diversity by altering water currents and forming pools, side channels and islands. Before Trinity and Lewiston dams were built, high flows in the Trinity conveyed and deposited logs and fallen trees along the river's banks and bars where they were beneficial to all forms of life. Since the dams, the velocity of lower flows has been insufficient to transport large wood.

Trinity River Restoration Program has been placing large wood along the river since 2006, and constructing logjams (see photos) since 2009 to recreate the kind of habitats and channel diversity that existed before the dams. *The TRRP will be hosting a free informational meeting on large wood and logjams in Weaverville on Thursday, October 20. Everyone is invited; refreshments and door prizes. See page 11 for the details.*



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Donna Rupp Joins District as Education Specialist

Donna Rupp, who first came to the District nearly a year ago on assignment as a Watershed Stewards Project member, has joined our staff as an education and outreach specialist.



As a WSP member, Donna was involved in a broad range of natural resources field work for the District as well as for our partner agencies. She also spent a good portion of her time planning and conducting classroom and outdoor education related to watershed conservation and the needs of salmon and other wildlife. Donna was instrumental in organizing the District's annual Summer Day Camp and Field Trips program conducted at the Young Family Ranch in Weaverville where her organizational skills stood out. Her educational background, writing skills and grasp of watershed and other resource issues are well-suited to her new post.



Donna graduated from Portland State University in 2010 with a Master's in Environmental Management after first earning and putting to work a degree in Communications. Her studies included wetland and riparian ecology. "The MEM program at PSU allows for individuals to pursue a course of study that links with a new or on-going community project," she explained. "I worked with a non-profit which was wrestling with a complicated stream and wetland restoration project. The land ownership ranged from homeowner associations to public lands to orphaned land parcels. I was able to track down lost paperwork, research historical conditions, collect data from the site, and then propose several restoration options. My project provided them with a stepping stone to be able to move on to the next phase of the restoration plan."

As a child, Donna spent days catching tadpoles and salamanders in the San Gabriel River in southern California. "I've always loved being in and around the water," she recounted. "Trinity County is an amazing place. There is so much natural beauty and everyone is very helpful," she said. "I'm really looking forward to enjoying all of the Autumn-in-theAlps activities in Weaverville."

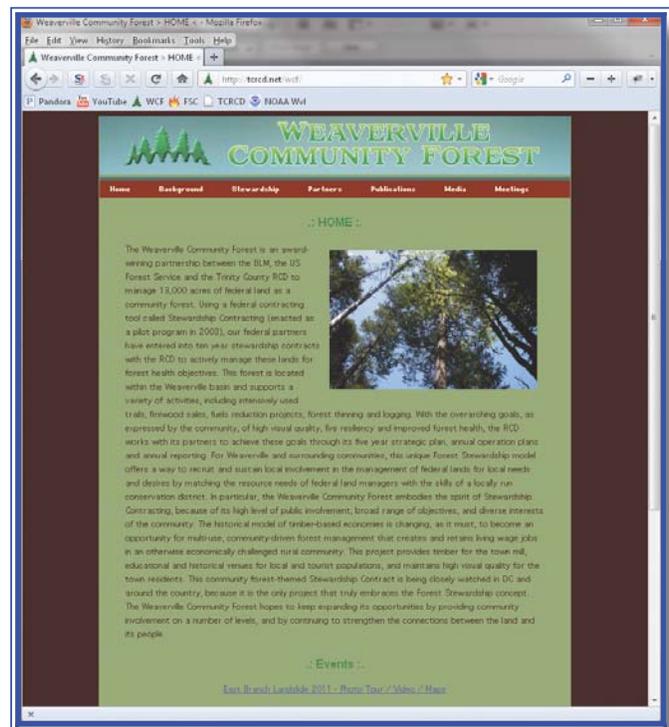
Donna will be sharing her enthusiasm about water and natural resources with the community at large and working to improve watershed health in Trinity County.

In her spare time Donna enjoys gardening, rafting, cooking and reading. This summer was her first year gardening in this northern California climate, but she was still able to take the prize for best homegrown tomato at Trinity Nursery's Tomato Tasting Day. "Next year I'll have to defend the title, so I'm already planning my strategy."



