



## Trinity River Fish Counts Look Promising

**T**alk around town is that the salmon run this year was good. Very good. Preliminary numbers from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) support that talk. This wasn't always the case.

The salmon and steelhead fisheries began their decline when gold fever spread to the Trinity River watershed in the mid-1850's. Another factor adding to their decline in numbers were commercial fish canneries at the mouth of the Klamath River. Trinity River salmon pass through this Pacific gateway on their journey out to the ocean as juveniles, and again as adults returning to home spawning grounds. Added pressures included outdated logging practices in the mid-20th century which muddied the once clear waters; followed by dams, which created unvarying annual flows, warmer water temperatures and a river channel lacking natural diversity.

Several efforts were made in the late 1980's through the 1990's to restore fish habitat. After years of studying the causes of the declines, the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP), created by the Record of Decision (ROD) in 2000, began construction on river rehabilitation work in 2005. The supporting documents of the ROD stated "Anadromous salmonid production in the upper Trinity River between Lewiston Dam and the North Fork Trinity River is believed to be limited at present by lack of fry rearing habitat."

The TRRP's approach to river restoration focuses on creating fry rearing habitat through the combined actions of modifying seasonal flow to mimic natural water cycles; reducing sediment entering the river by working to improve the watershed through cooperative projects including road decommissioning, culvert replacement, and riparian and upslope planting; improving spawning habitat; and enhancing the diversity of in-channel habitat. The projects include engineering side channels, islands, and backwaters designed for the forces of the river to continue to sculpt them into the future; and employing a strategy of adaptive management which allows the TRRP to adjust future plans based on the results of past projects.

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November 2012: Coho spawning in a tributary of the Trinity River. This creek has benefited from years of conservation work to reduce in-stream sediment.

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## Trinity River Fish Counts Look Promising (continued from page 1)

Collecting population information on any species can be difficult. This is especially true of fish, like the Trinity River salmon and steelhead, which spend the majority of their lives in the ocean where factors affecting their health are beyond the river environment.

Steve Cannata, California Department of Fish and Game environmental scientist on the Trinity River Project, provides weekly trapping summaries for both the Willow Creek and Junction City fish sampling weirs and the Trinity River Hatchery. Trapping at the weirs has ended for the year.

“Based on the initial weir counts, the numbers of Chinook at Willow Creek are the highest we’ve seen since 2002. About 2,600 were counted,” Cannata said.

The weir captures only a fraction of the fish returning to the river, so most fish pass freely upstream to spawning grounds or to the hatchery. “We tag fish captured at the weir as part of a method to estimate the annual salmon run size in the Trinity River,” said Cannata.

CDFG relies on anglers to return the tags from fish they catch to help assess the population. As of November 11, about 18,500 Chinook have entered the Trinity River Hatchery. The total run size estimate for Chinook will be available in January 2013.

The counts for Coho at Willow Creek are about average, with the average return since 2004 being 543, and this year’s return coming in at 589. Steelhead counts came in at a little over 3,600, which were 2,000 more than last year’s count at Willow Creek. Steelhead numbers haven’t been that high since 2007, when nearly 5,200 fish were counted at the weir. Steelhead counts at the Trinity River Hatchery will not be completed until late March 2013.

“We don’t know the full numbers yet, but it certainly is a big run. And the fishing’s been great,” said Cannata.

River restoration efforts designed to increase fish populations can be measured. However, salmon lifecycles can extend up to five years. Several generations of fish still need to be counted to measure the true influence of restoration actions. The river continues to flow, contour and re-design itself, creating new habitat and erasing old. Collection, analysis, and review of data will continue to influence future restoration projects and, ultimately, the health of the Trinity River fisheries.



August 2012: Juvenile Chinook using created habitat near Indian Creek in the mainstem Trinity River. The large tree root in the background provides places for the young fish to easily hide from predators.

# Trinity Alps Academy Sixth-Grade Environmental Camp

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In mid-September, after the dust of a new school year settled, Weaverville sixth-grade students attended a much-anticipated event: Environmental Camp.

Held at Bar 717 Ranch near Hyampom, the two and a half day camp introduces students to water quality, soil science, stream ecology, stream flow measurements, forestry, fish and wildlife, bird watching and archery. Painting, writing, swimming, making s'mores and singing completed the schedule.

This year's successful environmental camp received support from parents, educators, TCOE, and presenters from the Watershed Center, USFS, NRCS, TCRC, and members of the community. The Trinity River Restoration Program and the California Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator grant supported the planning, organization and implementation for Environmental Camp.



