NAPA COUNTY

RCD

Resource Conservation District

2008

Annual Report

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(as of June 30, 2008)

(L-R: Paul, Leigh, Anna, Astrid, Steph, Dave, Jonathan, Frances, Bob; not pictured: Kathleen, Chad, Lara)

Inside this Report

Message from the District

The *Annual Report* is an opportunity to look back over the past fiscal year to acknowledge accomplishments and to measure progress toward meeting the District's goals. It helps us to assess our strengths and to improve the delivery of our conservation assistance to the people and resources that we serve. It further provides a history and accounting of our many partners and gives tribute to the conservation work that a community can accomplished through collaboration and trusting relationships that have been built and sustained over decades.

The District strives to provide a balanced approach to resource conservation by integrating voluntary, cooperative and scientifically sound methods to ensure that the watersheds within the District are sustained, conserved, restored and protected within a landscape of productive agriculture, growing cities, and wild lands. Striving for this balance consistently provides many opportunities and many challenges. 2007-2008 was no different is this regard, and as a result many rewarding, innovative, and constructive projects were undertaken and accomplished by the District and its partners this year.

Thinking back over the past year, several projects and accomplishments demonstrate the District's conservation goals of education, assessment, planning and implementation. The District and its partners have reason to be proud of the work accomplished, and this annual report highlights just some of the accomplishments achieved.

Among the accomplishments identified in this report are the removal of a migratory fish migration barrier on Dry Creek, which brought together several cooperators and returned over 16 miles of stream habitat to threatened steelhead trout, and the first Napa County Watershed Symposium, which brought dozens of organizations and over 150 interested community members together at COPIA to learn about and discuss the past, present and future of Napa County's watersheds. Also identified is completion of seven years of field work related to assessing fish habitat throughout the Napa River watershed, compilation of the most comprehensive and accurate description of fish migration passage sites ever compiled for the Napa River watershed, initiation of Earth Day Creek Clean-up events, and progress made toward completing restoration plans for several priority projects.

Behind these projects and others highlighted in this report are many talented and dedicated staff, volunteers, project partners, and grantors. The District thanks all project contributors for the skills and energy they have dedicated to conservation in Napa County and looks forward to sustaining and expanding conservation partnerships in the years to come.

Clint Pridmore
Board President

Leigh Sharp
District Manager

Our Mission

The Napa County Resource Conservation District (District) is a local non-regulatory organization whose mission is to promote responsible watershed management through voluntary community stewardship and technical assistance. Since 1945, the District has facilitated natural resource conservation through community involvement, education, technical expertise and scientific research. The District is committed to utilizing voluntary, cooperative and scientifically sound methods to ensure that the watersheds within the District are sustained, conserved, restored and protected within a landscape of productive agriculture, growing cities, and wild lands.

As a "Special District," we are organized to support natural resource management solutions through partnerships with individuals, organizations and agencies. Our function is to "make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local community for conservation of soil, water and related natural resources."

We work to achieve our mission through:

- Promoting watershed-based land stewardship of natural resources
- Evaluating watershed conditions and functions
- Providing resource conservation planning services
- Implementing resource conservation practices and projects

Accomplishments

Engaging Youth in Watershed Stewardship

Helping next generation conservationists

For several decades the RCD has provided opportunites for students to gain conservation management experience through internships involving water quality monitoring, vineyard management assistance, data collection, field work, and resource education. Where opportunities exist, the RCD looks to match local students with opportunities in the watershed. In 2008, the RCD Board expanded support for local youth by initiating a scholarship fund for graduating high school and Jr. College students continuing in their pursuit of natural resource education.The initial award in 2008 was granted to a senior from **New Technology High School** who contributed over 50 hours of volunteer time to help with water quality monitoring, stream surveys, and salmon counts. The RCD scholarship will help this recipient attend Humboldt State University to study Environmental Engineering.

Protecting water quality

Over 1,500 youth and many adults learned about protecting water quality by reducing impacts from stormwater runoff. With funding from the **Napa County Stormwater Management Program**, RCD staff visited 30 classrooms to demonstrate the importance of reducing pollutants to our local waterways. We also worked with several dozen youth to stencil water quality protection messages on 150 stormdrains in the City of Napa. Hundreds more volunteers, youth and adults alike, took to cleaning local creeks on Earth Day and Coastal Clean-Up Day. These two events alone kept approximately 9 tons of garbage from being delivered to our local waterways.