Updates & Additions to tcrcd.net

The Weaverville Community Forest has a new online presence at its redesigned website. With clear, easy to use navigation you can learn about the history and evolution of the Community Forest, find out about upcoming events, read up on current and past articles published about the Forest, view documents, maps, photos, and video, and connect with other Forest Stewardship programs. Visit us at <http://www.tcrcd.net/wcf>. Very soon we will be providing you with interactive online maps, enabling you and others to instantly share helpful information about the Community Forest and the Weaverville Basin Trail system. This will open up opportunities to share information about specific sites or routes, sightings, tips, or places in need of attention. We hope to make good use of selected social media to get the word out about upcoming events and obtain your input.



The Trinity County Fire Safe Council also has a new website that houses the 2010 Trinity County Community Wildfire Protection Plan and many other documents and publications, maps, spatial data, photos, videos about protecting homes from wildfire, and FSC meeting agendas and minutes. Go to <http://www.tcrcd.net/fsc>. Importantly, we will be using this new website plus social media to keep you informed about upcoming Fire Safe Council projects that could benefit you, your land and your neighborhood. We will be seeking your input, suggestions and feedback as we move forward to make Trinity County communities more fire safe.

TCRCD Receives Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator Grant for South Fork Trinity River

The California Department of Conservation (DoC) has awarded Trinity County RCD, in partnership with the Watershed Research & Training Center, one of its 2010 Statewide Watershed Coordinator grants for the South Fork Trinity River Watershed.

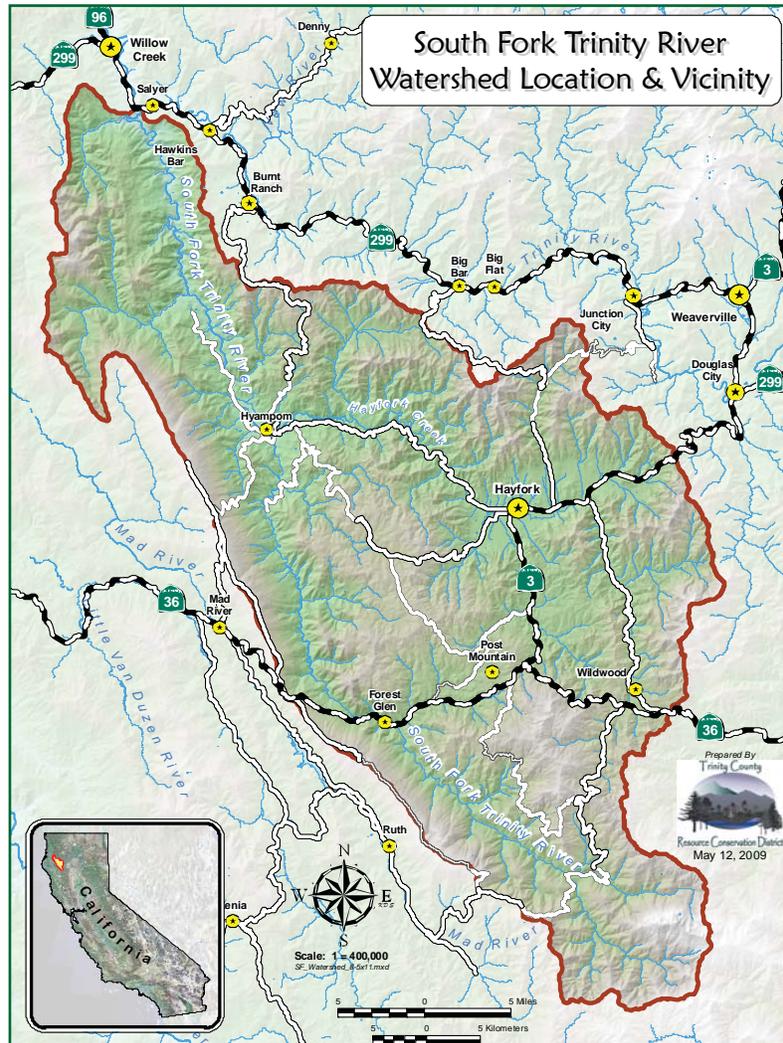
The South Fork Trinity River (SFTR) watershed coordinator's objectives are to identify and prioritize watershed improvement projects, enhance education and outreach regarding South Fork Trinity River restoration issues, help landowners and land managers address regulatory issues, obtain funding to implement on-the-ground watershed improvement projects, and to track improvements in water quality. The key staff for this SFTR project are Noreen Doyas, grant coordinator for the District and Josh Smith, Watershed Restoration Program Manager with the Watershed Research & Training Center in Hayfork.

