



RCD Outlook 2011

NOVEMBER 2011

Finnon Lake Restoration and Habitat Improvement Project

Presented by the Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation District

In 2004, the Mosquito Volunteer Fire Association approached the Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation District (RCD) to request assistance in restoring the Finnion Lake Recreation Area. Established in 1905, Finnion Lake represented a valuable community asset bringing visitors from all over California to enjoy camping, fishing, hiking, swimming and boating. It also functioned as an important and reliable water source to combat wildfire through the area.

Finnion Lake Dam was constructed using a hydraulic fill placement method in 1905 by Pacific, Gas and Electric Company. In 1939, ownership was transferred to the Mosquito District Mutual Water Company who retained ownership until 1956 when the dam and surrounding property was purchased by the Department of Fish and Game (DF&G) and maintained as a cooperative El Dorado County/Wildlife Conservation Board project. In 1990, the Department of Water Resources, Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) evaluated the seismic stability of the dam and found the structure to be deficient. It was concluded that the hydraulic fill material in the embankment could liquefy if the dam was subjected to a strong ground shaking during the Maximum Credible Earthquake. DSOD directed DF&G to remediate the dam. However, due to budget shortfalls, DF&G was unable to meet the mandated requirements. In 1997, the Mosquito Volunteer Fire Association (MVFA) purchased the dam from DF&G. The dam is presently operating under a reservoir storage restriction of 50 acre feet or less due to seismic stability deficiency. Since its drawdown, all resource values associated with the facility were lost. No longer were visitors attracted to the area and the MVFA, who used the facility to support its fire departments operations, no longer had the economic base to support its department.

The goal of the project is to restore a valuable economic and natural watershed resource by restoring Finnion Lake back to its original operating capacity of 375 acre feet while enhancing fishery and aquatic habitats, improving wetland habitat, improving upland forested habitats, and securing a sustainable water supply to combat wildfires.

In 2010, the RCD received funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and the El Dorado County Water Agency to achieve its restoration goal.

The strengths of the Sierra Nevada Region are its natural beauty, its fiercely independent population, and its growing tourism and recreational sector. Its main weaknesses are internal politics, the failure of civic leaders to recognize the interdependence of their environment and economy, and the lack of a regional identity (James Irvine Foundation, Collaborative Regional Incentives. November 2005).

DOC Watershed Portal—Success Stories

We are still looking for your success stories! We would like to add as many success stories as possible to the Watershed portal. This website will allow RCDs and others to let others know about their watershed successes. If you have a watershed project that you would like to highlight please send us your story!

Send any stories or questions to us at watershed@conservation.ca.gov
We also welcome any suggestions for Watershed Portal improvements and additions.



Finnon Lake Cont.

The Finnion Lake Restoration and Habitat Improvement Project have been adopted by the Cosumnes, American, Bear, and Yuba Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (CABY IRWMP) which represents a total of thirty-two (32) organizational and agencies from throughout the CABY region. The Project has also been supported by 25 other entities that include local and regionally elected and agency officials, non-governmental and business partners and others. These diverse sets of stakeholders understand the benefits of resource restoration and its impacts to economic vitality and the enrichment in the quality of life, both locally and regionally. They have engaged a diverse population of stakeholders seeking to enhance economic vitality, increase social equity, and protect the natural environment throughout the region.

“The Project not only lies within the purview of, but typifies the specified intent of the SNC, to “... initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities and the citizens of California.” – Assemblyman Ted Gaines.

The project also exemplifies the purpose and ability of the RCD’s Watershed Coordinator program. The position has enabled the RCD to leverage the necessary resources and expertise to successfully bring needed funding to ultimately implement the project. Through the efforts of the Watershed Coordinator, all restoration design and specifications were completed through in-kind contributions from a retired USDA-NRCS engineer. All federal, state and local environmental assessments, studies, surveys and associated permits were acquired. For example, the Department of Water Resources and the USDA-NRCS completed the necessary wetlands inventory to comply with the USACE Sec. 404 Nationwide permit. The USFS assisted in conducting the biological assessments for the US Fish & Wildlife Department, and the El Dorado County Resource Conservation District provided the needed funding to complete the necessary fisheries mitigation plan to satisfy the CA Department of Fish & Game Sec. 1600 permit. In addition, the International Union of Operating Engineers Job Corps – Local 3 committed its resources as a training project and job training for heavy equipment operators.

RCDs and Arundo donax Management

Arundo donax is one of the most aggressive invasive species threatening California's watersheds. RCDs have been leaders in address the Arundo donax threat. Several RCDs have Arundo donax programs that have been in operation for many years. This article explores a few of these programs.



Workers chemically treating Arundo

RCD of Santa Cruz County— This program began in 2005 as an effort to eradicate Arundo donax from Soquel Creek. The infestation was limited and complete eradication was a possibility. Using a variety of methods they were able to eradicate four of five known stands. Methods used included black plastic, cut-stump method (herbicide), and hand removal. The landowner with the fifth stand decided they liked the Arundo and did not let the RCD remove it. Since the original eradication effort one additional stand has been discovered and says they hope to remove it in the next few years.

