

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 Beaver Creek Planning Project

SNC Reference Number: 080220

Submittal Date: July 31, 2013

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Check one:

6-Month Progress Report

Final Report

6-Month Progress Reports should reflect the previous six months. **Final Reports** should reflect the entire grant period.

A. Progress Report Summary: (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.) [December 2009 to July 31, 2013]

The Fall River Resource Conservation District (RCD), in cooperation with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), conducted a planning project to address restoration and enhancement needs along lower Beaver Creek, a seasonal degraded stream and riparian floodplain system that is one of two major tributaries to the Pit River in the Fall River Valley. The total project area encompassed approximately 170 acres and consisted of roughly of 19,000 linear feet of stream. This project is consistent with the RCD's 5-year Strategic Plan and other regional planning efforts (i.e. Upper Pit River Watershed Management Strategy (2010), Draft Upper Pit River Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (2013)).

The dominant feature of the project site is a seasonal stream and associated floodplain. Historically, this ecosystem featured saturated hydric meadow soils in the floodplain and a riparian corridor along the stream. Past management practices (i.e. improper bridge design, water diversion structures, channelization, vegetation removal, and intensive season-long livestock grazing) are the likely causes of channel incision and disconnection to the floodplain. Today, management practices that contributed to these conditions have been corrected, but recovery of the stream and meadow in the near future cannot occur without active management and restoration techniques. As part of the project, restoration/enhancement designs were developed, resource surveys conducted, and California Environmental Quality Act compliance and other permitting (e.g. 404 permitting, 401 compliance) were completed. The project has been developed with landowner cooperation and has secured some implementation funding.

The proposed project addresses six SNC program goals: increased opportunities for tourism and recreation; protection of living resources; preserving working landscapes; reducing the risks of natural disasters; improving water quality; and assisting the regional economy.

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:

- Biological and archeological resource surveys conducted: reports prepared (botany and terrestrial wildlife August 2010, archeology in August 2010, aquatic in August 2010).
- California Environmental Quality Act Compliance – Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration (October 2012); Notice of Exemption (June 2013).
- Section 401 Water Quality Certification prepared and submitted August 2010 to Regional Water Quality Control Board; amended June 2013.
- Dept. of Fish and Game Streambed Alteration Agreement prepared and submitted August 2010; amended June 2013.
- Section 404 Clean Water Act compliance under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction (plans and specifications are required to be submitted 30 days prior to the start of construction). All the necessary data has been collected and will be provided to the entity who submit the information to the ACOE.
- Lower Beaver Creek Meadow Restoration, Design Report, August 10, 2010.
- Upper Beaver Creek Meadow Restoration, Design Report, August 5, 2010.
- Beaver Creek Enhancement Project, Design Report, June 2013.

C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered: Most of the challenges encountered were a result of this this project having multiple landowners each managing a portion of the meadow. Some adjacent landowners did not like one another and meetings were held separately, and two of the landowners resided in another region of the State and only visited their property on occasion. In both instances, neither landowner had a site manager living on the property or regularly working the land. Finally, one landowner passed away.

Additional challenges were associated with the landowner's reluctance to sign binding agreements for future implementation funds. They are/were concerned that the agreements would reduce the value of the property.

An unexpected opportunity was the formation of a partnership with Ducks Unlimited who included a portion of the restoration area into a grant application which was eventually funded.

D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved: As mentioned above, Ducks Unlimited included a portion of the project area into a North American Wetlands Conservation Act proposal. They successfully secured \$130,783.00

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 Spent
Coordination and Oversight	\$26,000	\$24,418.52
CEQA review and permitting	\$6,700	\$5,612.26
Resource Assessments, Design, Reports and Outreach	\$46,400	\$37,433.86
Administrative Costs	\$3,600	\$3,600.00
GRAND TOTAL		

Explanation: (if needed)

F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project? (If so, please list the Performance Measures below and describe your progress.) Yes, see below.

G. 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.)
No.

H. Next Steps: (Work anticipated in the next 6 months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.) The Fall River RCD will encourage the landowners to work with NRCS and apply for funds to implement the

Beaver Creek Enhancement Project. The Fall River RCD will also pursue finding additional funds to implement the rest of the restoration project areas.

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 NRCS staff and consultants. Both groups were responsible for assisting with components of this project and provided excellent products and support. The grant also helped the RCD maintain the Administrative Manager as well as their Watershed Coordinator. Both essentially rely upon grant funding to provide assistance to landowners and stakeholders within the region.

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 a partnership with Ducks Unlimited. The Coordinator was contacted by DU in 2011 as they were preparing a grant and sought to include a project that could improve wetland habitat within the Fall River Valley. The Lower Beaver Creek Restoration Project was selected and scaled back in size to meet the amount of proposed funding that could be requested. DU was notified in 2011 that their grant application to the North American Wetlands Conservation Act was successful. The Coordinator now regularly meets with DU to discuss potential future projects.

2. WOW Factor

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

See above explanation in item number one.

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 Coordinator learned how difficult it can be to work with multiple landowners. It will be difficult to implement projects that have several landowners because it only takes one to change their mind or for some unfortunate event to jeopardizes the continuity of the project.