The local proposal was chosen from among 116 proposals, totaling nearly \$26 million, submitted by special districts, local governments, and non-profits throughout the state. The number and caliber of competing proposals reflects the great need for watershed coordination in California and an increasing awareness that watershed-level strategies are among the most effective for managing resources. Just \$9.15 million was available for this round of grants - enough to accommodate only 41 of the 116 proposals, and will come from Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006.

Watershed coordinators have shown great successes in the management of water resources, especially in the improvement of impaired watersheds. A priority of this new DOC grant is to support watershed coordination where it has not done so before, and where projects are most needed to meet the interests of local communities by improving the watershed. The District currently provides watershed coordination for the Trinity River Watershed through a 2007 grant from DOC and with support from the Trinity River Restoration Program. TCRCD's Alex Cousins leads the District's Trinity River watershed coordination efforts.



Josh Smith with Indian Valley Summer Camp kids

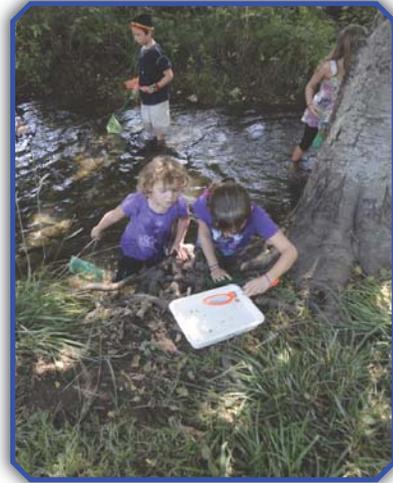


South Fork Trinity River Factsoids

- The South Fork Trinity River is the largest and longest undammed National Wild and Scenic River in California.
- SFTR drains 980 square miles and is 34% of the Trinity River Watershed.
- SFTR runs for 92 river miles from the headwaters in the Yolla Bolly Mountains to the confluence with the Trinity River near Salyer.
- The largest tributary to the SFTR is Hayfork Creek, making up 38% of the watershed.
- The highest point in the SFTR watershed is North Yolla Bolly Mtn at 7864 feet. Yolla Bolly (YOH luh boh lee) is derived from the Wintu yoola buli, meaning "snow mountain."
- The South Fork Trinity River watershed is included on California's Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list as water quality limited due to sediment.
- South Fork Mountain Ridge is the longest continuous mountain ridge in the continental US extending over 40 miles.
- SFTR lies in very remote topography and is one of the least developed tributaries of the Trinity River. The resulting pristine habitat is important for several endangered species and rare plants.

Weaverville Summer Day Camp 2011





Weaverville Community Forest Projects

Two projects are now underway within the Weaverville Community Forest that are designed to improve forest health and reduce the risk of a catastrophic wildfire near Weaverville.

In addition to lowering the risk of an extremely hot-burning and devastating wildfire, thinning overcrowded forest stands contributes substantially to the vigor and health of trees by reducing over-competition for water, nutrients, and available sunlight. Trees are better able to resist insects and disease when they are not stressed by over-competition for scant resources. Vigorous, healthy and resilient trees comprise a healthy forest and more sustainable habitat for wildlife of all types. Healthy forests capture rainfall, hold soil in place, limit erosion and make for a healthy watershed. Forests thinned by the purposeful removal of smaller trees and brush are more fireresilient; they hold a better chance of withstanding and recovering from wildfires.

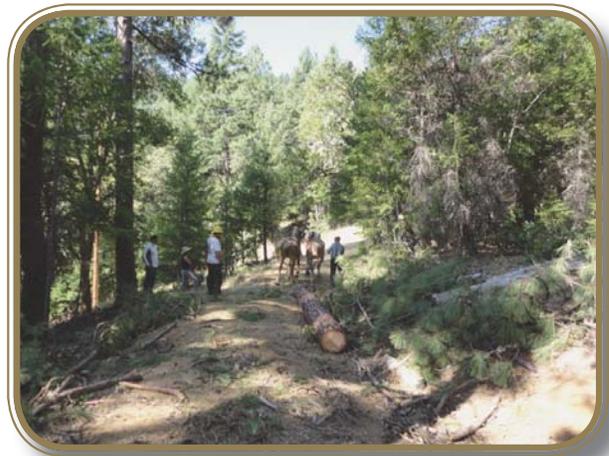
Smaller trees and tall brush growing under larger trees function as ladder fuel for fire to travel from the ground to the upper canopy of the forest. When this occurs, there is an increased chance a wildfire will wipe out entire stands, killing all of the trees in the area. By removing brush and smaller trees, there is less chance a fire could spread to the tops of the trees, the canopy, and become an extremely hot, stand-eradicating fire.

