



Truckee River Watershed Council

Collaborative solutions to protect, enhance and restore the Truckee River Watershed

TRUCKEE RIVER CURRENTS

SUMMER 2013

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Volunteer Opportunities	2
River-Friendly Landscaping	3
Weed Warriors	4
Challenge Gift 2013	5
Adopt-A-Stream	6
Truckee River Day	6
TRWC Donors	7
Together for the Truckee Society	8

CHALLENGE GIFT 2013



Your donation, matched dollar for dollar. See page 5.

PROJECT UPDATE:

Negro Canyon

Located within the Gregory Creek watershed just west of Truckee, Negro Canyon has been impacted by waves of human use, from grazing to construction of Interstate 80 to logging to wildfires to off-highway vehicle use. These land uses contribute to water quality problems within the larger Truckee River drainage. In big rainstorms, large amounts of sediment erode from Negro Canyon into Donner Lake via Gregory Creek.

Along with our partners, Truckee Donner Land Trust and the Tahoe Donner Association, restoration of six legacy erosion sites is planned as part of the Negro Canyon Restoration Project. A restoration design plan for several sites within Negro Canyon is in process.

Restoration work will primarily consist of restoring abandoned road alignments, revegetating areas with native plants, restoring eroded stream channels, and re-establishing natural drainage patterns. Significant habitat and water quality improvements are expected to result from project implementation. We estimate that restoration will reduce 60 tons of sediment per year for 20 years.

This project is funded by the California Department of Water Resources, the Truckee River Fund of the Community Foundation of Western Nevada, and donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council.



For more information, please reference the Negro Canyon Watershed Assessment conducted by TRWC and completed in 2012 (available at www.truckeeriverwc.org/about/documents).



This gully, formed by erosion from a road just uphill, will be repaired in 2013.

INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION SERVICES



Truckee River Watershed Council
Collaborative solutions to protect, enhance and restore the Truckee River Watershed

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Everyone Can Help the Truckee River!

Do you love the river?

*Are you looking for
something more you can*

do? There are many ways

to help the Watershed

Council protect, enhance,

and restore the Truckee

River watershed.

Become an Ambassador

The best way you can help us right now is by spreading the word. We're looking for individuals who can invite at least 10 people to a River Talk to learn more about our watershed. Host a River Talk at your home or in your office, or invite friends and colleagues to our office. The River Talk is a one-hour virtual tour of a few of our projects. We won't ask for a financial contribution, but we *will* welcome comments and feedback.

To become an Ambassador, call Michele at 530-550-8760 x4.

Become a Weed Warrior

The Weed Warriors prevent and control invasive weeds in the Truckee River watershed, focusing on identification, reporting, containment, and eradication. Weed Warriors search the watershed for infestations, report them to headquarters, and then dispatch a brigade of warriors to remove or otherwise eradicate the invaders.

To become a Weed Warrior, call Jeannette at 530-550-8760 x6.



KATHY WHITLOW

**Botanist and volunteer Weed Warrior
Kathy Welch explains the difference between
Oxeye Daisy (non-native, invasive)
and Shasta Daisy (desirable perennial)
at Weed Identification training
on April 19, 2013.**

Join Adopt-A-Stream

Biological Aquatic Monitoring

Collect and identify benthic macroinvertebrates (aquatic bugs and organisms) from local streams. The types of bugs found in a stream are strong indicators of water quality. Volunteers participate in field sampling events each summer and twice monthly lab sessions each winter.

To volunteer, call Beth at (530) 550-8760 x1.

Chemical, Physical and Habitat Monitoring

Adopt-A-Stream in your neighborhood and commit to help with monitoring four times a year, May through September. We train the teams and provide all the equipment and supplies. It takes two to three hours to complete each monitoring session.

To join a team or Adopt-A-Stream, call Andy at (530) 550-8760 x3.



STEFAN MCLEOD

**Adopt-A-Stream volunteer Kerensa Kruse
grabs a water sample at Pole Creek.**

River-Friendly Landscaping in Action

SPOTLIGHT ON THE INGELS

When homeowners Dot and Paul Ingels moved to Donner Lake, they knew they wanted to protect the house's foundation from already-evident erosion and create a more usable space in their backyard. They just weren't quite sure where to start. Then, they received a mailing from Truckee River Watershed Council about the River-Friendly Landscaping program.

They contacted the Watershed Council, who sent Conservation Assistant Jane Lufkin to the Ingels' home to do a free site evaluation. Jane's evaluation included recommendations for slope stabilization, covering bare soil with native vegetation, mulch or permeable walkways, maintaining the existing vegetation and gravel under decks, and getting better protection for the drip line system around their house. Dot and Paul were both grateful for the gentle push provided by the program. "We would have talked about doing something with the yard for a long, long time. Jane came out, gave us a plan and got us going."

"I know soils but I don't know this soil," said Dot, who is a Master Gardener in Marin County and knows a lot about horticulture and sustainable landscaping practices. She appreciated the information Jane provided about her property and techniques that work in this area and was impressed at how detailed the site evaluation of their property was when she received the report. "It gave us everything we needed to work with our landscaper." They were impressed with Jane's credentials and loved the extra help in solving some of the design issues in the yard.

