

2015 Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update (CWPP)

Wildfire continues to be the number one hazardous threat to Trinity County. Respondents to a survey conducted for the 2015 Trinity County Hazard Mitigation Plan ranked the threat of Wildfire 3.89 out of maximum score of 4, the highest perceived threat, and outranking other threats such as drought, major road closures and flood.

To aid in prioritizing fire prevention projects and providing recommendations to help prevent wildfire, the RCD is proud to be completing the 2015 Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update (CWPP). Starting in the spring of 2015 with funding provided by the CalFire State Responsibility Area Fire Prevention Fund, Fire Prevention Grant Program, the RCD started the process of updating the 2010 CWPP by partnering with the Watershed Center and consulting with the Trinity County Fire Safe Council (FSC). Made up of representatives from local agencies such as the USFS, BLM, and CalFire, the Trinity County FSC served as an advisory board for the CWPP update. With direction from the FSC and following the 2010 update model, the RCD met with local agencies and went out into the community to seek input on the plan with meetings held in Big Bar, Douglas City, Lewiston, Weaverville, Junction City, Trinity Center, Zenia, Mad River, Hayfork, Hyampom, Post Mountain, and Willow Creek.

At the community meetings, maps from the 2010 CWPP were presented and the public was invited to “mark up” and identify new fuels reduction projects and infrastructure improvements such as community water sources. Once completed, new maps with the updated information were created for the 2015 update.

Based on information gathered from the community meetings, FSC and agency input and updated planning documents such as the Trinity County Hazard Mitigation Plan and General Plan Safety Element, the following recommendations were presented in the 2015 CWPP update.

Prescribed Fire- Controlled burning has become an important tool in Trinity County over the last five years. Fuel accumulations, species composition changes, and loss of important wildlife habitat resulting from over 100 years of fire suppression have left much of Trinity County at a higher risk of loss from catastrophic wildfire. Prescribed burning addresses and minimizes the impacts of fire exclusion. Professionally planned and implemented during appropriate weather conditions, prescribed burns are an effective and appropriate fuels reduction/restoration treatment for many areas of Trinity County.

Safety Element of General Plan- Wildfire and Structures were addressed in this County plan and this CWPP reinforces the following recommendations:

- Fire Hazard Planning be reviewed and conducted by the Trinity County Fire Safe Council and Trinity County Chiefs Association.
- The Safety Element requires cooperation with CalFire in the development of policies regarding wildfire and review of the CWPP.
- Use of Local Area Advisors to coordinate with Agencies
- Support a Transportation Network Critical to Public Safety

Hazard Mitigation Plan- Table 4.2 Trinity County Mitigation Actions of the Hazard Mitigation Plan needs to be implemented. Wildfire specific actions include the following:

- Centralized GIS mapping of water sources for firefighting, structure location, bridges, and all County infrastructure and services necessary for emergency response.
- Improve watershed and forest health through actions to reduce illegal water diversions, fire hazards and unsustainable agricultural practices.

Fire Borrowing- With more than 8.5 million acres burned nationwide during the 2015 fire season it proved to be disastrous in terms of the loss of firefighter lives, homes and structures, and natural resources. Unfortunately, it was also disastrous with regards to the budgets of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service (Forest Service) transferred an additional \$250 million of funding from non-fire accounts to pay for firefighting through the end of the Fiscal Year. By 2025, the agency conservatively forecasts that it will spend two-thirds of its budget on wildfires. Similarly, in the U.S. Department of the Interior (Interior), the growing costs of wildfire preparedness and suppression now account for 76 percent of the wildfire management program budget, and are reducing funding available for fuels management and restoration activities by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In June 2016 the Trinity County Board of Supervisors sent a letter to U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell with two actions which could help solve the fire borrowing actions. First, Congress must allow the firefighting spending to be scored

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2015 Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update cont.

as an adjustment to discretionary spending caps in bad fire seasons, in keeping with the treatment of other Federal disaster response activities, instead of transferring resources from non-fire programs. Second, Congress must do this in a way that does not harm the agencies' ability to invest in fuels management and forest and rangeland restoration to make these lands less vulnerable and more resilient to catastrophic wildfire.

Build Local Capacity- Increase local capacity for integrated forest and wildfire management. Federal and State agencies need to work with local organizations to increase the capacity to reduce hazardous fuels.

