

Sierra Nevada Conservancy-Progress Report

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2008 (Proposition 84)**

Grantee Name: Pit Resource Conservation District

Project title: Lower Ash Creek Restoration Planning Project

SNC Reference Number: G0710004 **Submittal Date:** 10/7/2010

Report Preparer: Todd Sloat **Phone #:** (530) 336-5456

Check one:

6-Month Progress Report

Final Report

<p>6-Month Progress Reports should reflect the previous six months. Final Reports should reflect the entire grant period.</p>

A. Progress Report Summary: (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.)

Activities conducted during this reporting period include: preparing the Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) to the California Dept. of Fish and Game (DFG), Water Quality Certification form to the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and information to notify the Corps of Engineers regarding 404 Compliance. Also, the Dept. of Fish and Game (DFG) submitted the Initial Study Negative Declaration that the Pit RCD prepared. DFG prepared their Notice of Determination in August 2010.

DFG initially responded to the SAA in September and finalized the agreement in early October, and the RWQCB responded and finalized their agreement in September 2010. This completes all agreement deliverables. Once implementation funds are secured and the implementation schedule is set, the Pit RCD will submit the final Notification to the Corps of Engineers.

B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones Achieved: (Include specific information, such as public meetings held, agency participation, partnerships developed, or acres mapped, treated or restored.)

Tasks Completed:

- Initial Study Negative Declaration submitted to the State Clearinghouse and Notice of Determination (NOD) prepared by DFG (see attached NOD).

- Final Design Plan prepared. One design plan has been prepared, reviewed, and finalized. The design plan proposes to restore stream and floodplain conditions for approximately 3,500 acres in the Ash Creek Wildlife Area.
- Final permit compliance completed (401 Certification, Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement, Corps notification package). The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) 401 Certification was filed and received (see attached). The Notification information was mailed to the Corps of Engineers, and the Streambed Alteration Agreement was prepared and sent to the California Dept. of Fish and Game (CDFG). CDFG staff conducted their site visit in early September and has prepared their agreement (see attached). Prior to construction, the RCD will need to submit final construction design drawings for the diversion pond structure to DFG.
- Project featured in Pit RCD newsletter and discussed at several stakeholder meetings (Fall River Big Valley Cattlemen's Association annual meeting, Pit River Watershed Alliance quarterly meetings, and Northeastern California Water Association monthly Board of Directors meeting).

C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered: After the initial design plan surveys and meetings with the DFG, it was apparent that the project boundary needed to be expanded to the east and include approximately another 1,500 acres. This presented challenges to the budget, but it also presented an opportunity to expand the restoration and improve overall management of the Lower Ash Creek Wildlife Area. One of the challenges was having enough funds to pay for the Streambed Alteration Agreement. Initially when the project was submitted to SNC, the Watershed Coordinator was advised by DFG that the Streambed Alteration Agreement process would be streamlined since the project was occurring on the State Wildlife Area that is managed by DFG. However, once the project was underway and the Coordinator started working with the regulatory branch of DFG responsible for permitting the project, it became clear that there was not a streamline process and the application fee payment would need to be included. The additional expansion of the project also increased the fee because the fee structure is tied to the actual construction cost. These two factors, when combined, resulted in the Pit RCD not having enough funds in the permit line item budget to cover this cost. Therefore, funds were used from another Pit RCD/DFG budget to cover the remaining fees for the SAA.

D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved: As mentioned above, the project area has expanded by about 1,500 acres. This presented several opportunities and challenges. Expanding the project not only increased the amount of acreage to treat, but it allowed the design to factor DFG's water diversion structure and ability to manage their water right. Currently, they operate a very dilapidated diversion structure that inefficiently moves water through an open ditch system. The project expansion allowed for the redesign of this system, the opportunity to greatly increase the efficiency of water transport, and the management of this water. DFG seasonally floods several seasonal wetlands for waterfowl and wildlife habitat.