The result? A river- and lake-friendly backyard that will be enjoyed by the Ingels family for years to come. When Jane came back out to document what had been accomplished on the property, she was pleased to see that so many of her recommendations had been implemented. Now, most of the runoff from roofs, driveways and other impervious surfaces is directed to vegetation and other landscape features on the property, allowing the water to infiltrate back into the ground instead of eroding soil and running into Donner Lake.

The Ingels' advice to others about participating in the program? "Go for it!" they say, "Why would you not?"

River-Friendly Landscaping improves water quality by assisting residential property owners in voluntarily reducing or preventing soil erosion. It covers older homes in established neighborhoods in the Truckee River watershed within the Town of Truckee, Placer County, Nevada County, and Sierra County.

River-Friendly Landscaping is a joint project with the Truckee Backyard Conservation Program of the Sierra Nevada Alliance. Funding for this project has been provided in full or in part through the California State Water Resources Control Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program (Clean Water Act Section 319) and donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council.

To learn how you can participate, visit www.truckeeriverwc.org/river-friendly-landscaping, or call Andy Otto, Director of Land Use Compatibility, at 530-550-8760 x3.



KATHY WHITFLOW

The Ingels enjoy their newly landscaped backyard.



JANE LUFKIN

BEFORE: Bare dirt, and evident erosion necessitate steps to prevent soil erosion.



JANE LUFKIN

AFTER: Vegetation, terracing and other measures have made the yard useable and river-friendly.



Hard at Work in the Watershed

There are many ways to help protect the watershed from non-native, invasive plants.



KATHY WELCH

USFS East Zone Botanist and volunteer Weed Warrior Susi Urie works to eradicate Musk Thistle at a site near Boca Dam on July 14, 2012.

Weed Warriors is a program of the Truckee River Watershed Council, made up of volunteers working to prevent the spread of non-native invasive plants.

Non-native invasive plants like yellow star thistle and spotted knapweed displace native species. The invasives can reduce food sources for wildlife, create fire hazards, and contribute to erosion and murky stream water. They also interfere with recreation, because they can form barriers that block access to the river.

Maybe you've seen the big purple thistles growing along the river by 89 or by Hirschdale? These plants are just starting to move into the Truckee River watershed, so this is a critical time for everyone to become more aware and more active. Weed Warriors train landscapers, land managers, and landowners to identify and control non-native invasive plants and we help organize workdays that enhance our environment.

During three workdays in 2012, we removed over 250 acres of musk thistle in the Truckee watershed. We want to have similar impact this year and we need your help.

There are many ways to be involved:

- Attend a Weed Walk to learn more about non-native, invasive plants on August 10th
- Volunteer as a weed spotter; call Jeannette Halderman at 550-8760, x5
- Volunteer as a weed verifier; call Jeannette Halderman at 550-8760, x5
- Press and mount non-native, invasive specimens on August 27th or September 17th

The Truckee River watershed is relatively unaffected by non-native invasive plants, but we're starting to see outbreaks. If we act now we can preserve habitat, water quality and the natural beauty.

In addition to events, we have many resources to learn about the non-native invasive plants:

- Easy-to-use weed identification on our website: www.truckeeriverwc.org/weed-warriors/identification
- Easy reporting of invasive weeds: www.truckeeriverwc.org/weed-warriors/report-a-weed
- A field guide: *Invasive Weeds of the Tahoe National Forest*. Call us for a copy or download it: www.truckeeriverwc.org/weed-warriors/resources

Funding for this program comes from the California Natural Resources Agency, the Martis Fund, and donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council.

To learn more about how you can become a Weed Warrior, visit www.truckeeriverwc.org/weed-warriors/ww-overview, or call Jeannette Halderman, Program Manager, at 530-550-8760 x5.



SUSI URIE

Musk Thistle

BRECKENRIDGE

Spotted Knapweed

KATHY WELCH

Dyers Wood

UNCE

Bull Thistle

CHALLENGE GIFT 2013:

Your Donation Matched *Dollar for Dollar*

A new Challenge Gift for 2013 was announced at the annual River Breakfast in May. It is a matching gift of \$42,000 a year for the next 5 years! Generous donors will match *dollar for dollar* every new pledge to join the Together for the Truckee Society in 2013 (any new pledge of \$1,000 or more a year for 5 years).

The Truckee River Watershed Council has 50 projects to complete in the next 10 years. These are high priority projects identified based on the level of damage to an area and their overall value to the watershed. Each of these 50 projects will have significant impact on water quality, wildlife habitat, and watershed function.

We've already begun the work in areas such as:

- Coldstream Canyon Floodplain Restoration
- Middle Martis Creek Wetland Restoration
- Russell Valley Meadow Restoration
- River-Friendly Landscaping in 400 residences
- Adopt-A-Stream monitoring in 15 additional creeks

Our watershed is *not* pristine, but it can be. Over 50% of the Truckee River watershed is at risk. Five of our waterways are listed as polluted by the federal EPA. The Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, our native fish species, are gone from our streams. This is evidence of the damage resulting from 2 clear cuts of all of the trees in our watershed, the railroad, the interstate, gravel mining, and grazing. Past and current land use, invasive species, and climate change continue to threaten the natural resources of the watershed. We play here, stay here, and live here. It is our responsibility to take care of the environment we benefit from.

