

## 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: **Central Modoc River Center**

Project title: **Central Modoc River Center Capacity Building Project**

SNC Reference Number: **SNC 070158**

Submittal Date: **10-28-09**

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

The Wings of the Warners Migratory Bird Festival was planned, promoted and held on September 20 & 21, 2008. An event committee included River Center staff, National Modoc Wildlife Refuge staff, Friends of the Refuge representatives, Nth Cal-Neva RC&D staff and other interested members of the public. The event committee met every other week from July through September, 2008 to plan the event. The River Center Director submitted articles and advertisements to local and regional media, provided event information on the River Center website, obtained permits, arranged for the event banner over Main Street, arranged support services and volunteers, sent out applications for vendors and exhibitors, and set-up the site layout. The event schedule and overall event was evaluated by the River Center Director and event committee at a meeting in October, 2008.

The Pit River Adoption Project committee held several planning and training sessions in August and September, 2008 to prepare for the Fall 2008 field trips. The Pit River Adoption Project committee includes:

- River Center Executive Director
- Project Coordinator
- Refuge staff
- Teachers
- PIT Club members
- Environmental educators.

Educational materials were procured and transported to the education site at the Refuge. Arrangements were made for professional environmental educators to serve as teaching

assistants during each field trip and to provide “in-service” training for teachers. In-class teaching and preparation provided direction and anticipation for the field trips. The field trips were held from September 30 through October 9, 2008 at the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge. Two follow-up meetings were held for evaluating the Fall field trips and beginning plans for the Spring 09 field trips. The Central Modoc Resource Conservation Service (CMRCD) provided professional services for the Pit River Adoption Project in processing invoices, accounting and financial reports.

Upon notification in December, 2008 of the California State budget freeze that affected several grants funding River Center programs, The River Center board and staff sought alternative funding and resources. A Challenge grant from the Refuge funded the Pit River Adoption program coordinator position at a reduced level. In order to continue the program, an advance was procured from TEACH, Inc. which funded the River Center Director position on a part-time basis to continue the Pit River Adoption Program. The River Center completed Pit River Adoption program tasks during the time period from January 5 through April 30, 2009. Spring Field trips were held during the first two weeks of May, 2009 serving over 500 students from the Modoc County area.

**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.)

The following deliverables and timeline were accomplished as planned:

Detailed Project Deliverables	Timeline
<b>Wings of the Warners</b>	
Twice monthly event committee meetings	June – September 2008
Obtain city, county, & State permits	June/July 2008
Arrange for support services and volunteers	June/July 2008
Arrange for vendors and necessary permits	July/August 2008
Complete event schedule & site layout	August/ Sept 2008
Hold Wings of the Warners event	September 2008
<b>Pit River Adoption Program</b>	
Program Committee meetings (monthly)	July – October 2008
Meetings with Wildlife Refuge & other agencies	July – October 2008
Teacher/ Teacher Assistant training	August 2008
Supply procurement/ field trip arrangements	August – October 2008
Site preparation	Sept/Oct 2008
Fall 2008 Field Trip Sessions for K – 8 w/ 12 <sup>th</sup> grade TA’s	October 2008
Progress report for both projects	November 2008
Program committee meetings (monthly)	January – May 2009
Meetings with other agencies	March – May 2009
Teacher/ Teacher Assistant training	March 2009
Supply procurement/ field trip arrangements	March – May 2009
Site Preparation	April/May 2009

Spring 2009 Field trip sessions held for K – 8 w/12th grade TA	May 2009
Final Report / Final Payment Request (delayed due to CA Budget freeze) originally due in June 2009	October 2009

The 2008 Wings of the Warners Bird Festival attracted approximately 450 people of all ages in attending the event on Saturday at Modoc County’s Veterans Park. Ten vendors and twelve exhibitors provided the public with information, activities, food and shopping opportunities. Two Scout Troops, the P.I.T. Club, and other volunteers helped with set-up, take-down and clean-up. The most popular presentation was by Wildthings, Inc. that included several live raptor demonstrations. On Sunday, seven adults attended the Birding Walk at the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge. John Ranlett, with Ducks Unlimited, provided excellent birding identification and interpretation. The high point during the birding walk included observing a juvenile peregrine falcon making repeated attempts to capture an injured duck.