Providing opportunities for restoration experience

Native plants, creek restoration, and kids provide a good mix in accomplishing the RCD goals of education and restoration. For the past several years RCD has partnered with various environmental education groups to provide elementary students with an opportuntiy to experience restoration first hand. This year several classes of students experienced first hand the time and energy it takes to monitor and maintain a restoration site after the initial restoration planting work is complete. Students calculated plant survival, removed weeds around young native plants, replaced plants that had not survived, and collected seeds to propogate for next years planting.



Helping the Community Generate Watershed Opportunites

Bringing people together to explore watersheds

The RCD has a long history of bringing people together to talk about and explore watersheds and our common interests in functioning watersheds. This year, in addition to working with tributary watershed groups, the RCD collaborated with the **Watershed Information Center & Conservancy (WICC) of Napa County** to host a watershed symposium. Over 150 people filled COPIA's auditorium to learn about the history of Napa County's three watersheds, share information about the work being done today to conserve and restore our watersheds, and hear from a panel of local professionals regarding the challenges that we face in the future. Feedback from attendees was extremely positive and people seem eager to hold this event again and to take advantage of opportunities to collaborate.

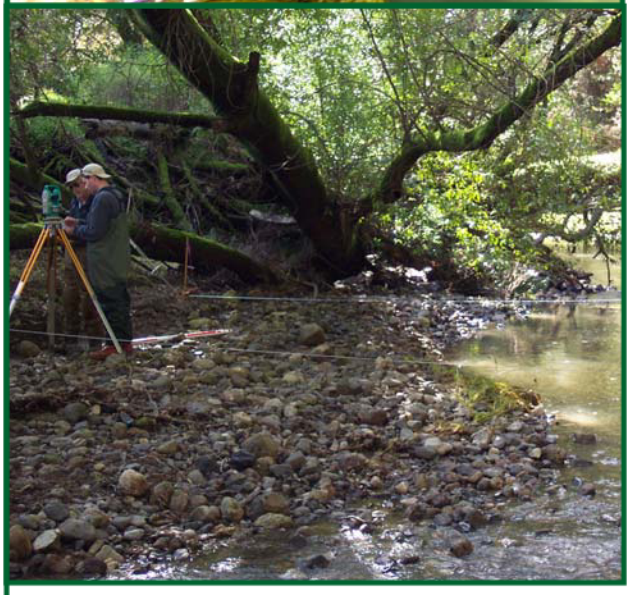
Providing bilingual training to vineyard workers

It's a well known fact that vineyard workers get things done in the field. They tend the vineyard and they tend the earth. **Napa Sustainable Winegrowing Group** (NSWG), facilitated by the RCD, continued to reach out to spanish speaking vineyard workers at it's 7th Annual Spanish Speaking Seminar. Vineyard workers learned about biodynamic farming practices that combine organic and sustainable vineyard management methods. Topics also included canopy management for pest control, cover crop management for erosion control, and modern methods for controlling mildew. NSWG also held several workshops for english speaking growers this year. It offered growers necessary continuing education credits through a series of lectures regarding weed management resistance and alternative controls, beneficial insects, water quality and spraying, chemical storage, respiratory protection, and sustainable practices for verterate control. With sustainable practices in mind, vineyard managers have options to improve the quality of their grapes, the health of their workers, and the condition of the resources.

Getting residential households involved in resource protection

Over 60 urban and rural residents learned how to perform a "self-assessment" of their environmental practices in and around their homes and received a free copy of **Laurel Marcus & Associates**' Home and Garden Audit book. RCD partnered with Lauel Marcus to coordinate these workshops for residents in the Napa River and Suisun Creek watersheds. Participants learned how they can contribute to resource protection by utilizing alternative gardening and housekeeping practices that minimize health, safety, and environmental risks associated with standard chemicals and cleaners.

