



RCDs & the Natural Resources Conservation Service

Partnerships in Action

In local communities all around the State, RCDs and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have partnered to make concrete conservation happen with fantastic results. These partnerships have included various conservation and restoration projects that have positively impacted their communities. The following are examples of these projects from this partnership.



Two Pajaro Valley High School students plant a young wetland's tree.
Photo Credit: NRCS



Student observing wetland wildlife.
Photo Credit: NRCS

RCD of Santa Cruz County & the NRCS Partner to Get Students into the Fields

In fall 2010 staff from the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County and the Watsonville Wetlands Watch prepared for the arrival of 28 students from Pajaro Valley High School in Watsonville. The RCD was awarded a grant which they are using to help kids get out of the classroom and into the fields.

The funding for this grant comes through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Floodplain Easement Program. The funds will be used to sponsor the RCDs partnership with the Watsonville Wetlands Watch to work with students and community volunteers on planting days and various restoration projects, for general public outreach related to floodplains easements, and the develop an interactive display for the Fitz Wetlands Education Resource Center (WERC).

During this particular trip in fall 2010, students experienced what a day in the life of a biologist is like and were a part of a hands-on restoration project by planting young wetland trees, shrubs, and grasses. The students also saw a demonstration of how wetlands help clean water and observed wildlife through binoculars.

The restoration work these students participated in is a part of a long-term plan to help agriculture and the wetlands coexist in a more sustainable way through re-establishing the important role wetlands play in the environment.

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The RCD and NRCS helped to secure floodplain easements on the two properties the students visited. One of the properties is now owned by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County. Project partner, Watsonville Wetlands Watch took the responsibility of restoring native habitat and wildlife areas on the properties. Overall, the partnership between these organizations allowed the students to apply what they have learned in class in a real life setting, agreeably one of the best outcomes of the project.

Coarsegold RCD & the NRCS Partner to Protect Threatened Beetle Species

The Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle is a brightly colored red and black beetle on the US Fish and Wildlife Service's threatened species list. It exists nowhere in the world except for in scattered areas along the San Joaquin, Kings, Tule, Kaweah, American and Sacramento rivers and tributaries. The Beetle was almost forced to leave its home in Madera County due to construction of a new high school.

The Coarsegold RCD had the idea of planting dozens of elderberry bushes the insects can use to live on along the construction site of the school to replace those being lost due to the construction. With help from the NRCS office in Madera, the Spring Valley 4-H Club, and Southern California Edison (which provided 90 elderberry bushes raised in a nearby nursery) the RCD had a field day to plant the new bushes in 2010.

The NRCS is assisting the RCD with preparing a range management plan to care for 200 acres of neighboring ranch land the school had to acquire to mitigate a vernal pool that was also removed due to construction. The school district has agreed to allow the Coarsegold RCD manage the ranch land, which plans to let the high school students operate it. The RCD will use the land as a demonstration site and the Minarets High School ag program can use the land for animal grazing.



*The Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle lives only along six central CA rivers and their tributaries
Photo Credit: US Fish & Wildlife Service Photo*



*Coarsegold RCD President Tom Wheeler and Minaret High School Student plant an elderberry bush
Photo Credit: Brian Ziegler*



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