The Pit River Adoption Project Fall field trips served 480 students, 29 teachers and several parent volunteers. Teaching assistants from Klamath Bird Observatory and independent Environmental Educators provided professionally presented interactive activities for the students. Classes from outlying areas were included in the Fall field trips. Preparation tasks for the Spring Field trips included: incorporating the Pit River Watershed Management goals into the field trip curriculum, updating River Center displays for class visits that prepare students for field trips, preparing presentations, communicating with the Pit River Adoption committee members via email, phone, and meetings, procuring and preparing educational materials, volunteer training, and processing invoices and making reports. The Spring 2008 Field trips served over 500 students and 30 teachers during a two week period in May, 2008. Again, a dozen parent volunteers helped during the field trips. Several staff from the Modoc National Refuge, Modoc National Forest and B.L.M. assisted with presentations during the field trips.

**C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered:** (Please describe what has worked and what hasn’t; include any solutions you initiated to resolve problems. If your project is not on schedule, please explain why here.)

The weather during the 2008 Wings of the Warners Migratory Bird Festival was overcast and cold which negatively impacted attendance. The Balloon Festival, usually held on the same weekend as the Wings of the Warners was held on the previous weekend. That had a negative impact on both events as attendance at each event compliments the other. The park was reserved for September 19, 2009 which brought the two events back together on the same weekend. The 2009 event had better weather, less advertising and more attendance of approximately 600 people of all ages on Saturday and nine adults on Sunday’s bird walk.

The Pit River Adoption Project had a logistical problem with storing and transporting the educational supplies and materials to the field trip site for each day. The Modoc National Wildlife Refuge resolved this problem by providing a new permanent storage building at

the educational site on the Refuge. The Refuge purchased 100 student sized ponchos and constructed a shelter at the education site for addressing poor weather days. A new restroom, located at the bus turn-around/parking lot, offers additional improved facilities for accommodating the Pit River Adoption Project.

The California State budget freeze had a negative impact on many organizations that utilize State funding, including the River Center. The unknown duration of the freeze created difficulties in managing cash flow and retaining staff. In the case of the River Center, TEACH, Inc.'s ability to "front" funding for a period of months allowed the River Center programs to continue. Once those funds were exhausted, the River Center Director continued to work nearly full-time as a volunteer for many months, and continues to do so as of October, 2009. The reimbursement requested with this report allows the River Center to pay long outstanding bills and to continue work on the Wings of the Warners 2010 event and the Pit River Adoption program in 2010.

**D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved:** (Please describe any additional successes beyond completing scheduled tasks or meeting scheduled milestones.)

A hoped for expansion of geographical influence of the Wings of the Warners 2008 event was accomplished. Though difficult to measure during the festival activities on Saturday, the Sunday Birding Walk included a sign-in sheet. Five of the seven participants on the bird walk came from outside the local area, one from Florida, one from Oregon and three from the central valley area. The Wings of the Warners 2009 event drew from a wider geographical area, due in part to the Balloon Festival being held the same weekend. These two events at Alturas during the same weekend compliment each other well as participants go to activities for both events. A free printed program that lists activities for both events encourages "cross participation." Future event planning includes the goal to keep both events scheduled for the same weekend in September.

The Pit River Adoption Project Fall 2008 field trips offered a special treat for sixty-one 2<sup>nd</sup> graders when 1,000 Sandhill Cranes spiraled upward, circling overhead and calling to each other as they prepared to migrate south. The magnificent sight enchanted students and teachers alike. The professional environmental educators knew to take advantage of such a wonderful natural occurrence. Everyone stopped planting trees to watch the Sandhill Cranes fill the sky.

**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.)

<b>PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>Budgeted SNC Dollars</b>	<b>Actual Dollars</b>
Wings of the Warners Event Coord	3,500	5,486.00
Pit Riv Adopt – prep, training, support	11,300	6,239.96
Pit Riv Adopt – teaching assistants	7,200	3,320.40
Pit Riv Adopt – contract mgt, reports	1,500	1,401.22
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>23,500</b>	<b>16,447.58</b>

**Explanation:** (if needed)

The \$1,984.76 difference between the budgeted and actual cost for the Wings of the Warners event coordination is considered a match from other sources.

