



# TRUCKEE RIVER CURRENTS

PUBLISHED BY THE TRUCKEE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

SUMMER 2009

## Truckee River Day



ROBIE LITCHFIELD

October 18, 2009

Please join us!

[www.truckeeriverday.org](http://www.truckeeriverday.org)

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I had this wondrous sense, as hard to put into words now as it would have been then, that everything was going to be all right.

~Excerpted from an essay "The Truckee River" by Johnny Tenkiller

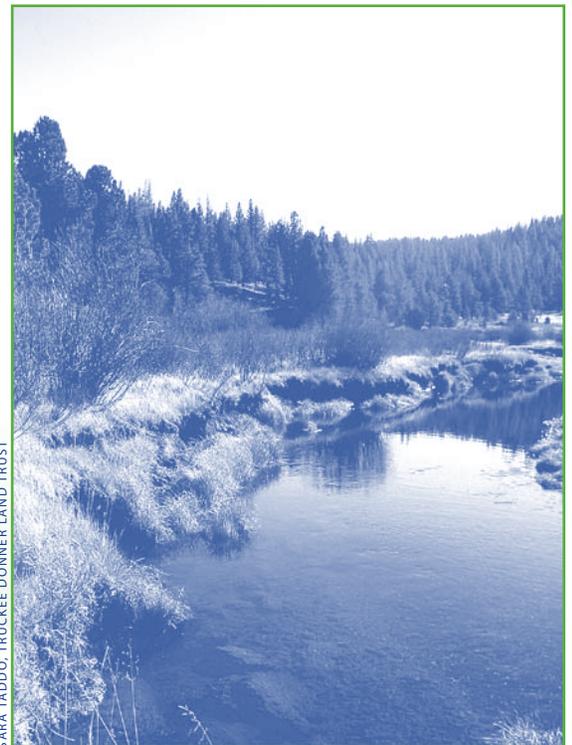
## Perazzo Meadows Restoration

Greyson Howard

*Perazzo Meadows is the northern part of the Truckee River watershed, about 10 miles northwest of the Town of Truckee. The meadows are ranked by state and national agencies as some of most valuable stream and meadow habitat in the Sierra Nevada. In 2004, Truckee River Watershed Council formed a partnership with the US Forest Service, Sierraville District and the Truckee Donner Land Trust to protect and restore Perazzo Meadows.*

*We are particularly grateful to Randy Westmoreland and Quentin Youngblood of the US Forest Service and to Sara Taddo Jones and Perry Norris of the Truckee Donner Land Trust for their dedication to this project. Funding for this project has come from the California State Water Resources Board and our donors.*

*Truckee River Day on October 18, 2009 will feature a restoration project in Perazzo Meadows.*



SARA TADDO, TRUCKEE DONNER LAND TRUST

**N**ow that Perazzo Meadows is preserved and in public hands, the next step is restoring the Sierra County landscape to its former glory.

The 982 acres of sub-alpine meadow north of Truckee was recently preserved by the Truckee River Watershed Council, the Truckee Donner Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land. Now the U.S. Forest Service and Watershed Council are teaming up to restore the Little Truckee River and Perazzo Creek to undo past damage and improve the local ecology.

The problem likely started in the early 1900s with a dairy farm, said Randy Westmoreland, watershed program manager for the east side of Tahoe National Forest.

**Since being moved off their original courses in the early 1990's, the streams in Perazzo meadows are too wide and too shallow, degrading fish habitat and water quality. The stream banks are unstable and eroding the meadow system.**

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Co-Chair, Truckee River Basin  
Water Group

**Robie Litchfield**  
Co-Chair, Truckee River Day  
Steering Committee

**Joanne Roubique**  
Chair, Watershed Issues Forum

**Sara Taddo Jones**  
Chair, Projects and  
Assessments Committee

**Laurie Soule**  
Co-Chair, Truckee River Basin  
Water Group

**Sarah Trebilcock**  
Co-Chair, Truckee River Day  
Steering Committee

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Organizations are for identification purposes only

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Executive Director

# What's Happening in the Truckee River Watershed?

## Helping Donner Lake and Negro Canyon

Gregory Creek runs through Negro Canyon and empties into Donner Lake. Past land use practices have created severe erosion problems in the creek—tons of excessive sediment are flowing into Donner Lake. In early 2009, we completed a watershed assessment that identified over a dozen restoration sites. Thanks to a grant from the Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation Nature Fund, we're partnering with the Truckee Donner Land Trust to restore two high priority sites.

