

Conservation Almanac

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Spring 1997

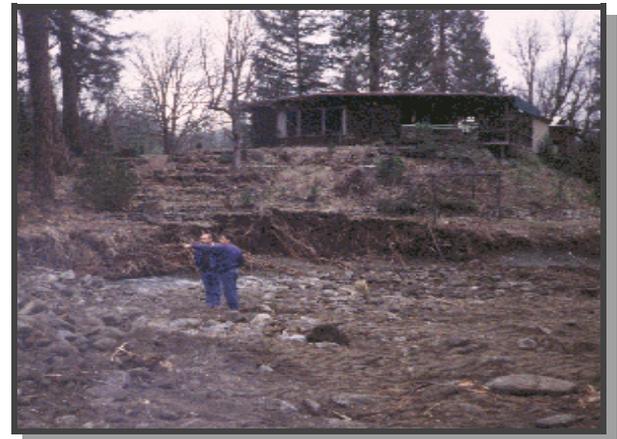
Vol. VI No. 2

Emergency Watershed Protection on East Weaver Creek

High flows from the storms of early January did more than wash out roads and cause delays along highways 299 and 3 in Trinity County this year. Many landowners had portions of their properties washed away by swollen creeks and rivers. In response to the crisis, many property owners requested assistance through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, funded through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, which grants assistance to help “safeguard people and property following natural disasters.” The EWP is a cost-sharing program, with local sponsors expected to obtain the necessary permits and contribute 25 percent of the cost for the work.

In many cases connected with the storms of January 1997, damage to property didn't result in further threat of damage--the worst was over. In other cases however, the possibility of further loss due to flooding made the need for repair work imperative. Ruth Snyder of East Weaver Creek found that not only had she lost a 20 by 100 stretch or her beautiful creekside garden (Ruth has been an active Garden Club member for many years), the raging water had moved 50 feet from its former channel and had begun to cut into the bank directly below her house. With another storm, the bank might have given way, causing her house to topple into East Weaver Creek.

The RCD agreed to sponsor a project to move large rocks--“riprap”--into the bend in the creek



Severe Undercutting of the Bank Below Ruth Snyder's Home on East Weaver Creek After Storms.

directly below her house to buffer the bank against further erosion. Since the risk to her house and property also brought the risk of adding huge amounts of sediment

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The AmeriCorps Watershed Project

Who Are We?

We are a partnership between Adopt-A-Watershed (AAW) and the California Conservation Corps (CCC). We receive the majority of our funding through the Corporation for National Service--"AmeriCorps." AmeriCorps is a national service program developed by President Clinton in 1993. Additional funding is generously supplied locally by the Resource Conservation District (RCD), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), AAW and local schools. The Watershed Project is in its third year in Trinity County. The Project also exists in 11 other counties in California, from Siskiyou to San Diego.

The Watershed Project, envisioned by AAW and CCC, combines two essential elements: education and service. AAW provides an integrated K-12 science curriculum, and CCC models the spirit of community service. Together our goal is developing science education and a sense of stewardship in students, adults, and the community for our watersheds. We attempt to nurture our communities' children through providing educational experiences, outdoor opportunities, and integrated interactions between students, natural resource professionals, and members of the community. Participants begin to see their potential to positively impact watersheds and commit to sustaining a healthy and enduring balance.

What Do We Do?

Eighteen AmeriCorps members serve as Community Coordinators and service crew members. Community coordinators work directly with local schools, linking community members and students performing science field studies and restoration projects. Service crew members work with students and also serve their communities through education projects, trail maintenance, and fire and flood

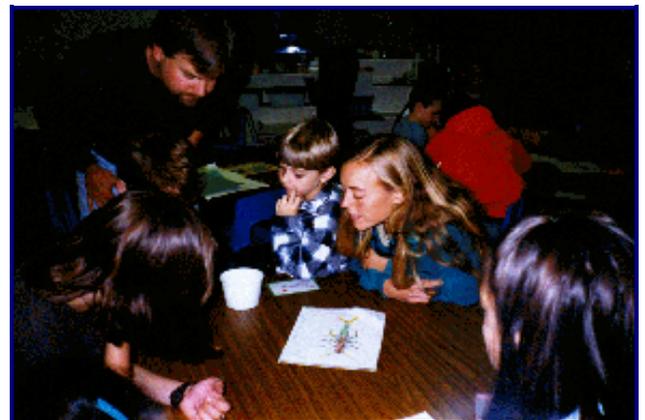
control.

