



RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

RCDs & the Department of Fish and Game

Partnerships in Action

In local communities all around the State, RCDs and the Department of Fish and Game 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.

Dixon RCD & the DFG's Master Ground Lease Agreement

In 2004, the Dixon Resource Conservation District and California Department of Fish and Game entered into a Master Ground Lease Agreement to provide management, reporting, and recommendations for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (YBWA) agricultural leases. This came about because in 2001 the DFG expanded by nearly 13,000 acres with the attainment of the Glide properties in the Yolo Bypass which included Glide Causeway Ranch and Glide Tule Ranch. The unique partnership has allowed ag producers to lease land through the RCD although it is owned by the DFG.

Since 2004 the RCD has been able to manage the development and negotiate some of the agricultural subleases that cover nearly half of the Wildlife Area. Currently the subleases consist of one rice, one combination of farming/grazing, and one grazing operation. The Dixon RCD is in charge of determining the agricultural production capabilities and the optimal crop and grazing rotations on the leased grounds. The RCD is required to submit crop and grazing plans, water system plans, and budgets to the DFG YBWA manager. In addition to this the RCD oversees the rent payments from the subleases, monthly bills, and accounting for the program. The RCD is also providing tours and informational materials to interested parties.

The RCD has used this opportunity to build onto its understanding of and contract within agriculture with the intent of highlighting where there are common benefits between production agriculture, wildlife habitat, and flood protection. The DFG's primary focus with the management of the lands within the YBWA has been the improvement and growth of wildlife habitat. They plan to use agricultural activities as tools in improving the habitat and reinvest the rental income towards the development of existing and production of additional habitat.



View of Downtown Sacramento from the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

Photo Credit: Dave Feliz, CA DFG



Tomato harvest by one of the ag producers in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

Photo Credit: Dave Feliz, CA DFG

RCDs & NAME: Partnerships in Action

RCDs are a leader in on-the-ground conservation efforts. The 99 districts statewide are the center of locally led conservation in their communities and accomplish thousand of practical, hands-on conservation projects every year. Typically these projects involve agriculture and private land, but we also accomplish much more. RCDs are special districts that are a good example of strong local government. We are responsive and accountable to our communities to promote local conservation goals.

All in all this Master Ground Lease Agreement of the YBWA has not only benefited both the DFG and RCD but also the land itself.

Shasta Water Association Dam Project

The Shasta Water Association Dam Restoration Project was funded in 2006, a year after the State named that the Southern Oregon and Northern California Coho (SONCC) salmon as threatened species. Funded through the Clean Water Act (CWA) §319(h) Nonpoint Source Implementation Program the goals of the project were to meet fish passage and water quality goals while ensuring that water users met regulatory requirements and could sustain the economic viability of the ag operations.

In addition to funding from through the CWA the CA Department of Fish and Game contributed over a million dollars on the project. This multi-year and multi-partner effort to plan, design, and execute one of the largest restoration projects ever conducted in the Shasta River Watershed was completed in 2009. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service were also financial contributors.

The Shasta Valley RCD had been anticipating the State listing of coho salmon as endangered and researched ways to improve fish passage and water quality in the diversions dams while ensuring agricultural operations would not be harmed.

In 2008 the project construction began when the Shasta Water Association Dam was removed followed by the installation of two "boulder weirs," which provide fish passage and water for irrigators. A fish screen was also installed to protect fish from the diversions which met the CDFG and NMFS criteria. This project also included the installation of pipelines to assist with better water management, conversion of two gravity fed diversion to a pump system, and the implementation of a monitoring program to assess whether goals of the project were achieved.

Since completion of the project achieved goals have included a reduction in the surface area of water impounded by the dam, year-round fish passage, elimination of need of herbicide use in ditches, and overall improvement in water use management. The RCD continues to host formal presentations and tours on the site to various agencies.



*Post-Project: Dam removal with installed boulder weir.
Photo Credit: SVRCD*



*Installation of the fish screen panels.
Photo Credit: SVRCD*

