



Spring 2023 News

Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District

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Do you have a project idea for your property? We are actively working with private landowners who want to improve their natural resources by tailwater reductions, forestry thinning, prescribed burning, or other project types. Give us a call.

Beavers in the Shasta River

Ethan Brown, Senior Project Manager

Have you heard the term Keystone Species, Biogenic Restoration, or Beaver Believer? The terms refer to one of the first environmental engineers within the Klamath Basin, the beaver (*Castor canadensis*) or Sahpīnīich in the Karuk language.

Beavers are easily recognized by their wide tails and large front teeth, which they use to gnaw through small and medium sized branches and stalks. Beavers use the wood they collect to build dams within a water way to impound water and create ponds. In addition to providing the beavers with safety from predators and food stor-



Two beaver dams are visible inside a riparian fence where willows are planted and caged

age, their dams and impounded water actually cause subsequent geomorphologic and ecological changes such as increasing channel and habitat complexity, slowing or even reversing rates of stream incision, and raising the water table

adjacent to the stream, helping to sustain riparian vegetation.

There has been a flurry of activity to improve conditions for salmon, and one focus is restoring beavers to our watersheds. The Scott Valley used to be called Beaver Valley but all our rivers and streams were teaming with beavers in the past.

One group that has championed the return of the beavers is the Scott River Watershed Council. Based on the leading work of the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center (OAEC) in Sonoma County and others, they have embarked on ambitious project to give coho salmon more summer habitat using beavers. The group has given talks and provided support to a statewide effort to change the way bea-

Azalea Road-Side Fuel Break Project



Azalea where small trees and brush has been removed and shredded (masticated) to open up this oak stand road-side for wildfire safety.



The Shasta Valley RCD has completed the first phase of a roadside fuel reduction project on the Cal Trans Right-of-Way along northbound I-5 between the Siskiyou Avenue exit in Dunsmuir and the SR 89 interchange. During the summer and fall of 2022, contractors worked to remove small diameter conifers and brush. This project maintains large diameter conifers and promotes Black oaks.

In the spring of 2023, the RCD will work with Cal Trans and the County of Siskiyou to apply an herbicide treatment to suppress shrubs and remaining small conifers. This is an important component of the project as the increase in sunlight from the thinning will promote vigorous regrowth of shrubs species.

A Refreshed SVRCD Logo to Ring in a New Era



Founded in the 1950's, The Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District is excited to share our refreshed logo. For many years the SVRCD logo depicted a Canada Goose and Tule Reeds as a reminder of the grasslands and riparian ecosystems iconic to the Shas-ta Valley. The updated logo symbolizes the diverse projects and communities that the SVRCD services.



Our new logo combines imagery of watershed and water quality work and the forestry projects through the iconic depiction of Mount Shasta with the forests surrounds it and the rivers that

flow through our valleys. Here's to another 70 years of serving the Shasta Valley through forestry and watershed projects and it's many communities and ecosystems.

Siskiyou PBA Burn Plan Workshop Success

The Siskiyou Prescribed Burn Association hosted a burn plan writing workshop in January. A wide variety of partners and community members attended. This one-day workshop was an introduction to the elements of writing a burn plan for a prescribed burn and was held at the College of the Siskiyous campus in Yreka. The class wrote a burn plan for a mock burn unit in the oak woodland adjacent to the college campus. This workshop helped landowners and community members learn the planning portion of how to successfully and safely implement prescribed fire.

Thank you to our amazing instructor Sami Schinnell, Mark Klever from COS, everyone who attended the workshop and the entire Siskiyou county prescribed burn community who continues to support and make this work possible.



Yreka Ridge Fuel Break Update



The Yreka Ridge Fuel Break is progressing since the McKinney Fire impacted parts of the project area in the summer of 2022. The CEQA has been filed, completed and the project has been put out to bid. Work is projected to start in Spring of 2023.



Pre-mastication view of the project area. Small trees and brush will be masticated for the shaded fuel break.