One project, just to the northeast of Weaverville along Musser Hill Road, is the first phase of the Browns Project, a forest health improvement and fuels reduction project occurring on US Forest Service land within the Weaverville Community Forest. Warner Enterprises, of Redding, is the operator, and is using a machine called a “feller-buncher” which cuts and gathers trees into piles. After these trees are removed, with some going to the local mill, the contractor will use other equipment to masticate brush and any remaining slash on the project area to increase the resilience of the thinned stands.

The second project is underway on the west side of Weaverville, between West Weaver Creek and Democrat Gulch Road. This is the Mining District Forest Health project and is taking place on BLM land within the Weaverville Community Forest. The project received its name because of an area of sensitive cultural resources there known as the Mining District. Modern equipment (including the feller-buncher) is prohibited from entering the area defined as the Mining District, as it would destroy the integrity of the site, so the Trinity County Resource Conservation District has turned to Jarrett Wilburn, from Southern Trinity, to thin that portion of the project area using a team of horses and a logger. This traditional approach to logging is expected to be considerably lighter on the land than mechanized equipment would be. This project is similar to the Browns Project in that the goal is to improve overall forest health and reduce the fuel hazards within the area. Warner Enterprises will help with this project and will use mechanized equipment to thin portions outside the sensitive resources zone.

These two projects, in combination with other efforts, are part of a wider “landscape approach” to caring for the forests near Weaverville and within the Trinity River watershed. These efforts serve as examples of community participation and are guided with consideration and input from the Weaverville Community Forest Steering Committee.

Horse Logging in the Weaverville Community Forest



What Comes Next?

The District wants to thank all of the members of the Trinity County Fire Safe Council, the volunteer fire departments and so many dozens of homeowners for a job well-done. The countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Update could not have been completed without everyone's help. That said, our work is not done. The CWPP is a keystone to build upon and the next step is to work with the County on two important public safety projects - the Safety Element of the General Plan and a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.



The District worked closely with the County on an application through the Disaster Recovery Initiative earlier this year. This Initiative was developed by the California Community Development Block Grant Program to help counties severely affected by the 2008 wildfires. Trinity County's application was successful.

The District will be responsible for coordinating the development of the Safety Element of the Trinity County General Plan. This will incorporate the county's existing Community Wildfire Protection Plan and will include a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan for the 16 communities with populations larger than 300 in Trinity County.

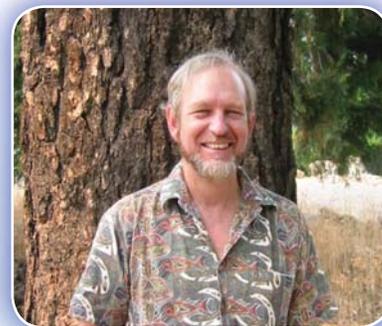
We recognize developing these two new "plans" will depend on a robust exchange of ideas. Towards that end, one of the approaches will be to provide an interactive web site and social networking portals for landowners to contribute information to our existing database developed for the CWPP. This digital access will provide absentee landowners (of which Trinity County has approximately 50%) the ability to participate in, and to augment, the information that is gathered through the more traditional use of Community Meetings. This will enhance the County's ability to inform and be educated regarding disaster preparedness for our distant and remote areas. All of this information will help in finalizing the Safety Element of Trinity County's General Plan.

This project will help the County fulfill federal disaster mitigation requirements, which call for all communities to prepare mitigation plans. The countywide plan will provide a list of activities designed to assist the County in reducing risk and preventing loss from future hazard events. In essence, hazard mitigation is any action that reduces the effects of future disasters. It has been demonstrated that hazard mitigation is most effective when based on an inclusive, comprehensive, long-term plan that is developed by communities and residents before a disaster actually occurs.