Natural resource professionals from the RCD, NRCS and the Forest Service identify projects in the adopted watersheds. The Watershed Project coordinates these educational experiences into service-learning projects. For example, students survey aquatic insects, raise salmon, test water quality, plant trees, build bird nesting boxes, and protect erodible slopes through mulching and revegetation. Students learn science concepts, apply them to watersheds, and provide service to the community. This is service learning.

How Do You Get Involved?

Interested community members can get involved in the Watershed Project in many ways. We need volunteers who can give historical perspectives on local watersheds, landowners to participate in restoration projects on their land, mentors to help students with lessons in the watersheds, and parents to help with classroom activities.

Another way to become involved is to support the Watershed Project by becoming a member. With a donation, members receive our quarterly newsletter, a membership card, and notification of upcoming events. Donations help cover the costs of watershed education coordinators, monitoring and restoration projects, and the science curriculum. Feel free to call Shannon Murray for more information at: 623-6004. ♠



TOT and RCD Work Together on Trails

Trinity County Resource Conservation District is taking part in Trinity Occupational Training Inc.'s (TOT) Temporary Job Creation Program to conduct storm-related damage assessment and repairs on the Weaverville Basin Trail System as well as the Hayfork trails, as identified in the Weaverville and Hayfork Community Plans. The Temporary Jobs Creation Program is in response to Trinity County being designated as a disaster area by the Governor of California due to the January storms. This program is federally funded through the Job Training Partnership Act and Economic Dislocated Workers Adjustment Act. The main goal of this program is to minimize the negative impacts of the disaster by assisting in community repairs and clean-up and to enable resumption of regular employment. Four people have been hired by TOT to conduct the trail log and condition survey, two for Weaverville and two for Hayfork.

This effort is being guided and assisted by the Trinity Resource Conservation and Development Council's Scott Eberly, the chairman of the Weaverville Basin Trail Committee, Scott Morris, as well as a member of the Hayfork Action Team's recreation committee, Bob Mountjoy. Since most of these trails/roads are primarily on Forest Service lands, the Forest Service's Trail Manager, Jon Sanstrom, has also played an integral part in the process. Some maintenance work has also been performed with the assistance of AmeriCorps members. To date, this project has been a significant inter-agency and volunteer cooperative effort. In addition to the storm damage assessment and maintenance work, the information obtained from this project will be useful in developing a Master Plan for the trail system as well as in creating brochures to draw visitors and economic activity to Trinity County

Stengels Selected for Goodyear Conservation Award

Trinity County Resource Conservation District has nominated Robert and Irene Stengel of Hayfork for this year's Goodyear Tire and Rubber Foundation Cooperator of the Year award. The RCD selected Mr. and Mrs. Stengel because of their willingness to participate in a variety of conservation programs. The Stengels own over 400 acres in the Salt Creek watershed in Hayfork Valley, including over 5,000 feet along the creek, which is important steelhead trout habitat. The Stengels have participated in the RCD's riparian improvement efforts by allowing the installation of cattle-control fencing along Salt Creek. In addition, planting of trees and numerous native plant species along their creekside by the RCD will result in reduced water temperatures and improved fisheries habitat. The Stengels are also participating in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Project and have a 7-year contract with NRCS to improve ranch management and conservation. The RCD and NRCS have enjoyed the Stengels pleasant and hospitable nature, and they show a genuine concern for sustainable resource use. ♠



NRCS Fish Biologist Tim Viel Works with Robert Stengel on the Stengel's Property in Hayfork

Trinity County Holds Wine Grape Workshop

Economically impacted by the decline of the timber industry, Trinity County is searching for new ideas for alternative industries. The Trinity Resource and Development Council (RC&D) Council's adopted Trinity Agriculture project aims to provide these ideas. One thought that has gained a lot of interest lately is the growing of wine grapes. The county is already home to a successful winery, Alpen Cellars--whose 1990 Riesling was rated best in the country--and the large-scale Meredith Vineyards, whose merlot grapes earned Fieldbrook Cellars a gold medal at the 1992 California State Fair. A few successful smaller-scale vineyards have also sprouted up in the county.