The RCD reported that all methods were successful and the effort was relatively problem free. However they did notice that one stand treated in 2005 that they thought was dead re-sprouted. They say, "We are now aware that this tenacious plant can resprout after many years of treatment".

Mission RCD— Mission RCD has been fighting Arundo donax in the Santa Margartia and San Luis Rey Watersheds for almost 2 decades. The Santa Margartia program began in 1994 and has resulted in a net control of about 40 acres of arundo. They have worked in partnership with the Department of Defense to help eliminate additional Arundo from the Camp Pendleton marine base portion of the watershed and have eliminated 685 acres total. The watershed once had almost 700 acres of Arundo and is now 99% controlled.

In 2000 the program was expanded to include the San Luis Rey watershed. In 2000 the watershed was overrun with 689 acres of Arundo donax. Today 612 acres or 90% have been treated. A majority of the work was completed by the RCD. This highly successful program is a great example of how RCDs can take the lead in addressing threats to watersheds.

Sotoyome RCD— Russian River Team Arundo Program. The Russian River has an estimate 4850 acres of Arundo donax. 98% of the watershed is privately owned so the RCDs program has placed an emphasis on public outreach and education. 155 land owners have participated in Arundo removal so far. They have used hand and mechanical removal techniques. This is an ongoing program that has been very successful.

These are just a few of the many RCDs working to address the Arundo donax threat. This is another example of the unique ability of RCDs to work with private landowners and public agencies to address a critical conservation need.

Finnon Lake Continued

Other contributors include the County Fish & Game Commission, Trout Unlimited, Boy Scouts, local schools, the El Dorado Irrigation District, the El Dorado County Water Agency, the County Board of Supervisors, Assemblyman Ted Gains, the late Senator David Cox, and Congressman Tom McClintock.

Visitors returning to Finnon Lake will again enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities, while at the same time; the MVFA might again realize a sustainable economic movement at a time when economic incentives are few and far between. Many years from now many may forget the true measure of success, without this project would have never have happened, which is the process of watershed management to build partnerships and establish collaboration of all those who made this project happen.

The RCD and the MVFA would especially like to recognize the California Department of Conservation – Watershed Coordinator Program, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the El Dorado County Water Agency, the County Board of Supervisors, the USDA-NRCS, and of course, the leadership of its Board of Directors.

Brown Act Corner: Minutes During Closed Sessions

I often receive questions about closed sessions held during meetings and what type of notes are required. The question of minutes and closed sessions is covered in Government Code Section 54957.2(a).

This portion of the Brown Act says that closed sessions can be recorded in a minute book. The act does not say that minutes must be kept. The board may appoint a clerk or other officer to record these minutes. The act goes on to say “The minute book made pursuant to this section is not a public record subject to inspection pursuant to the California Public Records Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 6250) of Division 7 of Title 1), and shall be kept confidential.” Furthermore, the minute book can only be available to the board members. In other words, this is not something you would share with your partners.

The only time the minute book should be provided to anyone other than a Board member would be if requested by the court.

Simply put, you don't have to keep minutes of your closed sessions. If you do chose to keep minutes, they need to be contained within a special minute book which is only available to board members.

Gold Ridge RCD –Salmon Creek Rainwater Harvesting

Gold Ridge RCD has worked with partners to install a rain water harvesting system as part of their Salmon Creek Habitat Rehabilitation Program. The RCD received 1.5 million dollars to improve in-stream and streamside habitat to benefit Coho and other salmonids. The rainwater harvesting program involves residents, government agencies, and other stakeholders working together to create a community scale roof water harvesting.

The rainwater harvesting program uses storage tanks to capture rain water on residential properties and at a new fire station. The tanks range from 10,000 gallon capacity up to 39,000 gallons.

The additional rain water storage will help keep streams from running dry in the summer and leave water for the salmon. Instead of drawing water from the shallow wells right next to the stream, residents can now use water captured in the rainwater catchment systems.

Additionally, the basin at the fire station will provide water for training as well as fire fighting. The rain water basins provide a much more secure source of water in the event of a fire.

This is a project that resulted in new jobs in the community, water security for the community of Bodega Bay, and more water in the creek for fish. This is an excellent example of how RCD projects can have a beneficial impact on habitat, water supply, and landowners. All while creating more job opportunities!

The RCD has done an excellent job of publicizing their success. They even made a video about this project and their story has appeared in several newspaper articles. Congratulations Gold Ridge RCD!

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Department of Conservation

Division of Land Resource Protection
RCD Assistance Unit
801 K Street, MS 18-01
Sacramento CA 95814

Phone: 916-324-0850
E-mail: rcd@conservation.ca.gov

Edited by:

Jenny Di Stefano

The RCD Outlook newsletter is intended to provide RCDs with helpful tips and updates on RCD work statewide. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or have an article to contribute please feel free to call the Jenny at 916-324-0774 or send an email to: jdistefa@conservation.ca.gov.

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