## Measuring Water Quality of the Truckee

Adopt-a-Stream is a volunteer-based water quality monitoring program providing reliable scientific data on local streams. We collect, identify and analyze benthic macro-invertebrates (water bugs) and various types of water samples. We have a dedicated crew of experienced volunteers and gladly welcome new volunteers. The summer collection season will end in September and the winter lab season will start in November. Call 550-8760 or check the website.

## Prosser Creek Fish Habitat Enhancement

Prosser Creek below the dam could be better trout spawning habitat than it is. The dam and other land uses have significantly impacted the stream. Thanks to grants from Bella Vista Foundation we're partnering with the USFS Tahoe National Forest and California Department of Fish and Game to restore this reach of Prosser Creek. Watch for a presentation in late 2009.

## Truckee River Day

Join us Sunday, October 18, 2009 on one of a dozen restoration projects throughout the watershed. Over 500 volunteers will work on projects in Perazzo Meadows, the Little Truckee River, and the Truckee River Canyon. Registration opens mid-September at [www.truckeeriverday.org](http://www.truckeeriverday.org).



SCOTT CECCHI

During the TRAM summer field season, teams collect samples from at least six streams in the watershed.

# Coldstream Canyon Ponds Restoration

Greyson Howard

*This wetland and pond restoration project is in Donner Memorial State Park. Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the Truckee River watershed—providing clean water and habitat for birds, fish, and reptiles. To insure we have wetlands in the future, in 2005, Truckee River Watershed Council formed a partnership with the State Parks to restore the ponds.*

*We are particularly grateful Cyndie Walck of State Parks for her dedication to this project. Funding for this project came from the State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Parks and Recreation and our donors.*

*Volunteers helped on this restoration project during the 2008 Truckee River Day.*

**B**eth Christman and Cyndie Walck stepped out of Walck's Jeep Tuesday afternoon, checking out their latest restoration project.

The site is a small pond in Coldstream Canyon, created in the gravel mining days and habitually thrashed by four-wheelers since.

For Christman, of the Truckee River Watershed Council, and Walck, of California State Parks, the goal was to create rare wetland habitat around the pond, known for being productive and biologically diverse.

And as if to illustrate the point, thousands of tiny frogs erupted from the cracked mud bank and swarming down to the water's edge, where a garter snake waited for an easy meal.

"It's a lot more biologically productive and great for water quality—filtering sediment and pollutants," said Christman, program director for the Watershed Council.

Walck, a fluvial geomorphologist for California State Parks, said the ponds were first created for gravel mining, taking advantage of all the sediment washed down the canyon by Cold Creek.

"It was probably forest before the mining, but now it's wetland, so we're trying to take advantage of that," Walck said. "We already have a lot of forest but not much wetland, so this is more valuable."

But it isn't just barring off-roaders from the pond and throwing down some seeds—the collaborative effort is actually a study to see what conditions are best to bring back the sensitive habitat, started with the help of 40 to 50 volunteers at the 2008 Truckee River Day, Christman said.

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CYNDIE WALCK, CDPR

**Three different restoration techniques were implemented and are being monitored for their results. In October 2008, Truckee River Day volunteers helped lay out the three restoration plots.**



CYNDIE WALCK, CDPR

**Spring runoff in 2009 is already helping the ponds transition to the wetland habitat.**

## COLDSTREAM CANYON PONDS RESTORATION

Continued from page 3

“We’ll monitor these plots for three or four years to see what the trends are,” Walck said. “And hopefully we can create more shoreline habitat.”

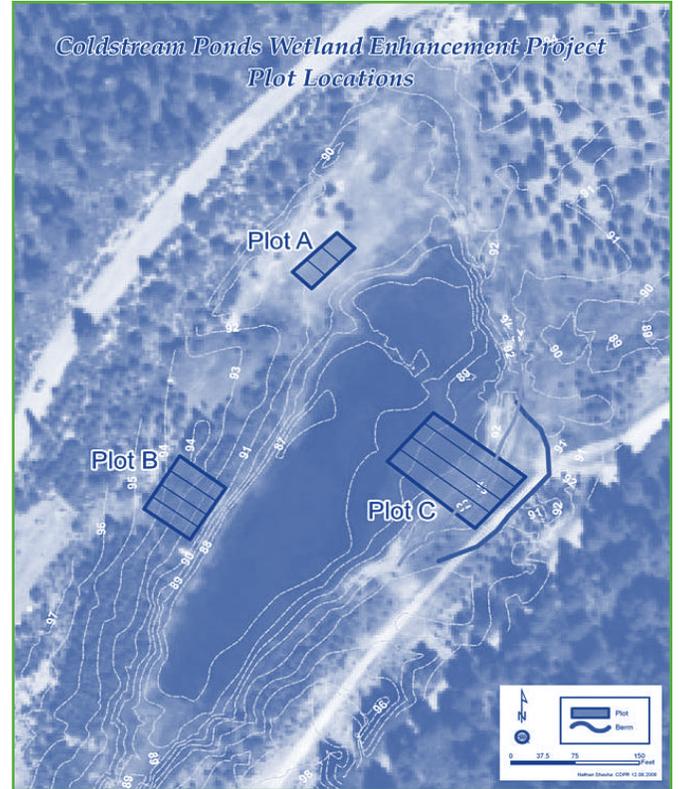
The pond project, along with others planned down the line in Coldstream Canyon, could go a long way to repairing the watershed, reducing the sediment that flows down Cold Creek, into Donner Creek, and ultimately the Truckee River.