During the grape growing season, Trinity County's hot days and cool nights provide for excellent conditions to grow specialty wine grapes. Mountainous elevations create microclimates that produce grapes of desired acidity, flavor, and color. It's not uncommon for this fruit of the vine to bring in up to \$1,500 a ton. These grape-related factors are creating quite a bit of excitement for business minded people in the county.

As a component of the RC&D's Trinity Agriculture project, and through the appreciated efforts and funding from local agencies, a viticulture workshop was held February 8th at the Fairgrounds in Hayfork. The RCD, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the UC Cooperative Extension, and the Trinity County Fair Association jointly sponsored the workshop. The workshop's goal to educate and inform people on the aspects and feasibility of growing wine grapes was certainly met. The event attracted over 100 interested participants, some from as far away as the Napa Valley.

The one-day workshop offered representatives from Alpen Cellars and Fetzer



Glen McGourty Presents Information on Wine Grape Varieties at the Trinity County Vineyard Development Workshop in Hayfork

Wineries, Meredith Vineyards, and the UC Cooperative Extension to discuss site suitability assessment, variety selection, marketing, and the economics of vineyard development and operation. Local growers also shared their first-hand experiences. The workshop included a delicious lunch served by the Trinity County Mule Committee and ended with a wine tasting, with wines donated by Fetzer Winery.

Although Trinity County's wine grape industry can't compete with Napa Valley's, it can surely enhance it. Grapes grown here are nationally recognized for their high quality and can unquestionably satisfy the palate of anyone who appreciates a fine wine. ♦

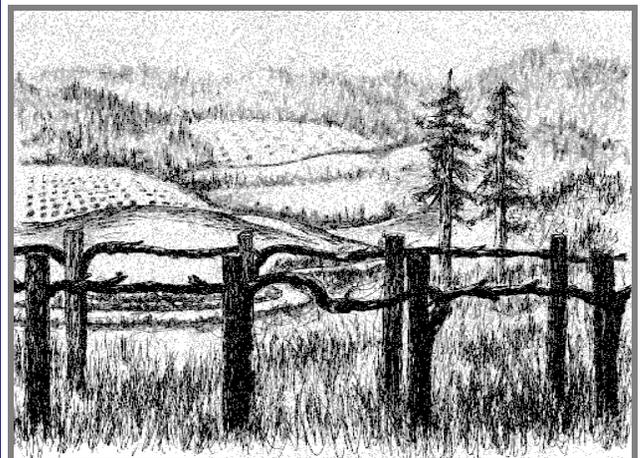


Illustration by Scott Brennan-Smith

Efforts Underway to Change Hayfork Creek Sport Fishing Regulations

Since the Sierra Pacific Industries mill closure early in the summer of 1996, Hayfork's economic base has experienced a downward trend as evidenced by loss of business revenue and the relocation of families out of the valley due to loss of employment. The Hayfork community has been working hard to offset this economic condition through various "action teams" that were formed at the local level and supported by the County Board of Supervisors to explore and pursue opportunities for improving the local economy and quality of life in this rural town.

The Recreation and Tourism Action Team is currently seeking funds through the grant process to support activities within the arena of recreation and tourism development. The committee is currently focused on a beautification project for the town center of Hayfork, the development of a trail system guide (hiking, horseback riding, fishing access, mountain biking) on surrounding public lands, and promotional activities (brochures, advertisements, road signs) to increase public awareness of Hayfork valley as a possible destination for families, retirees, or vacationers.