An additional success was the lowering of Elkins Lane, or County Road 87a. Currently, this road restricts floodplain surface flows as the road elevation is between two to three feet higher than floodplain surface. Expanding the project upstream required the design to account for the road and the two bridges associated with the road. Modoc County, working on a separate project, was considering re-engineering and replacing the two bridges. However, since the design recommended lowering the road and eliminating one of the bridges, the County was able to avoid a portion of the bridge replacement costs.

E. Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs: (Please refer to your grant agreement to list your deliverables/budget categories and budgeted costs compared to actual costs incurred during this reporting period in the table below.)

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	Budgeted SNC Dollars	Actual Dollars
Personnel	2,000	2,026.14
Permit fees and expenses	1,000	452.00
Office expenses	200	221.65
Publications	200	200.00
Advertising	200	152.21
Contract Services	50,000	50,548.00
GRAND TOTAL	53,600	53,600.00

Explanation: (if needed)

F. Were there any other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables? If so, please attach copies. (Include digital photos, maps, media coverage of project, or other work products.)

N/A

G. Next Steps: (Work anticipated in the next 6 months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.)

The work during this reporting period completes all deliverables of the agreement.

Please Complete this Section for FINAL Report ONLY

Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders:

(What partnerships did you initiate or strengthen as a result of this project? How did they affect the project outcome? If applicable, how did this grant increase your organization's capacity? What is your plan to sustain this increase?)

The RCD strengthened partnerships with DFG, Ducks Unlimited, and California Waterfowl Association. Both stakeholders have been involved with projects on Ash Creek Wildlife Area, and because of this, coordination was required to learn about resource assessment results. Based on the coordination, the RCD is partnering with these two organizations for the proposed implementation project. Ducks Unlimited will provide engineering services from the proposed pipeline, and CWA will provide coordination for pond construction and contract development.

Description of Project Accomplishments:

1. Most Significant Accomplishment

Describe in one concise, well-written paragraph, the most significant accomplishment that resulted from this grant.

The grant provided an opportunity to develop an integrated restoration plan that included water diversion management as well as restoring the form and function of the creek and floodplain. Typically, these two components are not conducted in an integrated manner. However, for this project, the starting location of the project involves creating a diversion structure that functions to direct the stream to remnant channels on the floodplain, while also serving as a source to divert water into a pipeline. The pipeline will replace an open ditch system, which is also a gully, that the Wildlife Area uses to manage their seasonal wetlands. Combining these two components will create the largest meadow restoration project (3,500 acres) that also has the ability to maintain and manage water diversion for downstream users and the WA.

2. WOW Factor

If applicable, please describe anything that happened as a result of the project or during the project that is particularly impressive.

The project proposes to restore 2,415 acres of meadow and protect another 1,085 acres of meadow. The RCD believes this is the single largest meadow restoration project proposed or implemented in the SNC region.

3. Design and Implementation

When considering the design and implementation of this project, what lessons did you learn that might help other grantees implement similar work?

See response to item number one. Also, the RCD learned that DFG, when implementing a project on their property, must still pay for a Streambed Alteration Agreement which they are responsible for regulation and providing.

4. Indirect Impact

Please describe any indirect benefits of the project such as information that has been developed as a result of the project is being used by several other organizations to improve decision-making, or a conservation easement funded by this grant that encouraged other landowners in the area to have conservation easements on their property.

There are no known indirect benefits of the project.

5. Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

If you worked in collaboration or cooperation with other organizations or institutions, describe those arrangements and their importance to the project. Also, describe if you encountered conflict in the project and how you dealt with it, or if there was conflict avoided as a result of the project.

The RCD collaborated with DFG, Ducks Unlimited, and California Waterfowl Association. This project was stimulated by the RCD after DFG contacted the RCD and requested technical advice regarding riparian revegetation along Ash Creek. The Coordinator described the physical disconnection of the stream to the floodplain to DFG staff and offered to show them similar projects that faced the same resource issue but had received restoration treatment. Based on these meetings, DFG requested the RCDs help to secure funds in order to develop a restoration design. This resulted in the initial application to SNC, and eventually resulted in an excellent working relationship between the RCD and DFG.

6. Capacity-Building

SNC is interested in both the capacity of your organization, as well as local and regional capacity. Please describe the overall health of your organization including areas in need of assistance. SNC is interested in the strength and involvement of your board, significant changes to your staff, size and involvement of membership. In addition, describe how your project improved capabilities of partners, or the larger community.