With the threat of the state legislature shutting down most state parks, including Donner Memorial State Park that owns the Coldstream property, Walck said the pond is in a position to do well enough on its own should funding dry up.

“If Donner State Park closes, the Truckee River Watershed Council has an obligation to continue monitoring for three years—we have a little funding from mitigation funds,” Christman said.

Other watershed council projects have been frozen, along with state grant funding, but some, like the work in Perazzo Meadows on the Little Truckee River, seems secure, Christman said.

*We thank the Sierra Sun for their generous permission to re-print this article. Read more at [sierrasun.com](http://sierrasun.com).*



CARMEL STUDIOS

## What Is a Watershed?

Watersheds are nature’s boundaries. A watershed is the geographic area of all land that water flows across, under and through on its way to a particular body of water. And we all live in one. (We are in the Truckee River watershed.)

On the edge of a watershed are the landscape’s ridgelines, mountains, and hills. If a raindrop falls on the east side of the Continental Divide, it may end up in the Mississippi River. But if it falls just a foot to the west, it travels a different path entirely—one that leads towards the Pacific Ocean. (The Sierra Crest is one of our ridgelines; the Truckee River terminates in Pyramid Lake.)

Everything we do impacts our watershed. Land and water uses from any part of the watershed—such as polluted run-off from highways, trails, yards, forests, ranches, and towns—eventually affect the health of the whole watershed. Each one of us can make a difference within our own watershed.

## PERAZZO MEADOWS RESTORATION

Continued from page 1

“There are indications they diverted the stream from its natural course to de-water what would be a really wet wetland for grazing purposes,” Westmoreland said. “People didn’t think much about the consequences way back when.”

This meant water was concentrated into a smaller area and sped up, causing erosion throughout the meadow, and drying out vegetation.

If the stream were on its natural course, it would overtop its banks every year or two, inundating the flood plane, which waters the vegetation and filters out sediment more effectively, Westmoreland said. Now it takes a 10-year flood event to overtop the eroded banks.

This also means water isn’t retained in the area as long through the dry summer months, and the two streams get too warm for many fish species, Westmoreland said.

So the forest service and watershed council started looking at fixes, obtaining a Proposition 40 grant for \$373,000, said Beth Christman of the Truckee River Watershed Council.

When the state started freezing grants, the State Water Board selected a subset of projects and converted them to Stimulus package funds, including Perazzo Meadows, keeping the project on track for this summer, Christman said.

To get things back in working order, Westmoreland said he will work with an excavator and a loader to create plugs in the current stream course, diverting it back to its original route through the meadow.

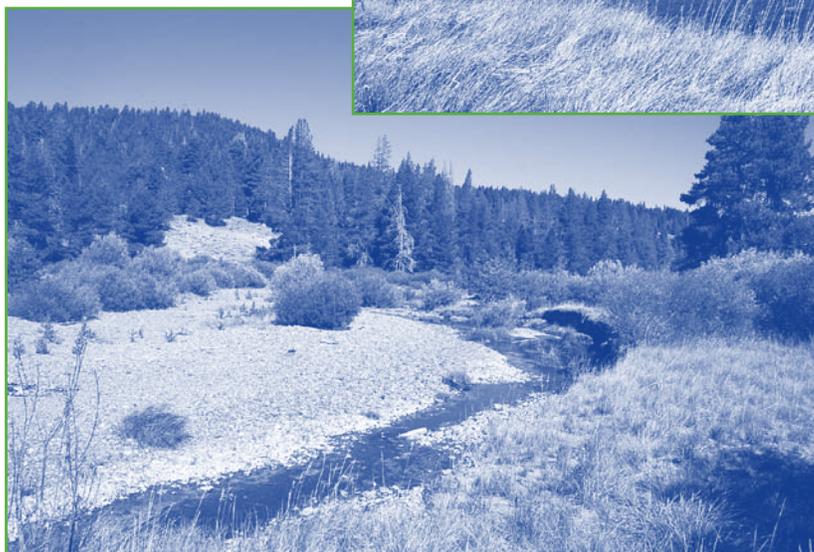
The work crews will have to use earth from the area to make the plugs, which will leave behind some ponds, he said, which will eventually fill in with sediment and vegetation.

