



The Solano RCD Demonstration Garden

In 2002, the DOC awarded the Solano RCD grant funding to develop a demonstration garden at the RCD's Conservation Education Center. The goal was to create a garden where residents could visit and learn about native plants, interact with staff, and develop a better understanding and appreciation for issues within the local watershed. Like many rural areas, Solano County has experienced a tremendous influx of new residents, with a significant number coming from major metropolitan areas. Many of the new residents are unfamiliar with best management practices and land stewardship. The RCD recognized both



Students working to establish the garden

a need and an opportunity. To ensure local support and participation, the RCD decided to hold four planning meetings and four additional hands-on workshops. Clearly, it would be a monumental undertaking to transform a gravel parking lot into a watershed friendly demonstration garden.

Local residents, partners, and cooperators met for more than 11 hours to plan the workshops and to discuss the demonstration garden. All the participants were eager to

embark on this exciting and challenging mission. The first workshop focused on evaluating a site, establishing goals, and developing a landscape plan. In addition, participants learned about native plants and irrigation principles. More than forty stakeholders attended the first workshop. After the workshop, nine local landowners requested that the RCD watershed technician visit their property to assist them in implementing watershed friendly practices. It was evident that the workshop was a success! The following month, the RCD held the second of four workshops.

The RCD held its second workshop in conjunction with its semiannual Native Plant Sale at their Nursery, which has proven to be an effective outreach program within the community. The emphasis was on teaching participants about designing a garden, plant palettes, and irrigation planning techniques. Over the next two months, the garden site was ripped and weeds were eradicated. In addition, the paths were laid out and the pond was dug. Work on

Demonstration Garden Continued

the demonstration garden progressed very well and community involvement was phenomenal.

The following month, the RCD held the third workshop. During the workshop, partners and RCD staff discussed planting techniques and also maintenance procedures. After the lectures, participants were able to help plant native vegetation in the demonstration garden. This provided attendees the opportunity to actually practice, under the observation of trained professionals, what they had learned during the classes. This approach enabled the RCD to reduce its costs while conducting effective and targeted outreach to the local community. Without a doubt, the workshop was once again a resounding success.

The fourth and final workshop, the grand opening, was held five months later. However, a tremendous amount of work went into the garden during the interim period. The RCD held two very successful workdays where students from the Dixon High School's Environmental Science Program volunteered their time. The students moved



The completed garden

decomposed granite for the paths, dug holes, planted vegetation, and assisted in a variety of activities in the garden. Students donated a total of 178 hours to the cause. In addition, RCD staff worked tirelessly on the demonstration garden, making changes and modifications as needed. Together with their partners, the RCD took an idea and brought it to life. Finally, the day arrived. The demonstration garden was complete. The RCD scheduled the grand opening on the same day they were holding their

semiannual Native Plant Sale. More than sixty people attended the event and the majority took a self guided tour through the garden. During the tour, RCD staff was available to assist and provide information on both the garden and the RCD.

Working with their partners and cooperators, the RCD took a gravel parking lot and created a demonstration garden. Much of the project's success can be attributed to the RCD's efforts to involve the community early in the process. This approach ensured local community buy-in and helped bolster outreach efforts. Countless new relationships were established and existing ones were strengthened. Over time, like the plants in the garden, these relationships will grow, blossom, and flourish. Although the demonstration garden is already a success, it also provides the springboard for even greater opportunities in the future.

Written by Robert Shun, Grant Coordinator

Completing the Local Permit Process, Part IV

Over the past three articles we've discussed the local permit process for a small stream bank restoration project on private land. We began by talking about whether these types of restoration projects are exempt from environmental review (typically, they're not). We then talked about where to start the application process, what the application requirements might be, how long the review would take and who would act as the lead agency. Our discussion left off near the end of the environmental review process. Let's pick up at that point.

The public review period for the Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is a minimum of 20 days, and 30 days if a copy is sent to the State Clearinghouse. Upon conclusion of the review period, the lead agency is required to consider all comments it received. If, as a result of these comments, the lead agency determines that the proposed mitigation measures do not adequately address the project's potential impacts or that a new avoidable significant effect is identified, the lead agency must develop new mitigation measures or project revisions and recirculate the Initial Study and proposed MND.

If the comments do not result in any needed changes, the lead agency may prepare formal responses to the comments. Although not obligated under CEQA to respond to comments on MNDs, many lead agencies choose to prepare written responses in order to fully document the decision process.

The next step is to prepare a Mitigation Monitoring Plan (MMP). This is a document that identifies the who, what, when and where of mitigation compliance. For each environmental mitigation measure applied to the project, the lead agency will identify how the project applicant will comply with the requirement and how that compliance will be documented.

Once the MMP is completed the project is ready for approval. Depending on the lead agency, this can be done administratively by the planning director or an authorized officer of the planning department, or by the planning commission. Administrative approval can be easier in that a public hearing is avoided, but some lead agencies make all discretionary permit approvals at the commission level. With administrative approval, we can expect some form of written notice with the conditions of approval and MMP attached. If approval at the planning commission is required, the project planner must prepare a staff report. The staff report will likely include a copy of the original application and any maps, the conditions of approval, the MMP, any required findings of fact, and the Initial Study. As part of the public hearing, anyone interested in the project will be given an opportunity to provide his or her comments. There must be a quorum for the commission to take an action and a simple majority is required for approval.