# Indian Day, September 2012

The 2012 Indian Day held in September at Trinity County Fairgrounds honored tribal elders and offered hands-on activities for 247 students from 10 different Trinity County schools. Children experienced coyote storytelling, beading, soapstone carving and many more Native American-related activities. The Trinity County RCD offered fish printing to the students who visited our station. The Trinity County Indian Education Program coordinates this annual event.



## HAYFORK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS INVOLVED IN PLANNING WETLAND ENHANCEMENTS

Located on a former gold and gravel mining site south of Hayfork High School, 21 acres of unimproved wetlands are now in use as an outdoor classroom by the high school's students. The course - Environmental Science - became available as an elective to students in August 2012. The specially created curriculum goes beyond the expected topics of science and math to include civics, community planning rules, grant writing, research and scientific monitoring.

The impetus for the new course came when a visiting wetland scientist viewed the site by invitation from Josh Smith, Watershed and Fisheries Program Manager at the Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC) in Hayfork. "The wetland scientist thought the project area had a ton of potential both environmentally and socially. Our ideas for wetland enhancement and outdoor service education were validated and the project took off from there," said Smith.

Owned by Trinity County, the parcels containing the wetlands have several land use limitations including airport safety zones, FEMA floodplain restrictions, and "jurisdictional" wetland regulations. The WRTC and Trinity County continue to work toward a formal agreement allowing enhancement to the site that will restore natural function and allow public access and education.

While actual enhancements can not be started until county approval is granted, students continue to lay the ground work for future projects. Most recently students helped write a grant to the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Schoolyard Habitats program. They are seeking support to implement service learning projects of their own design. These include noxious weed removal and riparian enhancement, permanent monitoring stations, public education kiosks, trail maps and guided community tours.

Working with the Mountain Valley USD and Trinity County Office of Education (TCOE), WRTC secured funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Forest Service Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee to continue planning site enhancements for use as an educational resource. The TCOE received funding from the California Department of Education Service Learning STEM Project to create the specialized wetland curriculum. They plan to use the curriculum as a model for other schools in Trinity County.

Rafael Kofler teaches the class at Hayfork High. He said that while his students are learning about wetlands, he has made discoveries also. "I was surprised at the amount of bear scat we found out there. I didn't know that they were so close to town." Students expressed interest in different ecosystems and the benefits wetlands provide to society. One student, Jessica Strobel, said she didn't even know that Hayfork had a wetland area. Kofler confirmed many of his students were skeptical about the existence of the wetlands. "They thought it was just a bunch of rocks and trash out here," he said. They are learning that there's a whole world of diversity hidden just behind their High School. With persistence and some luck, these students could be future stewards of this unique area that has much more than just rocks and trash to offer the community.



Members of Rafael Kofler's Environmental Science class learned about wetland plants on a recent walk to the Hayfork wetlands south of the school grounds.

# 2012 Salmon Festival





The 2012 Salmon Festival was sponsored by the Trinity River Restoration Program and the Trinity County Chamber of Commerce

# New District Conservationist for Trinity County NRCS

John George has been named District Conservationist for the Trinity County office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS is a federal agency under the US Department of Agriculture dedicated to helping people help the land.

John moved to Weaverville from his previous NRCS post as Resource Conservationist and Tribal Liaison to the Yakama Nation in Toppenish, Washington. While in Toppenish, John worked on a wide a range of conservation projects including erosion control on irrigated row crops, forest health, wildlife habitat improvement and range improvement projects. As liaison between the Yakama Nation and the USDA-NRCS Washington state office, John assisted tribal committees working to improve the stewardship of their lands.



NRCS programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. The public benefits from enhanced natural resources that help sustain agricultural productivity and environmental quality while supporting continued economic development, recreation, and scenic beauty.

In 2011 John completed a 13-month detail in Afghanistan with the USDA, working to support and advance reconstruction of that country's farms and rangeland. He worked in Paktika Province, located in eastern Afghanistan along the Pakistan border. "I met some good men there. They want to feed their families like everyone else," he said.

Having grown up in northeastern Oregon where timber, ranching and a history of gold mining are part of the culture, John feels at home in Trinity County. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Range Management with a minor in Crops and Soils Science at Oregon State University's extended campus in La Grande, at the Eastern Oregon University campus. After spending six years as assistant herdsman for OSU in Union, John worked for the Wallowa (OR) County Soil and Water Conservation District before starting with NRCS. He has currently worked with NRCS for over seven years.