- Long term service contracts with Federal and State agencies for fuels reduction that supports the development of a skilled workforce.
- Contracting rules that allow for the local agencies to participate in wildfire suppression activities without penalizing project work.

Trinity County Collaborative Group (TCCG)- Support the Trinity County Collaborative Group's efforts to serve as an inclusive and successful natural resources, land management and economic development advisory group that supports safe and vibrant communities, thriving economies, and ecological resilience, through sustainable resource use and stewardship practices. TCCG projects include the Roads and Plantations Pilot Project, and the Joint Chiefs Program, a 3-year program of work with special funding. "Joint Chiefs" projects include post-fire hazard reduction, several "Fire-Resilient Community" projects that blend community protection, ecological restoration, and all-lands strategies.

Even though the 2015 CWPP update is complete with new recommendations, the CWPP is a "living document" and will be updated with new projects, infrastructure improvements and policy recommendations.



The November 2013 Five Cent Gulch prescribed burn (gold) was a highly effective tool in controlling the 2014 Oregon Fire.

2015 Fires, Image: NASA MODIS Rapid Response Team



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Monitoring Post-Burn Revegetation in Weaverville Community Forest

In early December 2016, members of the Weaverville Community Forest steering committee met with US Forest Service Forester Randi Paris to monitor the trees planted in the salvage area of the 2014 Oregon Fire.

This particular area of the fire is in the McKenzie Gulch drainage and located within the boundaries of the Weaverville Community Forest. The salvage took place after the fire in 2014 and early 2015. The salvage area was replanted in the fall of 2015.

The USFS planted mostly Ponderosa Pine with some Douglas Fir and Cedar inter-mixed. For this project area, trees were planted in clusters of three, with 50 clusters per acre, which is less dense than typical prescriptions of between 200 and 300 trees per acre.

Based on observations by the group, not a scientific survey, it appears that about 40-50% of the trees have survived. Paris suggested that tree mortality could be due to poor soils, the continuing drought and failure to use as many micro-sites as possible. Micro-sites are small areas shaded by existing cover

such as downed logs or brush, which offer the young trees some protection from the scorching summer heat.

The areas where the roads were “ripped” after the salvage sale and then replanted had nearly a 100% survival rate. This could be due to a combination of factors such as more organic materials, better soils, and loosening of the soil which allows roots a better chance to get established.

“If this project area were to be planted again, more of the micro-sites would be planted and soil amendments would also be added,” said Paris.

Bob Morris, a member of the WCF steering committee, expressed concern over putting conifers back in the path of wildfire inside the wildland urban interface, and inter-planting conifers within surviving oak stands.

The WCF steering committee and the TCRCD are exploring options to hold a volunteer planting day in the McKenzie Gulch drainage in the fall of 2017. If you are interested in participating, please contact the TCRCD at 623-6004.



USFS Forester Randi Paris surveying revegetation at McKenzie Gulch.



Tree planted in “ripped” soil.

Revegetation at Highway 3 Slate Creek Slide Site

By Ian Erickson, TCRCD Project Coordinator

Located about ten miles north of Weaverville on state Highway 3, the need for the Slate Creek revegetation project arose when a large section of roadway collapsed in early 2016, sending a massive debris flow down slope and into the creek.

The first thing I noticed while walking the banks of Slate Creek was the large number of Pacific Yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) growing along the bank. A short-statured, extremely slow-growing conifer, the Pacific yew is characterized by its thin, burgundy bark and bright red fruits, called arils, that emerge in the fall. It is somewhat rare to find this tree growing within the interior portions of Pacific Northwest forests – and even more unusual to have it growing almost immediately adjacent to a restoration site.

As part of the emergency repair, CalTrans removed the debris and re-contoured the stream bed, leaving the banks devoid of vegetation. CalTrans has an agreement with the Trinity County Resource Conservation District to perform the revegetation work associated with replacing or enhancing the functions and values of the aquatic resources affected by the slide.

In addition to the Pacific yew growing at the site, Slate Creek is dominated by Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), with black-fruit dogwood (*Cornus sessilis*) and Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) rounding out the understory. Replanting with white alder was a priority, both because of its value as an early successional riparian tree species, and because of its high population density both upstream and downstream of the project

site. Because it fixes nitrogen, white alder will also help improve the nutrient deficient soils and gravels that currently comprise the banks of Slate Creek.