This SNC grant, and other SNC grants for similar RCD projects, has been instrumental for providing viability for the RCD, their partners, and contractors in the area. Most all communities in the Pit RCD area are considered severely disadvantaged, and there is little opportunity for work in the area. The RCD's Business Manager, and their watershed coordinator, both live locally and work on

several other projects, many of which are volunteer in nature. The Pit RCD is a small RCD, but has been able to assist landowners and stakeholders with important resource projects. There has not been enough workload or opportunities for other funding sources to expand the capacity of the RCD, but the continued effort by the RCD stimulates project development with other partners and stimulates the community through economic activity.

7. Challenges

Did the project face internal or external challenges? How were they addressed? Describe each challenge and any actions that you took to address it. Was there something that SNC did or could have done to assist you? Did you have to change any of your key objectives in response to conditions “on the ground”?

The only challenge faced for this project was the need to ensure the budget could be met while expanding the project size by one-third. The RCD was able to use Dept. of Conservation grant funds (DOC) and DFG-RCD funds to make up for work when the budget was spent. For example, when the budget line-item had been used for coordination work, the RCD paid for coordination work through their DOC grant. RCD-DFG funds were also used to pay for a budget shortfall with the Streambed Alteration Agreement.

8. Photographs

Grantees are strongly encouraged to submit photos, slides or digital images whenever possible. These images will be used for SNC publications such as annual reports or on the website. Please make sure you clearly identify location, activity, and your project with each submitted image. Images will be credited to the submitting organization, unless specified otherwise.

The RCD has approximately 350 photos documenting site conditions on Ash Creek Wildlife Area. These photos are intended to be used for pre-project monitoring and will be taken in the future once restoration has been completed in order to show changes in habitat conditions. A good summary of these photos is provided in the Initial Study Negative Declaration, and a CD will be mailed to the SNC of this photo set.

9. Post Grant Plans

What are the post-grant plans for the project if it does not conclude with the grant? Include a description of the following (if applicable): (1) Changes in operations or scope; (2) Replication or use of findings; (3) Names of other organizations you expect to involve; (4) Plans to support the project financially, and; (5) Communication plans?

Post grant plans include securing funds through SNC and the Wildlife Conservation Board to implement the project. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has

granted the RCD \$100,000 for project implementation and the WCB Board has stated a strong interest in funding the restoration of the Wildlife Area. As stated earlier, DU and CWA will partner with the RCD and DFG to implement the project.

10. Post Grant Contact

Who can be contacted a few years from now to follow up on the project? Please provide name and contact information.

Todd Sloat (530-336-5456) and Sharmie Stevenson (530-299-3405).

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SNC-approved Performance Measures: (Please list each Performance Measure for your Project, as identified in your Grant Agreement, and the results/outcomes.)

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Project Reporting Guidelines

Progress Reports are required periodically throughout the term of the Grant Agreement (Refer to Exhibit B of the Grant Agreement). These reports will allow you and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to see the degree to which the project is on track and achieving your projected outcomes. Your Progress Reports will further provide the SNC with information that will help us to explain your work to the Board Members and various other audiences. Timing of Progress Reports is specified in the Project Schedule included in Exhibit A of the Grant Agreement, but generally every 6 months until completion of the project.

A Progress Reporting Form is provided to Grantees on the SNC Website. **Six-month Progress Reports** should reflect the previous 6-month period; **Final Reports** should address each question for the entire grant period – looking at the project as a whole.

The form specifies the items you will need to report on. For the Six-Month Interim Report these include, but are not limited to: *A Progress Report Summary of work completed, Deliverables or Outcomes Completed, Challenges or Opportunities Encountered, Unanticipated Successes Achieved, Actual Costs compared to Budgeted Costs, Any Additional Relevant Materials Produced, and Next Steps.*

The Final Report will include additional information, such as: *Resources Leveraged, Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders, a Description of Project Accomplishments, and SNC Approved Performance Measures.*

Please make sure that you submit complete reports by the dates requested in your Grant Agreement.