"I get great satisfaction from working with land owners. I understand their concerns and work with them to do what is best for them and the land," said Mr. George. In his spare time he likes to hunt, fish and help with the family gold mine. The 2007 hunting season was a good one for John: he bagged his 7 x 7 bull that now hangs in the NRCS service center.

The Weaverville NRCS office is located in the Tops Shopping Center and welcomes the public to drop by or call with questions, at 623-3991.



## NEW TRAIL BRIDGES INSTALLED IN THE WEAVERVILLE COMMUNITY FOREST

Five sturdy new timber bridges have been installed in the Weaver Basin Trail System to accommodate year-round enjoyment of its pleasant paths. The bridges span wet and muddy crossings along a spur route off of the West Weaver Creek Trail that climbs up into the hills away from the creek before looping back down. The trail, which has trailheads at both Oregon and Mill Streets, is open to hikers, bikers and equestrians. Motorized vehicles are not permitted.

John Condon, TCRCO project coordinator, spearheaded the project over two years. "I've begged and borrowed to get these bridges built and installed," he said. The timber for the bridges was harvested from the Weaverville Community Forest and hauled to Lewiston, where inmates at the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Trinity River Conservation Camp (TRCC) milled the logs into bridge kits.



CAL-FIRE Captain Nick Ciapponi, left, with TRCC inmates atop a newly finished bridge.



The bridges, ranging in length from 16- to 26-foot long by five-foot wide, were assembled off-site by TCRCO employees, trainees and volunteers. TRCC inmates then moved the heavy bridges to placement sites and installed four of them. TCRCO employees installed a fifth bridge and added railings and other finishing touches to each bridge.

District employees John Condon, Darrel Tate and Doug Crispin (not shown) installed the first bridge October 2012.



Installation of handrails by TCRCO employees (l-r) Jeff McGrew, Duke Klang, John Condon and Darrel Tate. Doug Crispin works on underside of bridge.

## Full Circle Farms CSA Trinity County Community Supported Agriculture

*"[A CSA is] a unique and creative way for farms and communities to become more sustainable. It is an excellent way for people to support local farms and get the freshest food in return. It is a way for children to learn about where food comes from. It is a way for growers to benefit from each other's knowledge."*  
-Local Harvest, A Multi-farm CSA Handbook

**I**n Spring 2013, Full Circle Farms CSA will be starting a Community Supported Agriculture project in Weaverville. Their goal is to sign up 25 families for a season of fresh, local produce, eggs, mushrooms, honey, and breads all grown, raised, and homemade by individuals and farmers from Trinity County. Desiree Coutinho, founder of Full Circle Farms CSA believes that CSAs are a vital part of a healthy community. "Working cooperatively we hope to make healthy, sustainably grown foods more available to local residents and nourish the community by connecting people to the source of their food," said Coutinho.

### What is Community Supported Agriculture?

Sometimes it is hard to know the country your food was grown in, let alone the individuals who grew that food. Community Supported Agriculture bridges that gap. A CSA provides individuals and families with the freshest, locally grown and produced foods. Members subscribe for the whole season and pre - pay monthly for a box of fruit, vegetables and herbs, with an additional option for eggs, mushrooms, breads, and honey. The contents of the box will vary depending on what is in-season. Subscribing for a whole season gives more responsibility to the consumer and ensures some economic stability for local growers, creating a mutual commitment between the farm and the consumers. "Joining a CSA is an investment in local farms and business," said Coutinho.

Full Circle Farms CSA plans to host farm visits and workdays for members and offer free educational workshops for everyone. "Community Supported Agriculture contains the potential to enrich community, strengthen the local economy, and draw people together for education, fun, and most importantly fresh, local food," said Coutinho.

This Community Supported Agriculture project is open to everyone in the community, not just farmers. If you can produce a fresh, sustainably farmed product that is of high quality, Full Circle Farms CSA is interested in working with you.

An informational meeting to discuss more details of membership will be held over the winter. If you have questions on how to sign up or would like to grow for the CSA, please email Desiree at [desiree.coutinho@gmail.com](mailto:desiree.coutinho@gmail.com) or call (541)-864-0210.



## District Manager's Corner

### A Message from our new District Manager, Alex Cousins

For my first message as District Manager, of many to come, I'd like to start by thanking the District's Board of Directors for giving me the opportunity to serve as District Manager. District staff has been extremely helpful, including former District Manager, Pat Frost, who continues to provide insight. I look forward to working with the board, District staff and the community to continue and expand the District's accomplishments.