In addition to white alder, the riparian planting also included black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) and several willow species, which were planted from pole-cuttings. Pole-cuttings are sections of live wood - usually branches or sprouts - taken from healthy, vigorously growing plants, and installed directly into the soil or substrate. Only certain species of trees will grow using this method (most notably willow), and it requires a very shallow water table. As such, pole-cuttings are often used with success in wetlands and stream restoration projects.

The next phase of the Slate Creek project will include an upland planting, comprised of native plants adapted to the Klamath mountain ecoregion, and selected for their suitability to certain characteristics of the site, such as slope, aspect, and soil-type. The upland planting will require an irrigation system to supply water during the dry months while the plants are getting established – usually 1-3 years, but sometimes more. The plantings will also likely receive a soil amendment and protection from deer and other opportunistic herbivores, to ensure the highest possible survival rate.

The Trinity County Resource Conservation District will be maintaining and monitoring the Slate Creek restoration project for the next five years. As we observe and steward the site, we will constantly be looking for opportunities to improve our methods, strategies, and best practices for ecological restoration not only for Slate Creek, but all future revegetation and restoration projects.



Slate Creek site in December.

Revegetation, cont.



Large Pacific Yew tree.



Arils – fruit of Pacific Yew.



Slate Creek site ready for revegetation.



Trinity River Watershed Council Expands and Seeks Input

The Trinity River Watershed Council is a group of concerned citizens representing agencies and other groups who have an interest in the health of the Trinity River Watershed. Over the past two decades the TRWC has focused on watershed issues around the mainstem Trinity River, from Lewiston to Helena. With help from the US Bureau of Reclamation, the Council is expanding its scope to get input on projects that are important to all areas of the Trinity River Watershed – from the headwaters in the North Lake down to the confluence at Weitchpec.

The mission of the TRWC is: To protect, enhance, restore and revitalize the watershed through collaborative efforts that leverage external resources, work toward common goals, educate and engage community stakeholders, address natural resource issues, and support healthy ecosystems for future generations.

The goal for expanding the scope of the TRWC is to develop project concepts that will benefit the health of the watershed through improved water quality and quantity, ecological and economic resilience. While the TRWC itself does not apply for funding to put projects on the ground, it supports members of the council who do so on behalf of their organizations.



Healthy forests = healthy watersheds.

Coordinated by the Trinity County Resource Conservation District, the purpose of the TRWC is to provide a centralized, non-regulatory entity where people representing varied interests in the watershed can communicate and share their visions to promote and facilitate sustainable use of water resources in the watershed, recognizing that a healthy watershed is the foundation for a healthy community. Watershed councils work across jurisdictional boundaries and across agency mandates to look at the watershed more holistically.



Hayfork Creek along Hyampom Road.

Watershed Council Expands, cont.

Over the past several years, the Trinity River Watershed Council has focused on improvements to salmon habitat, restoration of riparian areas, and fish passage improvements; as well as programs that target noxious weed control, water quality, and outdoor education. With this expanded scope, the focus can include other areas important to all residents of the watershed, such as recreation, tourism, water supply, agriculture, etc.

Participation from neighborhood associations, trade groups, utilities, civic organizations, ag related groups, or any group that has an interest is welcomed. The watershed coordinator can attend your existing meetings, or representatives from your groups are welcome to attend the TRWC meeting. If you know of an upcoming community event where information in the TRWC could be distributed, please see contact information below.



Spawning salmon.

Individuals and existing groups are encouraged to participate. Current active members include representatives from:

- Trinity County Resource Conservation District
- US Forest Service
- Yurok Tribe
- Hoopa Tribe
- Trinity River Restoration Program
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Watershed Research and Training Center
- 5 Counties Salmonid Conservation Program

The next Watershed Council meeting is scheduled for April at the TCRCD conference room in Weaverville, please check our website for date and time (www.tcrcd.net). Contact Donna at the TCRCD, 623-6004, for more information or to schedule a meeting with your group.



South Fork Trinity River.

Funds Available for Forest Management

Funds for forest management planning, fish and wildlife habitat improvement, tree planting, thin and release, and erosion control projects are now available through the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP), from CalFire.