If there is a need to appeal, approvals at the administrative level may be appealed to the planning commission and planning commission decisions are appealable to the board of supervisors. Beyond that there is the court, but you must exhaust your administrative appeal rights first.

Once approval has been given, the final step for the lead agency is to file a Notice of Determination (NOD). Since our application was at the county level, the NOD must be filed with the county clerk. If the lead agency had been at the state level (i.e. Department of Fish

Planning: Help We Need a Plan (part III)

In the last edition of RCD Outlook we discussed developing your vision, goals and objectives. It is critical that you successfully achieve these steps and develop a clear picture of where you want to go before moving on to the next step. It's also important that the directors and employees are involved in the entire planning process.

Once you have answered the question, "Where do we want to be?" you are ready to tackle the question "How do we get there?". This is the part of the plan that contains a description of the key actions you will take to reach each objective. For example, the CARCD 1999-2003 Strategic Plan* identifies the goal of obtaining annual funding to enhance the existing RCD infrastructure. The key action item to reach this goal is, "obtain performance funding of \$2 million annually from the state to support district's operating needs". It's important to remember that it's not necessary to identify the day-to-day RCD operational tasks in your strategic plan. The strategic plan focuses more on the higher level tasks that are necessary to

'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?' 'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,' said the Cat. 'I don't much care where --' said Alice. 'Then it doesn't matter which way you go,' said the Cat.

Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

complete to reach your goals. For example, the Western Shasta RCD Strategic Plan 1999-2003 identifies watersheds as one of their strategic focuses. Their objective in this area is to "continue to develop the District's competence in watershed restoration with focus on key salmon and steelhead trout". Some of the high level actions identified to reach this objective include supporting the formation of watershed groups and focusing project work on the streams with high-potential for anadromous fish restoration. These are some of the "big picture" tasks they need to achieve to successfully reach their watershed goals. In the introduction section of the RCD's plan, they indicate that they use their strategic area and goal statements as a base to develop their annual plan.

Annual plans are the place to identify the detailed steps an organization will take to reach its goals in the year ahead. For example, the Western Shasta RCD annual plan includes goal statements taken directly from their strategic plan and lists the activities that will get them closer to reaching their goals. One of the goals listed in their strategic plan is to increase the number of associate directors that serve on their board. In their 2002-2003 annual plan, the specific task corresponding to this goal is, "Add at least one Associate Director who is a landowner with current agricultural expertise, e.g. cattle ranching, wildlife biology, fisheries biology." Their plan also identifies the individuals that will work towards achieving this task. In addition to identifying who will carry out the work, it's also a good idea to include a discussion of the funding and partnerships needed to obtain your goals in the strategic and annual plans.

Once the RCD has developed its vision, mission, goals, objectives, key tasks, and its annual plan, implementation is the next phase. However, strategic plans are meant to change with changing conditions in the district. So, it's a good idea to revisit your plan on a fairly regular basis. In the next issue we discuss the importance of creating annual reports.

*You can access the CARCD strategic plan on their website at <http://www.carcd.org>. The 1999-2003 Western Shasta Strategic Plan is also available on the CARCD website at <http://www.carcd.org/download/download.htm>

Permitting Continued

and Game), the NOD would need to be filed with the Office of Planning and Research. In either case, the NOD must be filed within five working days after approval of a project for which a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared. Filing of the NOD starts a 30-day statute of limitations on court challenges to the approval under CEQA, therefore it is important to make sure the lead agency does this.

Filing of the NOD must be accompanied by payment of the environmental review fees for the Department of Fish and Game. In our case that fee is \$1,250 (\$850 for projects approved with an EIR) plus any administrative filing fee the lead agency may require. The lead agency will not file the NOD without these fees so be prepared with a check. And that pretty much completes the process. Whoopee! Now all we have to do is complete condition compliance and obtain any required state and federal permits.

The first place to start with a state permit is... Oh boy, here we go again.

Written by Andrew Rush, Environmental Specialist

Grant Writing Help

RCD Assistance Program Staff are available to review your grant applications for state and federal grant programs. (excluding Dept. of Conservation programs) The staff will review your applications and provide you with suggestions where appropriate. Please allow adequate time for review, ideally at least 2 weeks before the application is due. Applications will be reviewed on a first come first serve basis. Contact Jenny at 916-324-0774 or send her an email at jdistefa@consrv.ca.gov for more information.

RCD Director Qualifications

Division 9 of the CA Public Resources Code lays out the guidelines for individuals to qualify to be an RCD director. First of all, the law states that directors must be a registered voter in the state of CA. (§9352) Secondly, directors must live within the district boundaries and own property within the district. As an alternative to the property ownership requirement, candidates can qualify if they have served on the board as an associate director for two or more years. Resident landowners within the district also have the option of designating individuals as their agents, which would qualify the agent to be an RCD Director. (If the agent is a registered voter)

Associate director positions allow those who do not own land within the district to take an active role in the district. Associate directors frequently provide districts with valuable input and expertise. The district is responsible for establishing rules about the requirements for becoming an associate director.

Department of Conservation

801 K Street, MS 13-71
Sacramento CA 95814

Phone: 916-324-0774

Fax: 916-327-3430

Email: rcd@consvr.ca.gov



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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 please feel free to call the RCD program staff at 916-324-0774 or send an email to rcd@consvr.ca.gov.