I look forward to our ongoing collaboration with our partners on the many and varied projects we currently operate, as well as assessing the current community needs in order to develop new projects to meet changing goals. The Young Family Ranch provides this community an opportunity for education and program development; the Weaverville Community Forest is a living classroom and provides opportunities to work with partners to further explore forest management through collaboration; and continuing implementation of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan is key to developing fire resistant communities. Continued work with partners throughout the county on a variety of projects such as the Indian Valley Summer camp; southern Trinity fuels reduction project; Hyampom fuels reduction, and the Hayfork Wetlands will help to ensure that the entire county is part of the District's program.

The District's traditional guiding concept that "We All Live in a Watershed" will continue to be at the forefront of our planning and implementation of projects, as it is key to our success. We need to view projects as part of a larger effort to maintain a healthy natural environment and a healthy community.

While fire and forestry are often at the front of everyone's mind when talking about natural resource management, these two fields also have important impacts on fisheries and other aspects of natural resource management. Designing and maintaining our trails to reduce runoff is just as important as ensuring our forest roads are not delivering sediment to rivers and streams.

The writings of Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the US Forest Service, are a great place to look for guidance. Pinchot believed that natural resource management started with scientific management, efficiency, and economic benefit in relation to nature. We need to manage our public lands for the benefit of the community, while maintaining a healthy relationship with nature. I agree with Pinchot's belief that it's important to apply scientific principles to the maintenance and use of forests and rivers, and that forests should be managed for the greatest good, for the greatest number, for the longest time. Through community involvement and input we can achieve this goal.

Trinity County can be at the forefront of rural development through forest management by maintaining a balance between wildlife needs and management goals.

Being proactive, not reactive, provides us with an opportunity to work with our communities and follow through on Pinchot's words, which will help us realize a healthy forest and a healthy community.

Trinity County RCD is open to new ideas and has an open door policy. Please feel free to call me anytime, or stop by the office.

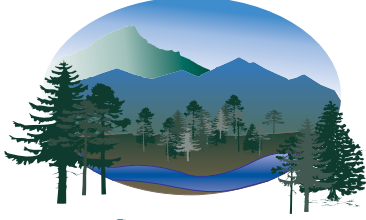
*Alex Cousins*

### Independent Science Advisory Board to Explain the Science Behind the Review of Trinity River Restoration Work

Starts at 6:00 p.m., Monday, January 7, in the conference room at Johnson's Steakhouse, Trinity Alps Golf Course, Weaverville.

You are invited and encouraged to learn about the science used to evaluate the first phase of Trinity River restoration. A question and answer period will follow. Please come and join us in learning about the independent analysis of restoration work that has been done so far on the Trinity River. For more information, please contact Ernie Clarke at 623-1800 or at Ernest\_Clarke@fws.gov.

Trinity County



Resource Conservation District

Trinity County Resource Conservation District  
P.O. Box 1450  
Weaverville, CA 96093

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## POSTAL PATRON

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### **District Board Meetings**

Third Wednesday  
5:30 PM  
Open to the Public

### **TCRCD Office**

Number One  
Horseshoe Lane  
PO Box 1450  
Weaverville, CA 96093

### **Telephone**

(530) 623-6004  
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**E-mail: [info@tcrcd.net](mailto:info@tcrcd.net)**  
**Internet: [www.tcrcd.net](http://www.tcrcd.net)**

*The Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) is a special district set up under state law to carry out conservation work and education. It is a not-for-profit, self-governing district whose board of directors volunteer their time.*

### **The TCRCD Vision**

**TCRCD envisions a balance between utilization and conservation of our natural resources. Through economic diversity and ecosystem management our communities will achieve and sustain a quality environment and healthy economy.**

### **The TCRCD Mission**

**To assist people in protecting, managing, conserving and restoring the natural resources of Trinity County through information, education, technical assistance and project implementation programs.**

**TCRCD Board of Directors are  
Mike Rourke, Rose Owens, Patrick Truman,  
Colleen O'Sullivan, and Greg Lowden.**

*The RCD is landowners assisting landowners with conservation work. The RCD can guide the private landowner in dealings with state and federal agencies. The RCD provides information on the following topics:*

- **Forest Land Productivity**
- **Watershed Improvement**
- **Water Supply and Storage**
- **Educational Programs**
- **Erosion/Sediment Control**
- **Wildlife Habitat**
- **Soil and Plant Types**
- **Fuels Reduction**

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