Accomplishments



Conducting Local Assessments to Address Local and State Interests

Completing multi-year comprehensive assessment of stream channel conditions in the Napa River watershed

Since 2001, the RCD has been walking the mainstem Napa River and its tributaries conducting comprehensive assessments of stream channel and bank conditions, with an emphasis on the needs of Chinook salmon, steelhead, and other native fish species. In 2007, the RCD Biologists completed their field work and estimate that they waded approximately 30 miles of creek per season, per year. The resulting reports from this work provide the most comrehensive evaluation of the condition of local creeks, identifying areas of quality habitat and areas that would most benefit from restoration. Over the next several years, RCD staff will make the results of the assessments more broadly available and will work with interested land managers to implement projects that will improve the health of the river and its tributaries.

Helping the community address instream flows for farms, rural residents, and fish

In 2006, in anticipation of State policies related to stream flow and water rights, the RCD initiated a project to provide greater scientific understanding about the local relationships between stream flow, water use and fish habitat. 2007 was an active year for this project including stream gage installation, maintenance and monitoring, hydraulic and fisheries modeling, and community participation. Initial results from the project helped inform local comments regarding draft State policy and provided access to stream flow data so that local water management practictioners could make informed decisions regarding the timing of water withdrawals. Future work of this project will incorporate water demands from rural residents and the RCD will remain engaged in local efforts to improve the management of water resources while meeting local needs.

Producing the most comprehensive and accurate inventory of fish migration barriers in the Napa River watershed

Using RCD's extensive stream survey data, current and historic records, and field verification, the RCD has generated the most comprehensive and accurate description of fish passage barrier sites ever compiled for the Napa River basin. In total, 99 current fish passage obstructions were identified on streams known to support salmonids. Of these, nearly 1/3 were natural features and are generally not considered for modification or removal. The remaining 69 artifiical passage sites were assessed using Department of Fish and Game

protocol and prioritized for severity. RCD has submitted a grant request to the Coastal Conservancy to fully assess and develop specific plans to address the highest priority sites. If funded, planning work would begin in early 2009.

Monitoring threatened salmonid populations

The listing of the Napa River as "impaired" for sediment under the Federal Clean Water Act is largely based on long term declines in salmonid populations. However there is no quantitative data available for steelhead or salmon that would allow one to determine whether population levels are improving or continuing to decline over time. This, coupled with the fact that the Napa River has been identified as the most important watershed within the San Francisco Estuary for the protection and recovery of regional salmonid populations, led the RCD to initiate a salmon monitoring program in 2003 to assess Chinook abundance, distribution and spawning success in the Napa River. For the past six years the RCD has been conducting samon monitoring through spawner and snorkel surveys. The result of these monitoring efforts is that more quantitative information is available now regarding local salmonid populations than at any time in the past several decades, and the RCD continues to look for better and more accurate ways to monitor salmonid species. In the coming year, with support from the W**ildlife Conservation Commission**, the **Gasser Foundation**, and **Napa River Steelhead Unlimited**, the RCD will improve its monitoring efforts and be able to more accurately estimate the population of steelhead and salmon in the basin. This monitoring is essential to demonstrate that the community in Napa County is making progress toward meeting the requirements of the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Collaborating to Help Putah Creek Farmers protect water quality

Over the past serveral years, RCD has been collaborating with **Napa County Farm Bureau**, **Natural Resources Conservation Service**, the **Agricultural Commissioner**, **local officials**, and **farmers in the Putah Creek watershed** to protect and monitor water quality. The partners also work together to meet local and state interests in a manner that is cost effective. RCD provides technical assistance and conducts annual monitoring. The group has been quite effective at meeting its goals: a large percentage of farmers are involved in the program, monitoring data suggests that water quality standards are being met, and farmers are jointly covering the costs of the program, thereby making it cost effective and less burdensome on any individual farmer.

Accomplishments

Developing Voluntary Restoration Plans Using a Watershed Approach

Planning rural road improvements on private property to protect water quality

The RCD has been working with residents, land managers and other interested individuals in the Carneros Creek and Sulphur Creek watersheds for the past several years to develop and implement watershed management plans. Initial assessment and planning was completed in 2002 and several priority actions were identified, including improvement of rural roads to protect water quality. With a grant from the **State Water Board** and **Department of Fish and Game**, RCD has been working with **Pacific Watershed Associates** and **private landowners** to complete detailed resoration plans for several reaches of rural road that are likely contributors of fine sediment to local waterways. The prescribed road improvement practices, to be implemented next summer, will ultimately reduce fine sediment delivery to creeks, assist in meeting requirements of Clean Water Act regulations, and provide several examples of how erosion from roads can be addressed.