The CFIP can provide eligible landowners with technical and financial assistance for planning, reforestation and resource management investments that improve the quality and value of forestland. Under current state law, CFIP can help with rebuilding forest, soil, water, fish and wildlife resources to meet our future needs for a healthy environment and productive forest and woodlands. This is a non-regulatory and voluntary program.

The program scope includes the improvement of all forest resources including fish and wildlife habitat, and soil and water quality. Cost-share assistance is provided to private and public ownerships containing 20 to 5,000 acres of forest land. Landowners who own less than 20 acres may qualify if they submit a joint application with neighboring landowners and the combined acreage is a minimum of 20 acres of forestland.

This cost-share program may grant up to 75% of the cost of your project, with 90% cost share rates available on lands substantially damaged by fire, insects and disease within ten years prior to the execution of a contract.

Cost-shared activities include management planning, site preparation, tree purchase and planting, timber stand improvement, fish and wildlife habitat improvement, and land conservation practices.

The minimum project size for timber-related practices is five acres. There is no minimum acreage limit for land conservation or habitat improvement projects. Any work required under the Forest Practices Act is not eligible for CFIP funding.

There are zoning requirements and landowners must work with a Registered Professional Forester. The webpage for this program is located at: http://calfire.ca.gov/resource_mgt/resource_mgt_forestryassistance_cfip.

For more information, contact your CalFire Unit Forester or the unit's Forestry Assistance Specialist (FAS), or a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) for assistance in developing your application package. The CalFire Unit Forester for Trinity East is Brook Darley (530) 224-1420, 6105 Airport Road, Redding, CA 96002; and for Trinity West is James Robbins (916) 224-8761, 118 Fortuna Blvd, Fortuna, CA 95540.



Blooming dogwood in a thinned forest.



Volunteers Needed at the 9th Annual Trinity County

Plant and Seed Exchange

FREE Community Event

**Bring Plants, Seeds, and Starts
to Share, Trade, or Give Away**



If you're new to gardening, you don't have to bring anything. In the years to come, we hope you'll pay it forward. Take what you like, but keep the community in mind.

Volunteers needed. You can work in the craft shed with children, help set up before opening in the morning, help put away after 3 pm, or help keep areas stocked during the event.

Save the Date

Saturday, April 22

11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Young Family Ranch, 260 Oregon St., Weaverville



Contact David at the TCRCD to schedule your volunteer time slot: 623-6004

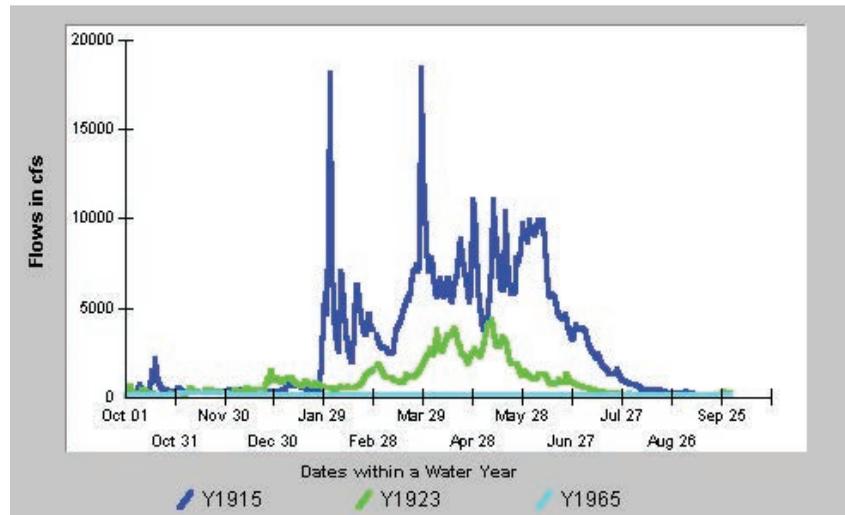
Sponsored by the Young Family Ranch, a community trust and agricultural property, the University of California Cooperative Extension, and the Trinity County Resource Conservation District.