District Manager's Corner

You will be reading this as summer turns to fall, but even today as I sit at the computer to write the District Manager's Corner I can sense the transition. The morning's sun seems a little softer and chores at our place are shifting. While we're still eating fresh beans and tomatoes, we also have an eye towards winter. Yesterday we pressed early apples and the kitchen counter is cluttered with jars of pickles. The potato fork stares at me each day reminding me of one more task.



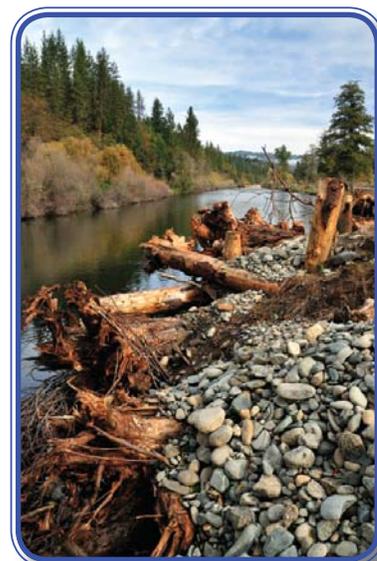
These are seasonal transitions of which most of us are familiar. I've been looking over the draft of this Conservation Almanac and it highlights transitions, too. The Trinity County Fair fits in here. It has always been a seasonal mile marker for me and the District. Our booth has become an RCD tradition – a way in which we can connect with old friends and meet new ones. This year we used it to highlight the Fair's home watershed – the South Fork of the Trinity River, because we are embarking on a review of this incredible assemblage of natural resources, what folks have been doing to maintain and improve it and what it might need in the future – how we can make sure that it is the best it can be for future generations. This issue of the Almanac introduces two people who will coordinate this effort. Noreen Doyas is no stranger to the South Fork as our photo archives show her out there in the 1990s. Josh Smith with the Watershed Research & Training Center represents the transition to a new generation of professionals dedicated to Trinity County's natural resources.

You also will begin to see some transitions in how the District is working for all of you. In this issue you can read about some of the technologies we're incorporating to reach out more effectively to communities – enhancing our website (www.tcrd.net) and its webpages for the Fire Safe Council and Weaverville Community Forest. This year we also added social media tools, like Facebook, to help publicize the annual Plant and Seed Exchange and Summer Day Camp at Young Family Ranch. You can look forward to a stronger online presence in the coming months. We'll be providing you with new tools like interactive apps and maps to help you explore, learn about and share your knowledge of the Weaver Basin Trail System.

Pat Frost

TRRP Wood Informational Meeting

The TRRP will be hosting a free informational meeting on large wood and logjams in Weaverville on Thursday October 20, from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. to explain and discuss the construction, placement and benefits of wood and man-made logjams for river and fisheries restoration. This important and educational event will be held in the banquet hall at Trinity Alps Golf Course. Topics will include the natural history of wood in river ecology, river management and restoration, wood and fisheries, river safety considerations and local perspectives. Several invited speakers from throughout the northwest and locally will offer insights on the use of large wood and logjams for river and fisheries restoration. Light refreshments provided; great door prizes too, but you must be present to win. Questions? Call (530)623-1800.



Trinity County



Resource Conservation District

Trinity County Resource Conservation District
P.O. Box 1450
Weaverville, CA 96093



Established 1956

District Board Meetings

Third Wednesday
5:30 PM
Open to the Public

TCRCD Office

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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 whose board of directors volunteer their time.

The TCRCD Vision

TCRCD 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.

The TCRCD Mission

To assist people in protecting, managing, conserving and restoring the natural resources of Trinity County through information, education, technical assistance and project implementation programs.

**TCRCD Board of Directors are
Mike Rourke, Rose Owens, Patrick Truman,
Colleen O'Sullivan, and Greg Lowden.**

The RCD is landowners assisting landowners with conservation work. The RCD can guide the private landowner in dealings with state and federal agencies. The RCD provides information on the following topics:

- **Forest Land Productivity**
- **Watershed Improvement**
- **Water Supply and Storage**
- **Educational Programs**
- **Erosion/Sediment Control**
- **Wildlife Habitat**
- **Soil and Plant Types**
- **Fuels Reduction**

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