Exploring feasible remedies to address fish migration at Zinfandel Lane Bridge

The Zinfandel Lane Bridge across the Napa River has been identified as a barrier to fish migration in the Napa River. Since the New Year's eve storm in 2005, threatened steelhead and Chinook salmon have found it nearly impossible to make their way over the concrete apron that partially supports Zinfandel Lane bridge, south of St. Helena. Migration barriers, such as Zinfandel Lane Bridge, exert significant pressure on steelhead and salmon populations by delaying or preventing access to high-quality upstream spawning habitat. The highest quality habitat for Chinook salmon is located in the mainstem Napa River upstream of Zinfandel Lane, and several significant steelhead tributaries including York Creek, Sulphur Creek, Selby Creek, and Ritchie Creek are also upstream of Zinfandel Lane. Fish frequently make repeated leap attempts to pass the barrier and this causes exhaustion, injury, and even mortality to migrating fish. RCD and **Jones & Stokes** developed a conceptual design to address the barrier in 2006 and RCD facilitated completion of a feasibility study in 2007. In the coming year, RCD will work with **Napa County Department of Public Works** to produce construction drawings, complete environmental review and obtain appropriate permits and funding to improve fish passage at Zinfandel Lane while retaining the structural support and cultural integrity of the bridge.

Facilitating restoration plans for the Napa River

Two large scale restoration planning projects are being undertaken on the Napa River between Zinfandel Lane and Oak Knoll Avenue. The first project was initated by landowners in 2002 in the vicinity of Rutherford between Zinfandel Lane and Oakville Cross Road when landowners formed the **Rutherford Dust Restoration Team** (RDRT) to address bank erosion, habitat degradation, and river incision. Over the past several years the RCD has contributed to this large planning effort through fiscal sponsorship, technical input, fisheries habitat assessment, surveying, and landowner coordination. The plan has come a long way in the past year, and plan designs, environmental documentation, and permitting are scheduled to be completed in late 2008. The implementatin phase of the project will be managed by **Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District** and ground will likely break in 2009. It is anticipated that he RCD will continue to be involved in landowner coordination, technical assistance and monitoring.

The second project was initiated in 2006 by the **California Land Stewardship Institute** (CLSI). The project reach, downstream of the RDRT effort, is between Oakville Cross Road and Oak Knoll Avenue. RCD provides technical support to CLSI in their efforts, including fisheries habitat assessment and initial surveying of the stream reach.

Leveraging NRCS technical and engineering assisstance for restoration plans on agricultural land

The RCD has been working with the local field office of the USDA **Natural Resources Conservation Service** (NRCS) for over half a century. The cooperative partnership between NRCS and RCD provides agricultural producers with expanded opportunities for restoration planning and funding. An example from 2008 is the NRCS and RCD partnership to provide support to agricultural producers on Dry Creek to remove a seasonal water impoundment and restore vertical creekbanks to a more sustainable and natural configuration. The NRCS provided engineered drawings, financial assistance, and project oversight and the RCD secured additional financial assistance and managed the project from planning to implementation. NRCS and RCD partner on many projects. Over the next few years NRCS and RCD will be collaborating with the **Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District** and the Department of Fish and Game to design a habitat enhancement plan for the Napa River Ecological Reserve in Yountville.

Accomplishments

Implementing Projects to Improve Watershed Conditions

Opening 16 miles of stream habitat to threatened steelhead trout

Napa County's migratory fish populations have reason to celebrate in 2008 as an estinated 16.9 miles of stream in the Dry Creek watershed was made available to them for migration, spawning and rearing. Access to the high quality habitat was made possible through the actions of **Hall Wines** when they decided to partner with the RCD, NRCS, and Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to remove a seasonal instream water storage structure that was utilized during the spring for frost protection. The storage structure, located approximately 1/2 mile upstream from the confluence of Dry Creek and the Napa River was limiting fish migration into and out of the Dry Creek watershed. Hall Wines and other neighboring vineyard owners took action to install wind machines as an alternative frost protection method and simultaneously sought assistance to develop an engineered plan to completely remove the structure and restore the creek banks.