Get the work done *now*. If we don't tackle the 50 priority projects in the next 10 years, it will get worse. In 2012, the August hail storms and heavy December rains demonstrated the ability of strong weather events to accelerate erosion. Luckily, TRWC projects like River-Friendly Landscaping and the Coldstream Canyon Floodplain Restoration reduced the amount of sediment eroding into the Truckee River by at least 6,000 tons! But erosion continues on a daily basis. A project that costs \$10,000 today could cost \$100,000 in 10 years, and there are still dozens of projects needed to make our watershed more resilient.

We gratefully thank the following Challenge Gift donors for their amazing gifts:

Anonymous

Debbie and Michael Hogan

The Martis Fund

Northstar California / Vail Resorts Echo

Tahoe Mountain Resorts Environmental Fund

Cathy and Tom Van Berkem

These multi-year investments in the Watershed Council increase our financial stability for planning and implementing large, multi-year restoration projects. With the help of our Challenge Gift donors and the help of those of you inspired to make a pledge and double your impact, we can complete the 50 priority projects in 10 years. This work is critical to the health and function of the watershed. The watershed depends on donors like you to help us get the work done.

Join the Together for the Truckee Society today. Simply visit www.truckeeriverwc.org/donate/join-together-for-truckee-society to make your pledge, or contact us at 530-550-8760 x4.

The Challenge Gift and matching donations support projects like Coldstream Canyon Floodplain Restoration shown below.



JEFF FISHER



BETH CHRISTMAN

An eroding bank (top) has been re-graded to a sustainable angle with an expanded floodplain area and replanted with willows.

Monitoring Water Quality

Adopt-A-Stream volunteers collect vital information on the health of our watershed.

Changes in the water can signal problems upstream. Decline of stream health can snowball, affecting a wide community of plants and animals. If trees on a stream are downed and more sunlight on the water causes the temperature to rise, aquatic plants might die, leaving bare banks to erode. The channel can deepen, leaving plants high and dry. The eroded sediment can travel downstream, which may increase sediment load. Adopt-A-Stream volunteers look for these situations by monitoring our creeks.

Volunteers conduct two types of water quality monitoring, both of which tell us about the health of river life:

- **Chemical and physical monitoring** to take measurements such as temperature, conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen, turbidity and habitat characteristics. Adopted streams are monitored by a committed team of volunteers four times a year, May through September. We produce annual reports to summarize the results.
- **Biological monitoring** to collect and identify aquatic insects and other types of organisms called benthic macroinvertebrates. Volunteers participate in field sampling events each summer and twice monthly lab sessions each winter. We publish monitoring reports approximately every other year which summarize the data and review the results.

Teams go to the same stream several times a year. We compare the data from trip to trip and year to year. We have 12 Adopt-A-Stream teams, but we need at least 15. The Watershed Council will provide all equipment and supplies; you will learn field collection techniques and habitat assessment skills—no prior experience required. Come join us!

Funding for Adopt-A-Stream is provided by the Lahontan Community Foundation and donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council.

To join an Adopt-A-Stream team, visit www.truckeeriverwc.org/events-a-programs/adopt-a-stream, or call Andy Otto, Director of Land Use Compatibility, at 530-550-8760 x3.



Truckee River Day SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2013

A day of river, meadow, and wetland restoration

Projects start at 9 a.m. or 11 a.m.

The River Fair begins at 3 p.m.

Registration required: www.truckeeriverwc.org

Truckee River Day Celebrates Our Love for the Watershed

Truckee River Day was born when Alice Berg, Jim Plehn, and Sarah Trebilcock organized the "first annual" in 1996. When almost 500 hundred people showed up, the founders realized they had touched a passion with locals and visitors alike. Every October since then, 400 to 600 volunteers have worked at 10 to 15 restoration sites each year. Projects have been completed from Squaw Creek to Donner Creek to Gray Creek to Perazzo Meadows. Volunteers restored many 1997 flood sites and replanted many acres after the 2001 Martis Fire.

Join the Truckee River Watershed Council for the 18th Annual Truckee River Day and River Fair on October 20th. A full morning of river, meadow, and wetland restoration projects will be followed by a river fair in the afternoon with activities for the whole family.

Truckee River Day is funded by Vail Resorts Echo, the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce, and donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council.

For more information on Truckee River Day, please visit www.truckeeriverwc.org/events-a-programs/truckee-river-day or call Beth Christman, Director of Restoration Programs, at 530-550-8760 x1.

Donors to the Truckee River Watershed Council

We thank the donors below who made contributions since July 2012. They provided resources to find solutions to protect, enhance and restore the Truckee River watershed. Together we are making a difference. Please see the following page for multi-year pledges to the Together for the Truckee Society.

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 \$10,000 a year for 5 years**

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