The amount remaining in the Pit River Adoption project line items represents the amount not spent during the State of California budget freeze. The River Center was unable to expend additional funds without a timeline for reimbursement.

**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.)**

Yes, several relevant materials were produced. Please see attached photos and copies of media coverage. Also included are Pit River Adoption Project brochures developed and produced during the Fall of 2008 that utilized funding from the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge.

Also included are photos taken during the Wings of the Warners event and the Pit River Adoption Project field trips.

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

The Wings of the Warners for 2008 is complete. Additional funding will be sought for continuing the River Center's role in participating in the annual event planning, promotion and event implementation. During 2009, the River Center Director participated as a volunteer in the event planning and implementation. A River Center booth at the event offered educational information about Pit River Watershed natural resources.

Pit River Adoption Project planning, training, procurement and preparation continues with twice annual (Fall & Spring) field trips for K – 8 grades, now funded by a Challenge Grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Service through the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge. The Spring field trips to the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge in May, 2009 served 500 students as did the Fall, 2009 field trips. Planning meetings for Spring, 2010 are already underway.

## **Please Complete this Section for FINAL Report ONLY**

**Resources Leveraged:** (What kind and amount of resources -- funding or in-kind -- outside of the SNC were you able to leverage, and how?)

The River Center, together with other Wings of the Warners event committee members, worked with the Alturas Chamber of Commerce, Alturas Humane Society, Alturas Balloonfest Committee and local businesses to successfully develop resources for the annual event.

The River Center applied and received additional grant funding for the Pit River Adoption Project from the National Fish & Wildlife Service through a Challenge Grant at the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge. Additional funding was also used from a CalFed Grant that paid for part of the Coordinator's position. Natural resource agencies contributed in-kind staff time for leading activities during the filed trips in 2008 and 2009. Those agencies include the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, Modoc National Forest, Central Modoc Resource Conservation District and B.L.M. Also, the River Center Director continues to contribute extensive volunteer time toward the Pit River Adoption Project. Eagle Optic offered binoculars for half-price when purchased for educational programs. That offer provided the River Center with the opportunity to purchase 30 binoculars dedicated to the Pit River Adoption Project.

**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 River Center staff leadership provided through the SNC grant for the Wings of the Warners event developed a strong relationship between River Center staff and the other event committee members. The relationship proved strong enough that when the 2009 year faced a decrease in funding, the River Center staff and event planning committee members sought and found different sources of funding and support that allows the event to continue.

The partnerships between the River Center and each of the agencies involved in the Pit River Adoption Project strengthened as a result of the SNC funded portion of the project. It's important to demonstrate matching funding for the Challenge Grant provided by the National Fish & Wildlife Service. By doing so, additional funding was made available to continue the project in 2009 and 2010. Attending the monthly planning meetings throughout the year provides an opportunity to establish long-term relationships between the River Center and agency staff. The meetings were not monthly until the SNC funding provided for staff time to attend the meetings. Once started, the monthly frequency continues as everyone attending found benefits in more frequent planning meetings.

The grant increased the River Center's capacity by involving professional environmental educators. Environmental educators facilitated training sessions for teachers and teacher assistants that included informative presentations and interactive training. The best presenter was from the Klamath Bird Observatory, but moved to the East Coast during the summer of 2009. Agency staff learned activities and techniques that can be continued by River Center and agency staff in the absence of the environmental educators. Enhancing and further developing the Pit River Adoption Project appeals to teachers. More teachers are now participating in the planning committee. An increased number of teachers want to bring their classes on the twice per year field trips and to the River Center. Teachers are also showing an increasing interest in other River Center programs, such as native plant gardening, watershed friendly landscaping and Pit River Watershed geology.

Though the change was not planned, the freeze in funding precipitated a change that resulted in capacity building. The River Center's capacity was increased by the change from the CMRCD staff to River Center staff in providing professional services in processing invoices, accounting records and financial reports. CMRCD staff held several training sessions with the River Center Executive Director during December 2008 through March 2009 for implementing the change in March of 2009. The long-term partnership between CMRCD and the River Center grew to a more mature level with the shift in financial responsibilities.