To help with this effort, the Hayfork Community Action Team is requesting a change to the current fishing regulations for Hayfork Creek to allow for an adult steelhead catch and release season from Hayfork valley to its confluence with the South Fork Trinity River at Hyampom. With special regulations such as allowing only barbless, artificial lures during a limited season (January - March), impact to spawning activities of this species in the upper watershed and its

tributaries should be minimal. This regulation change would provide public opportunity to fish for wild, adult steelhead. Likewise, this fishing opportunity has the potential to attract visitors to the area, providing local merchants with increased customer traffic.

Lower Hayfork Creek provides a unique experience for winter steelhead fishing due to its low suspended sediment transport and ability to clear after major storms. This year's January storms emphasized this characteristic of the watershed. While other waters such as the mainstem South Fork below Hyampom remain unfishable due to high turbidity, the lower Hayfork Creek remains clear and fishable.

A regulation change could also provide California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) biologists with census information regarding adult steelhead runs within the Hayfork watershed. Currently, little information exists on run size of steelhead in Hayfork Creek. Steelhead numbers for the entire South Fork Basin are believed to be at a stable population size according to Larry Hanson, CDF&G biologist.

This request has the support of the South Fork Coordinated Resource Management Plan technical team as well as many of the local fisheries biologists and resource specialists working in the South Fork Basin.



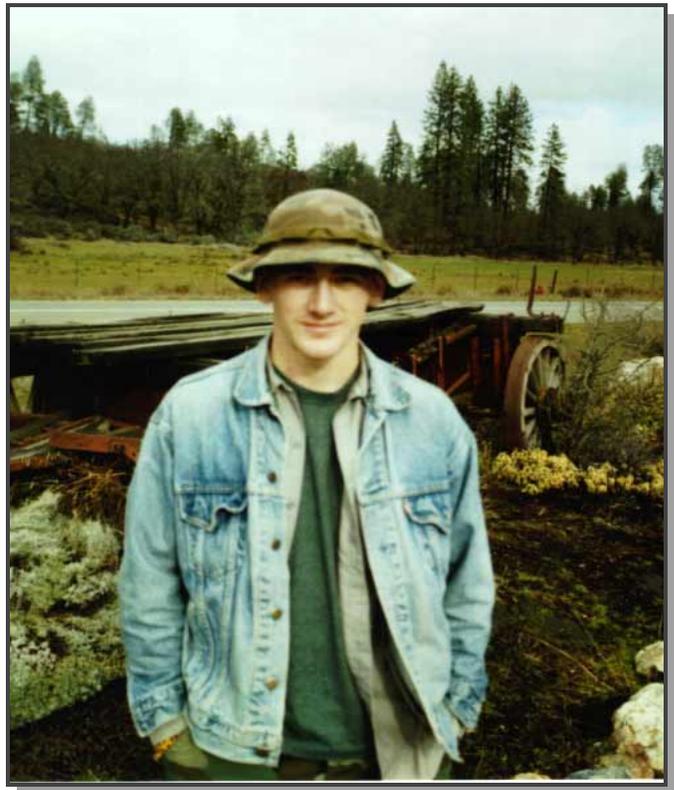
Featured Employee: Jason Hoopes

Actor, musician, and RCD employee, Jason Hoopes may not be your typical RCD Restoration Technician. He maintains an interest in resource conservation work while also playing Hamlet, Macbeth, and Prometheus--bigger-than-life roles he has taken on through association with the Mountain Actor's Workshop and the Trinity Players. Jason is surprisingly low-key for someone who feels no qualms about getting up in front of an audience to perform leading roles in some of the world's most famous plays.

An employee since September 1995, Hoopes says he has enjoyed his stint with the RCD. He likes hard work, and with the RCD there has been plenty of it: fence construction, trail maintenance, planting, seeding, and mulching in Grass Valley Creek and in the South Fork of the Trinity River watersheds. One of the more arduous tasks--and one he liked best--was the fuels reduction effort the RCD undertook in Hayfork, which involved cutting limbs and clearing trees in dense, heavily wooded areas. John Condon, RCD project manager, says Jason is an ideal employee--he works hard and has the right attitude to get the job done.

But the work with the RCD crew has been fun as well. Jason praises the camaraderie among the crew, as well as the spirit of good fun that occasionally erupts. He remembers a time when two crew members searched their backpacks in vain for their own belongings. "Someone had switched the contents of two of the backpacks, and it took the two perplexed owners a while to figure out what had happened." The resident RCD practical joker had struck again.