Work starts in the upper meadow mid-August, Westmoreland said, and continues next summer in the mid-meadow area.

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TRUCKEE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

**WE HAVE A RANGE OF NEEDS FROM SMALL TO LARGE:**

- Fiber optic light source for microscopes (up to four) for water quality monitoring
- Truckee River Day safety video
- Truckee River Day video Public Service Announcement
- Radio Public Service Announcements for events
- Tools for Truckee River Day
- Watershed display for outreach booth
- Exterior sign for office
- Conference room chairs
- Very sturdy, movable conference room/lab tables
- Photographs of staff, board, coordinating committee for web site
- Technology Assessment and Plan
- Adopt-A-Stream volunteers for water quality lab work
- Five-line (or more) live telephone system

Wishlist

**The Economy's Impact on Restoration Projects**

*This year, thanks to your support, we've been able to continue working on several important watershed restoration projects.*

Due to the economic downturn and California's budget crisis, many of our restoration projects have been indefinitely suspended. These include:

- Merrill Davies Stream and Meadow Restoration
- Coldstream Canyon Floodplain Restoration
- Residential Erosion Control Project at Donner Lake
- Professional Water Quality Monitoring of the Truckee River

We know the impact of the State budget crisis is widespread and affecting many organizations and people in our region.

We are always grateful for the volunteer and donor support we receive, but in these recent times we are especially thankful. This year, we have been asking for your help and because of your support we have been able to continue working on other important watershed restoration projects including:

- Negro Canyon Restoration, with our partners the US Forest Service and the Truckee Donner Land Trust
- Prosser Creek Fish Habitat Restoration, with our partners the US Forest Service
- Truckee Wetlands Restoration Partnership, with the Truckee Donner PUD and the Town of Truckee
- Truckee River Day
- Adopt-A-Stream Water Quality Monitoring

We hope you can join us for Truckee River Day on October 18, 2009 to participate in restoration projects throughout the watershed!

*thank you!*

**The strength of the Watershed Council** comes from our partners and stakeholders. They work through four committees to set the direction of our restoration work. Together the committee leaders form the Coordinating Committee. Our streams, wetlands and meadows are benefitting from the dedication of the Coordinating Committee.

**The Truckee River watershed has benefited** greatly from the expertise and advice of the Watershed Council board members. This often quiet and behind-the-scenes group of people has made our streams, meadows and wetlands are better known and more protected than ever before.

**Coordinating Committee**

John Eaton  
Co-Chair, Truckee River Basin Water Group

Sara Taddo Jones  
Chair, Projects and Assessments Committee

Robie Litchfield  
Co-Chair, Truckee River Day Steering Committee

Laurie Soule  
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Joanne Roubique  
Chair, Watershed Issues Forum

Sarah Trebilcock  
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Gayle Dana *Secretary*  
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Dave Giacomini  
Jake Hudson  
Lauren O'Brien *Chair*  
Jody Poe  
Bonnie Riley  
Gail Stephens

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Richard Anderson  
Kathleen Eagan  
Julia Gold  
Rich Gresham  
Mike Griesmer  
Martyn Hoffmann  
Joan Jones  
Andy Morris  
Cadie Olsen  
Trinkie Watson

*thank you!*



*These donors have made a long-term commitment to the Truckee River watershed. They are members of the Together for the Truckee Society. We deeply appreciate their confidence in our restoration and protection projects.*

**Protect the River –  
\$5,000 a year for 5 years**

Sierra Mountain Mortgage  
Shelley and Michael Perry

**Restore a Stream –  
\$1,000 a year for 5 years**

Alpine Meadows Ski Resort  
Juliet Bradley  
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Joanne Roubique  
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Kathy and Pat Setter  
Shaw Family Farm  
Sierra Insurance Associates, Inc.  
Gail and Rick Stephens  
Vaille Construction, Inc.  
Lisa Wallace and Family  
Ward Young Architects

