



# 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 this successful partnership particularly through the AWEF Program.



### About AWEF

The Agriculture Water Enhancement Program AWEF is a program through the NRCS which provides support for projects that conserve and improve water quality, use irrigation water resourcefully, alleviate the effects of drought and climate change, and take other actions that benefit water resources. The following are success stories from RCDs that have utilized the AWEF program to benefit their communities.

### Western Shasta RCD & the ACID AWEF Project

The ACID AWEF project is enhancing irrigation efficiency and water quality for users within the Anderson Cottonwood Irrigation District (ACID) service area. ACID, is a 32,000-acre irrigation district in Shasta and Tehama counties. It delivers irrigation water to more than 800 farmers and ranchers. Through the AWEF program efficient pipes are replacing earthen ditches that carry water from the ACID canal to agricultural fields.

Some of the ditches are more than 100 years old and have a heavy build up of weeds that clog the flow. The resulting seepage drains the ditches of as much as 20-50 percent of water directed towards the fields and pastures.

In 2010, the Western Shasta RCD successfully applied for AWEF in partnership with ACID and the Cottonwood Creek Watershed Group (CCWG) to help farmers in the irrigation district implement effective conservation practices to improve water efficiency and quality.

Using \$2.8 million in AWEF funding from NRCS, the grant is helping to pay for the lateral improvements over a four-year period. Participating ACID customers will pay 10-25 percent of the cost of replacing the lateral, all depending on the project.



*The pipes used were 18 or 24 inches in diameter and depended on the ditches size. Workers put the pipe in the old ditches then covered them with soil and mulch.*

*Photo Credits: NRCS*

*Western Shasta RCD & NRCS: Partnerships in Action*

open ditches with pipelines are expected to range from 1.5-2 acre feet per acre per year. The water conserved annually will result in direct benefits to the California-Bay Delta.

Overall, this project will improve ACID's operational efficiency and quality in addition to increasing water flow.

### Honey Lake Valley RCD & the Lower Susan River Watershed Project

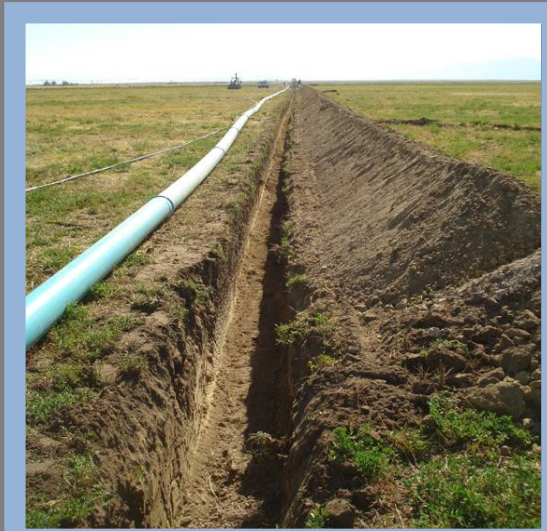
In 2010 a partnership was formed between the Honey Lake Valley RCD and the NRCS when the RCD applied for AWEF. The RCDs goal was to assist private landowners in the lower Susan River on irrigation system improvements, weed treatment, and resource restoration. Honey Lake Valley RCD was awarded \$750,000 in FY 2010 with that amount to come in the next four years.

AWEF contracts are helping farmers and ranchers in the watershed conserve water and reduce harmful weeds while improving the stream passage and floodplain. Some practices to address water quantity and quality include: irrigation water management, underground pipelines, sprinkler systems, cover crops, irrigation canals, pest management, and filter strips.

While the RCD administers the program and in addition to the resources being provided by the NRCS, the RCD has a multitude of partners that are providing services to plan and monitor water conservation and regulate water quality issues within the project area. Over the course of the next the project period (2010-2014) the partnerships will contribute nearly \$8 million in non-Federal resources and services. These partners include: The Susan River Watershed Partnership, Ducks Unlimited, UC Cooperative Extension Services, Lassen Irrigation Company, Lassen Special Weed Action Team, California Waterfowl Association, Pheasants Forever, Bureau of Land Management, Lassen County Ag Commissioner, and the Lassen Land and Trails Trust.

The funds from AWEF are being used to achieve goals of improving water yield/duration of flow, water quality, and the riparian health through conversion of inefficient irrigation systems. Along the corridor funds are being used to help farmers restore stream channels, treat weeds, and plant more drought tolerant crops.

The partnership hopes to achieve a 25 percent decrease in groundwater use and expects helping nearly 90 percent of participating producers to meet the state's water quality permit requirements.



Through AWEF the Honey Lake Valley RCD and its partners have been able to improve water flow and quality in the Lower Susan Watershed. High-pressure underground pipeline have been installed and control structures have been completed to reduce water loss.



Photo Credits: NRCS