### **Description of Project Accomplishments:**

#### **1. How did the Project succeed in accomplishing its intent?**

The support provided by the SNC grant allowed the River Center staff to further develop community participation in planning and attending the Wings of the Warners annual event. Through more community outreach, a local wildlife rehabilitator became involved in demonstrating live raptors at the event. Support from local businesses also grew for the event.

The Pit River Adoption Project increased the River Center's capacity by improving the program content and by increasing agency participation and support. Also, teachers began demonstrating more involvement in the Pit River Adoption Program by including class room activities that prepare and then reflect the field trip experiences. A trend for teachers increasing their involvement in the activities began when the SNC funding provided environmental educators that demonstrated interesting and applicable learning activities.

**2. Describe any follow-on or indirect benefits resulting from the Project.**

The successful event and project implementation resulted in new contracts between the River Center and other agencies to provide additional public education programs. One example is the Warner Mountain Geology Interpretation project for the Modoc National Forest and another is a Sage-Steppe Restoration Interpretation project for B.L.M. These projects represent follow-on projects that agencies felt the River Center capable of producing after participating with the Wings of the Warners event and/or The Pit River Adoption Project.

**3. Describe any significant experiences, unanticipated results or noteworthy events that create a “wow” factor.**

At this point in time, it's a “WOW” factor that the River Center survived the State of California budget freeze of many grant programs. The sudden freeze created cash flow problems and lay-off of key staff for many agencies throughout California. The SNC projects and other River Center programs continued due to community support and staff dedication. The River Center Executive Director continues to volunteer almost full-time in order to keep the River Center programs moving forward.

**4. Describe any Lessons Learned.**

The main lesson learned during the Wings of the Warners event planning and the Pit River Adoption Project regards the extensive community support of the River Center programs. TEACH, Inc. provided the means for staff to continue working for many months before they called for re-payment. When River Center staff could no longer provide the full level of time commitment for program support during 2009, volunteers and agency staff stepped up to assist. The Central Modoc Resource Conservation District (CMRCD) has not asked for payment of an invoice it sent the River Center in November 2008 for professional services associated with the Pit River Adoption project. The CMRCD has patiently waited for that payment while continuing positive work with the River Center. It's amazing to have a partner who will wait a year for payment without complaint. The River Center Board and staff are grateful for its community supporters.

**5. How do you intend to share the results of your work on this project?**

Sharing the results of this project is on-going as the Wings of the Warners event planning committee continues its work. Sharing results is also ongoing as the Pit River Adoption Project continues to plan for the next round of field trips in 2010. Articles in local media and information displayed at the River Center and on the River Center website provide other means for sharing the results of the

work on this project. Participants and students provide excellent word of mouth communication about the project.

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

Number of people reached:

*Wings of the Warners* event, 2008:

People of all ages – toddler to elderly = 450 participants, 10 vendors, 12 exhibitors, two scout groups (youth), the PIT Club (four teenagers) and a dozen adult volunteers.

*Pit River Adoption Project – Fall 2008* - 480 students K - 8, 29 teachers, a dozen parent and adult volunteers and one 12<sup>th</sup> grade teaching assistant and six adult Teaching assistants.

*Pit River Adoption Project – Spring 2009* – 500 students, K - 8. Additional students came from the outlying communities of Canby and Likely. 32 teachers, 20 parent and adult volunteers and four adult teaching assistants from local agencies plus one 12<sup>th</sup> grade teaching assistant who received a college scholarship based on his teaching potential observed during the field trips.

Observable changes in behavior/ attitude of students toward the watershed are based on art work and poetry produced by students after the field trips. Also, several students brought their family to visit the River Center after attending field trips. The observed behaviors included thoughtfulness and increased understanding about wildlife, birds, plants, water and the fact that a National Wildlife Refuge exists close to their home. Students expressed excitement and joy in the outdoors through their exuberant participation in each activity during the field trips. The teachers also expressed increasing interest in active participation in planning the field trip activities and integrating the lessons from field trip activities into their class room learning. The Refuge staff is also gaining interest and participating more actively in planning and assisting with the field trips.