Summary of SVRCD Current Grants and Projects

Parks Creek Riparian Fencing and Off Stream Stock Water	NCRWQCB	\$ 609,263
Elk Flat Meadow Habitat Restoration	NFWF	\$ 256,731
Horse Creek Storm Proofing and Watershed Infrastructure	NFWF	\$ 284,869
Azalea Roadside Fuels Reduction Break	Cal Trans	\$ 200,000
Yreka Ridge Fuel Break	Cal Fire	\$ 581,034
McKinley Scott Fuel Reduction	Cal Fire	\$ 4,817,427
Cal Fire Technical Assistance Program	Cal Fire	\$ 500,000
Shasta River Watershed Monitoring	SWRCB	\$ 113,000
Upper Sacramento Watershed Coordinator	DOC	\$ 99,999
Siskiyou County Fuels Reduction Collaborative Map	Cal Fire	\$ 242,900
West Mount Shasta Forest Resiliency Project (Phase 1)	Cal Fire	\$ 2,999,994
Yreka Craggy Mountain Good Neighbor Fuels Project	Cal Fire	\$ 1,607,954
Shasta River Watershed CRMP	USFWF	\$ 15,000
Siskiyou Prescribed Burn Assoc. (PBA) Leadership	DOC	\$ 148,240
Shasta Safe Harbor Effectiveness Monitoring Program	Other	\$ 19,500
		\$ 12,495,911

SVRCD utilized over \$1.6 million in grant funds in fiscal year ending 6/30/22 on a variety of contracts to assist critical natural resource projects in Siskiyou County. Of those grant funds \$1.24 million was expended on the projects with local contractors from both Siskiyou County and surrounding communities.

Beavers in the Shasta River (continued from page 1)

vers are managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). And they have been successful!

CDFW has announced a new policy to trap and relocate “nuisance” beavers instead of more lethal methods that were common place in the past. For more information on “Living with Beavers”, click here: [Beaver \(ca.gov\)](https://www.beaver.ca.gov)

In the Shasta River, we know that beavers are pretty common in and around our project areas. They are famous for plugging irrigation diversions and chewing down riparian vegetation (caged or not) that we have planted. Even when the project is not directly tied to improvements for beaver, they are present, active, and they are creating beneficial habitat, just doing what they do.

As Ethan Brown explains: “Beavers immediately moved in after the completion of improvements to irrigation conveyances and riparian vegetation. The beavers capitalized on the improvements and added mud, tules, a few small branches, and one of our temperature sensors. The beaver dam has raised the river stage several feet, and backs up water for several hundred yards. Deeper water means it is less likely to heat up as much at depth, which is beneficial for juvenile fish in the summertime. This is also very beneficial to the surrounding water table, which in turn benefits riparian vegetation by providing a steady depth for their roots to seek the needed water. Higher winter flows

The beaver dam has raised the river stage

are more likely to flood this field, replenishing nutrients and restoring river function. Flood stage hydrographs are also good side channel habitat for small fishes.”

To recap: beavers are good for fish, good for groundwater, good for riparian vegetation! What’s not to love?

As Ethan points out, “This presents an excellent opportunity to show the **overlap between irrigation and on-farm conservation projects** with **traditional ecological knowledge** and demonstrates the management that can occur once infrastructure improvements are put in place.”

Welcome New Board Members



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Stewardship Through Collaboration

We are excited to announce that we are hiring.

Check out our website for job announcements and bid outreach for local contractors.

This newsletter is sponsored and funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.



Jay Perkins joined the SVRCD Board in Feb. 2023: Jay is a retired Chief Fire Officer from the Klamath National Forest and have a career (over 40 years) of experience in forestry, management and fuels and fire suppression management. Perkins served on the Board of Directors for the Siskiyou Family YMCA, 14 years. He also served on the Board for Stable Hands, the non-profit Therapeutic Horsemanship Program of Siskiyou County .

Mike Luiz joined the SVRCD Board in June 2022: Mike owns a small sheep and hay operation in Big Springs, and is the Maintenance Manager at Siskiyou Golden Fairgrounds. He grew up on a dairy in Weed CA. Mike served in the US Army before returning to Siskiyou County. Served as a past State committee member of Young Farmers and Ranchers and board member and past president of the Siskiyou County Farm Bureau.

West Mt. Shasta Forest Resiliency Project

The California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) EIR was completed by Ascent Environmental, Inc in 2022. The West Mt. Shasta Fuels Reduction Program is currently the largest project in the state that has utilized the CalVTP process.

Treatment Strategies

The project will consist of non-commercial operations designed to improve forest resiliency and reduce the threats of wildfire and drought. The restoration of forest conditions will focus on removing brush, thinning trees, and debris disposal. Removing excess brush will reduce surface fuels and limit the fire hazard within the area. The

pruning and removal of specific trees will reduce the likelihood of fires traveling through the forest overstory and will decrease the competition for water and sunlight.

Participation and Funding

Nearly 13,000 acres have been assessed for the project. The project area will tie in with the USFS South Fork Sacramento Public Safety and Forest Restoration Project, which will treat the neighboring upper South Fork Sacramento River watershed.

Anyone interested in participating can contact Michael McGill, mmcgill@svrcd.org.