## Donors to the Truckee River Watershed Council

*We thank the following donors and grantors who have made contributions in this calendar year. They have provided resources to find solutions to protect, enhance and restore the Truckee River watershed. Together we are making a difference!*

**\$1,000 – \$2,499**

Mary and Chip Brown  
Penny and Robert Fink  
Michael Sabarese  
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**\$500 – \$999**

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Laurel and C. Anders Holmer  
Kaitlin Backlund and Ronald Hunter  
Val Kelly  
James Kercher  
Kerensa Kruse  
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**\$20,000 and up**

Bella Vista Foundation  
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National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
The Nature Conservancy  
Sierra Nevada Alliance  
Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
State Water Resources Control Board  
Tahoe Mountain Resorts  
Environmental Fund  
The Nature Fund of the Truckee  
Tahoe Community Foundation  
Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation

**Up to \$10,000**

Lahontan Community Foundation  
Town of Truckee  
Truckee Donner Public Utility District

*If we missed or mis-identified you or your organization, please call and let us know: 530-550-8760.*

It was the best water I was ever going to taste. It was icy cold, fed by the summer melt of the glaciers above Lake Tahoe, and fast-moving enough to be inhospitable to algae, amoebas, and mosquitoes. As I lay there on my stomach, inhaling the pine-scented air and gulping the frigid, crystal clear water, I looked at the polished grains of granite sand on the bottom. The water was so clear I could see every grain of sand. I looked upstream and saw the waning afternoon sun gleaming on the calmer parts of the stream, and the white foam at its center flashing as it swept down the gorge.

I felt like I was somehow part of it, not a separate being regarding it, but part of its 'being.' And I had this wondrous sense, as hard to put into words now as it would have been then, that everything was going to be all right.

*Excerpted from an essay "The Truckee River" by Johnny Tenkiller.*

*We thank Moonshine Ink for their generous permission to re-print this article. Read more at moonshineink.com*



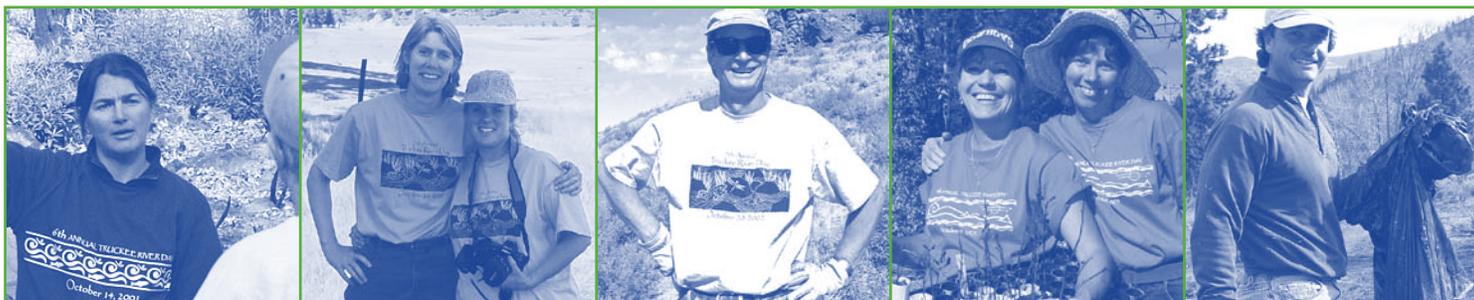
RUSSELL ROSEWOOD

## Want to be a Group Leader for Truckee River Day 2009?

Since 1996, Group Leaders have led restoration projects on Truckee River Day. If you'd like to be a Group Leader for Truckee River Day 2009, please join us at the Group Leader BBQ September 15, at Truckee Regional Park. Call Beth Christman for more details, 550-8760.

### Thank you, Group Leaders!

- |                  |                     |                          |                   |                           |   |
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| Troy Corliss     | Jeannette Halderman | Tony Lashbrook           | Stefanie Olivieri | Carrie Smith              |   |
| Gayle Dana       | Shelley Harris      | David Lass               | Cadie Olsen       | Georgia Smith             |   |
| Steve Disbrow    | Mary Hetherington   | Susan Levitsky           | David Olsen       | Paul Smith                |   |
|                  | Ed Heneveld         |                          | Andy Otto         |                           |   |



Joan Jones, Annaliese Miller, Robie Litchfield, Ron Hunter, Sandy Rademacher, Shelley Harris, Jake Hudson