Jason was born in Fortuna in 1976 and lived in various places in the North State until 1987, when his family moved to Trinity County. He attended Trinity County schools, graduating from Hayfork High in 1994. He



RCD Crew Member Jason Hoopes Poses Outside the Frontier Kitchen in Hayfork

took part in school theater productions from time to time during his school years. While in high school he played the title role in *Macbeth*, a role he may play again this Summer with the Mountain Actor's Workshop. He has continued to perform since graduating, playing the lead role of *Hamlet* in Spring of 1996. He also played the title role in *Prometheus Bound* this past winter in the Trinity Players' production at the Golden Age Nutrition Center.

Despite his theater background, Jason would like to pursue a career in music. He plans to go to a two-year college beginning in the fall of 1997, in preparation to transfer to a four-year college. When asked what the future holds for him, he didn't hesitate. "Music." He's been playing guitar for about five years and wants to learn more, so in August he plans to begin attending classes at the College of the Redwoods in Eureka.



High School Students to Compete in Envirothon

Twelve Hayfork and Trinity High School Students are preparing now to compete in the Envirothon, the largest high school environmental education competition in the United States, currently involving 40 states and provinces.

Several students from Hayfork High participating in this year's event--Bix Lane, Arthur Yount, Lori Barni, and Cynara Kidwell--also competed in last year's Envirothon. The team placed 18th in a field of 32 teams, a good performance for a first-year team. Teams typically compete for several years before winning the California Envirothon. This year's Hayfork team includes one new member, Heather Van Zee, and a new alternate, Serena Bliss.

Trinity High School also plans to send a team to the Envirothon. Trinity High team members include Liza and Melissa Scatena, Randy Brummer, Camille Grupl, and Jessica Miceli, as well as alternate Nate Hammer. The California Envirothon takes place in mid-April of this year.

The Envirothon has several phases. Students first compete in a state-level Envirothon, which will be held this year at Oakhurst, near Yosemite National Park. The winners of the state contest then compete at the national level. The state and national competitions are similar in format, and both test the students' knowledge of four environmental disciplines--aquatics, wildlife, soils, and forestry. In addition, each year's competition highlights an important issue in natural resource management. This year's theme at both the state and national levels will be "modern pest management."

For the first time in the Envirothon's history--which dates back to 1979--teams finishing first, second, and third at the national competition will be awarded college tuition scholarships, funded by Canon USA, the official sponsor of the National Envirothon. Tuition prizes range from \$1,000 to \$2,500 per student. Canon is a well-known maker of copy



Hayfork High School's Envirothon Team (L to R): Cynara Kidwell, Lori Barni, Bix Lane, Serena Bliss, Arthur Yount, Heather Van Zee.

machines, cameras, and computers, and it is one of the largest supporters of environmental education programs in the United States. The company also underwrites PBS's *Nature* series and participates in a variety of corporate recycling and energy-saving initiatives. ♦

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to the creek, which would ultimately end up in the Trinity River, the RCD could utilize funds available through the Trinity River Restoration Program in its sponsorship of EWP repair work on Ruth Snyder's property.

Other landowners in the county also requested EWP assistance, but the imminent threat of further loss to Ruth Snyder's property gave this project highest priority of all the requests made. For some property owners above Trinity Dam, Trinity River Restoration Funds couldn't be used to sponsor projects, since there was no potential for sediment to enter the Trinity River. Some of these landowners elected to undertake repair projects themselves, providing the necessary legwork and cost-share contribution.

Once the project was approved the RCD moved quickly, hiring a construction contractor--Deneau Company--to reroute the creek and move large rip-rap onto the site using heavy equipment. After two days of intensive work with an excavator and a front loader, the creek had been moved back to its pre-storm channel, and the steep bank below Ruth Snyder's house protected by huge chunks of rock from a quarry near Shasta Lake City.

Ruth Snyder may be able to sleep a little better at night now that the threat of the creek undermining the foundations of her home has been averted. ♦