Environmental Restoration Flows: Maintaining a Dynamic River

A healthy river is a dynamic river; it changes with the seasons and fluctuates according to precipitation runoff. Water flow changes regulate the physical processes that provide suitable habitat for fish and other species. After the construction of the Trinity Division of the Central Valley Project in the 1960s, 80% of Trinity River water was diverted to the Central Valley for agricultural purposes. The natural processes of a healthy river were disrupted by decades of water diversions, which dramatically reduced the Trinity's ability to support the life cycles of salmon, steelhead, and other native species that depend on the habitat of a healthy river.

Environmental restoration flows are one method used by the Trinity River Restoration Program (Program) to restore the natural processes that were present before the construction of the Trinity and Lewiston dams. The Program was established after extensive studies on the Trinity River, which led to the signing of the 2000 Record of Decision (ROD) to restore salmon populations by encouraging natural river processes.



Trinity River flows at Lewiston before and after dam construction.

It is simple to state that a healthy river needs variable flows, but it requires vast amounts of scientific data to model environmental flows that can meet ecological needs given a fixed water budget. The water budget for the Trinity River Restoration Program is determined by the California Department of Water Resources and is calculated beginning on October 1 of the previous calendar year and ends on September 30. Trinity River restoration flow volumes are based on the amount of water that flows into Trinity and Lewiston Lakes.

The chart below shows how much water can be released, according to water year type:

Water Year Type	Restoration Release ⁱ Water Volume (acre-feet)	Probability ⁱⁱ of Occurrence	Inflow to Trinity and Lewiston Reservoirs (acre-feet)
Extremely Wet	815,000	12% in any given year	>2,000,000
Wet	701,000	28% in any given year	1,350,000-2,000,000
Normal	647,000	20% in any given year	1,025,000-1,350,000
Dry	453,000	28% in any given year	650,000-1,025,000
Critically Dry	369,000	12% in any given year	<650,000

ⁱ Source: US Fish and Wildlife Service; Hoopa Valley Tribe. 1999. Trinity River Flow Evaluation Final Report. Department of Interior.

ⁱⁱ Probability of occurrence based on data from 1912 to 1994.

One acre-feet of water equals the volume of water needed to cover one acre of ground to a depth of one foot; and is equivalent to 325,851 U.S. gallons.

Restoration Flows, cont.

There are five categories of water budget, or “water years,” that the Program operates under, ranging from Critically Dry to Extremely Wet. Each water year type has a volume of water available for restoration flows. Water year type is forecasted by the California Department of Water Resources based on current snowpack and meteorological modeling.

On average, approximately half of the water that flows into the lakes are available to be used for restoration flows. The other half is diverted from Trinity River to the Central Valley, first for electrical power generation and then for agricultural and municipal purposes. Once the water year type is determined, the Program makes a recommendation to the Regional Directors of both the Bureau of Reclamation and the

US Fish and Wildlife Services. When the Regional Directors approve a restoration flow schedule, the Secretary of the Interior signs the restoration schedule and the Bureau of Reclamation is tasked with implementing the flow schedule.

River restoration flows recommended by the Program are designed to improve ecological integrity by meeting specific management objectives aimed at improving salmon habitat. Priorities change based on intake; in dry years, critical objectives are given priority, such as maintaining minimal temperatures for habitat; in wet years, the objectives expand to include sediment removal for fish habitat. Similar priority objectives are adjusted for riparian vegetation, sediment transport, and habitat in wet and dry years.

What is a “water year”?

A water year begins in October and runs through September. A forecast is made around April 1st each year - based on a combination of snow pack measurements and modeling of historic conditions using statistical and hydrological methods.



Critically dry



Extremely wet



The spring time water releases are just a fraction of natural flows once found in the Trinity River. The limited water available in any given year is used in the most efficient way to benefit salmon and steelhead, other aquatic species, and riparian plants.

Trinity County



Resource Conservation District

Established 1956

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



District Board Meetings

Third Wednesday
5:30 PM
Open to the Public

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.

TCRCD Office

30 Horseshoe Lane
PO Box 1450
Weaverville, CA 96093

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.

Telephone

(530) 623-6004
FAX 623-6006

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.

E-mail: info@tcrd.net

Internet: www.tcrd.net

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

This issue of the *Conservation Almanac* is funded in part by grants from the Trinity River Restoration Program, Young Family Ranch Trust, California Fire Safe Council, US Forest Service and the Trinity County Resource Advisory Council.

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