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 NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, and Lassen County Planning Department (Lassen County). NRCS assisted with landowner outreach and developing ideas for future project work. This outreach and project will likely encourage one of the landowners to apply for EQIP funds in order to enhance their portion of Beaver Creek. Ducks Unlimited was able to secure \$130,783 to implement a portion of the restoration design plan just upstream of the Dee Knoch Road Bridge. This was the first time the RCD partnered with DU to leverage existing funds and design work and obtain implementation funds for a project through the North American Wetland Conservation Act Program. Hopefully this partnership will result in more opportunities and project work in the future. Finally, the collaboration with Lassen County was the first time the RCD successfully collaborated and provided input into the future design of a bridge that is proposed for replacement immediately upstream and adjacent to the project. If the suggestions are implemented, it will enhance habitat conditions within the proposed project area.

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, have been instrumental in providing viability for the RCD, their partners, and contractors in the area. Most all communities in the Fall River RCD area are considered severely

disadvantaged, and there is little opportunity for work in the area. The RCD Administrative Manager, and watershed coordinator, both live locally and work on several other projects, many of which are volunteer in nature. The Fall River RCD is a small RCD, but has been able to assist landowners and stakeholders with important resource projects. The funds made available through this project have been instrumental in maintaining employment for the Administrative Manager and Watershed Coordinator. It also increases the likelihood of sustainability of these two people because of the implementation funds secured by DU. This has and will allow the RCD to sustain their project work and office staff during very difficult economic times and while continuing to promote project development with other partners and stimulates the economic viability in the community.

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"?

Working with the multiple landowners was the primary challenge with this project. Some of the neighbors did not like one another so individual meetings were held. Also, one of the landowners passes away, and another sold their property at the most upstream portion of the restoration design. Finally, one landowner did not want any recommendations written about their property into a design report but verbally told the Coordinator they would attempt to promote the recommendation that was provided in the draft for their review.

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 numerous photos documenting site conditions in the project area. These photos were used for analysis, and will also be used for pre and post project monitoring

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 implementing the restoration design plan above Dee Knoch Road Bridge for a distance of about .5 miles, and implementing enhancement

practices downstream of Dee Knoch Road Bridge. The Coordinator also intends to meet the new landowners in the upper portion of the project area to determine if they are interested in implementing the restoration design plan.

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 Patty Betz (530-336-6591).

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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.)

1. Resources leveraged in the Sierra Nevada:

The purpose of this performance Measure is to measure the additional resources generated as a result of SNC investment. The total value is based on matching funds provided by external, number of volunteer hours, and the value of major in-kind contributions made to a project.

After receiving SNC funds, the RCD partnered with Ducks Unlimited who included a portion of the restoration plan to request implementation funds. DU successfully secured \$130,783. In addition, landowners spent several hours meeting with the Coordinator and reviewing plans. These hours, however, were not formally documented and compiled.

2. Number and Diversity of People Reached:

The purpose of this performance measure is to measure progress of information-sharing and education efforts and inclusiveness of other project efforts such as plan development.

The project was shared with approximately thirteen private landowners in the area as part of the development of the restoration and enhancement design plans. It was also shared with staff of Ducks Unlimited, California Waterfowl Association, and Partners for Fish and Wildlife.

3. Number and Type of Jobs Created:

The purpose of this performance measures is to measure economic benefits to the Sierra Nevada Region by tracking the full-time equivalent jobs created by SNC-funded activities.

Refer to Item 6 above and below text.

In addition to RCD staff and Watershed Coordinator, the project used local consultants to perform resource assessments and surveys. Although most of these consisted of one to two weeks of work, with the exception of the restoration design consultant (StreamWise) who worked several weeks on the project.

Overall the types of jobs directly created included project administration, project coordination, resource assessments, and restoration design. When combined, these jobs were determined to equal .83 FTE (see below table). No attempt was made to estimate the number of indirect jobs creating from the project (e.g. service industry that provides equipment rental, fuel, supplies, etc.)

Job Type	Number	Employment Length	Avg. Hrs. worked per week	FTE	Season
Resource Assessments	3	1.5 month	40	.11	Spring/summer
Coordinator	1	36 months	4	.3	All year
Administration	1	36 months	3	.22	All year
Design Consultant	2	24 months	4	.20	Spring/summer/fall

4. Number and Value of New, Improved or Preserved Economic Activities

The purpose of this performance measures is to measure economic benefits to the Sierra Nevada Region by tracking the full-time equivalent jobs created by SNC-funded activities.

The primary economic activities associated with this project include the employment of resource professionals and an administrative assistant that totaled approximately .8 FTE.

5. Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments:

The number of collaboratively developed plans and assessments is a measure that may be relevant for a wide variety of projects. Plans and assessments help communities plan for resource use, qualify for targeted funding, and support subjects include fire protection, water resources, land use, tourism development, habitat surveys and many more.

Three design plans were prepared and provided to landowners and NRCS for review. Each of the plans are hoped to lead to future restoration and/or enhancement of Beaver Creek. As mentioned earlier, one of the plans has been partially funded and the project is proposed for implementation in 2014. The other plans may also result in receiving implementation funds that ultimately lead to more project work, protection/enhancement of natural resources, and overall improvement to the local socioeconomics.