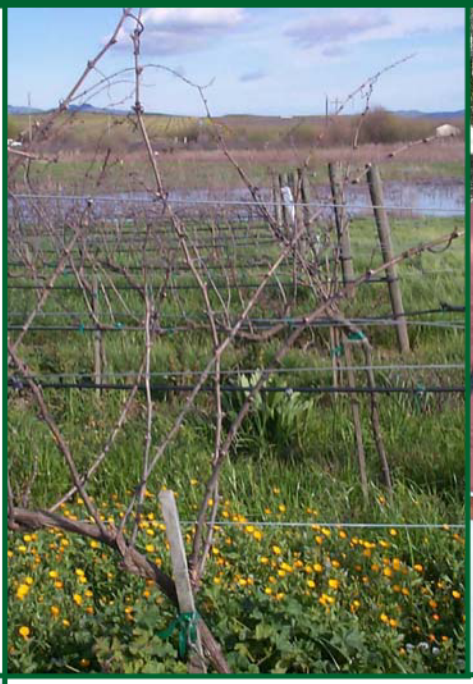
After a lot of cooperative planning, design, and evaluation a solution was developed that took into account the long-term stability of the creek and its banks and also met the salmonid passage criteria established by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and DFG, which takes into account maximum jump height for juvenile salmon, stream velocities, and the depth of the pools in the stream.

During late summer in 2007 the barrier was completely removed by a team of **local contractors**. The railcar bridge came down, the concrete was jack hammered apart, and the non-functioning fish ladders were removed. Once all of the debris was hauled away as scrap, **California Conservation Corps** crews worked with the contractor to restore the creek banks with native willow plants. After several years of planning to meet various requirements, the project was completed in less than two months. Steelhead and Chinook salmon were seen moving upstream just a few months later and juvenile steelhead were spotted upstream of the site in the spring.

Hall Wines intends to move forward with other conservation projects on the ranch. They will be working with the RCD and NRCS in the fall of 2008 to establish a riparian corridor of native plants along Dry Creek to provide wildlife habitat, stream shading, and bank stabilization.

Partnerships & Funding

Implementation of resource conservation and stewardship requires strong and trusting partnerships among conservation and research organizations, community and interest groups, individual landowners and managers, private industry, and government agencies. The RCD values all of its partners who help create meaningful opportunities for natural resource conservation and voluntary stewardship of natural resources.



2007/08 Funding Agencies & Organizations

Bay-Delta Authority
California Coastal Conservancy
CA Department of Conservation
CA Department of Fish and Game
CA Deptartment of Water Resources
California Land Stewardship Institute
CA State Water Board
Carneros Land Stewardship Foundation
City of Napa
Friends of the Napa River
The Gasser Foundation
Laurel Marcus & Associates
Napa County Consevation, Development & Planning Dept.
Napa County Flood Control & Water Conservation District
Napa County Regional Park & Open Space District
Napa County Stormwater Management Program
Napa Sanitation District
Napa Sustainable Winegrowing Group Members
North Bay Watershed Association
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Putah Creek Watershed Group
San Francisco Estuary Institute
Sonoma Ecology Center
US Army Corps of Engineers
US Environmental Protection Agency
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Financial Report

Statement of Net Assets

ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	$561,561
Due from other governments	234,245
Other receivables	1,454
Land	350,100
Other capital assets	11,993
TOTAL ASSETS	**$1,159,353**
LIABILITIES	
Accounts payable	$44,990
Payroll wages payable	35,089
Deferred revenue	31,778
Non-current liabilities	83,836
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**$195,693**
NET ASSETS	
Investment in capital assets	$289,420
Unrestricted	674,240
TOTAL NET ASSETS	**$963,660**

Statement of Activities

REVENUES	
State and Local Agencies	$956,885
Federal Agencies	215,133
Huichica Creek Vineyard	101,230
Taxes	242,807
Use of money	23,986
Donations	8,618
Fundraising	23,050
Miscellaneous	17,465
TOTAL REVENUES	**$1,589,179**
EXPENSES	
Salaries and benefits	$845,233
Office expenses (rent, insurance, materials equipment, maintenance, etc.)	67,689
Staff development (training, memberships, staff education, etc.)	12,874
Professional services (project related services, legal counsel, auditing service, human resources, etc.)	684,463
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$1,610,259**
Change in net assets	(21,080)
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	**963,660**

Based on audited figures for FY 2007-08. Copies of all financial documents are available at the RCD office.