



TRUCKEE RIVER CURRENTS

PUBLISHED BY THE TRUCKEE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

WINTER 2009

Adopt-A-Stream

Lab sessions Nov. – Feb.



STEVE MATSON

Join us to learn what these bugs tell us about our water quality. Call Beth at 530-550-8760.

What's Happening?	P2
Martis Valley Restoration	P3
Perazzo Meadow Update	P6
Donors and Volunteers	P7
Erosion Control Demo Garden	P8

NOTES & QUOTES

You are piling up a heritage of conflict and litigation over water rights for there is not sufficient water to supply the land.

~ John Wesley Powell, 1893

14th Anniversary of Truckee River Day

October 18, 2009

On Truckee River Day, over 550 volunteers—of all ages!—helped restore nine sites in our watershed. The projects improved meadows, protected wetlands and stream banks, and increased water quality.

Glenshire Boardwalk and Trail Re-Route

Thanks to the 60 volunteers and the fabulous Group Leaders: Dan Warren along with Marie Delgrego, John Juba, Jeannette Halderman, Jim Herzman and David Shaw.

Over past years, a common-use trail developed next to Glenshire Elementary. The trail is used by students and Glenshire residents to get to the school and other parts of the neighborhood. However, the trail ran through a wetland and was causing damage. It's an important link in Glenshire, so closing it was not an option. Instead, we developed an alternate route and built a boardwalk over the wettest area. The new route skirts the wetland and will handle a lot of use. Residents and students built the boardwalk and the new trail and then revegetated the old route. Volunteers also put up signs to direct users to the new route.

Sagehen Creek Trail Barbed Wire Removal

Thanks to the 10 volunteers and the fabulous Group Leader John Eaton.

The Sagehen Creek trail is a very popular hiking spot. Many people use this trail to enjoy the wildflowers and the creek. A portion of the trail runs along an old fence line that has been abandoned. A lot of barbed wire was still present along the fence line. On Truckee River Day, volunteers removed the barbed wire from the trail. Removal will help to improve the recreational experience along the trail and enhance safety.

Continues on page 4



DAVID BUNKER

Residents and students built a boardwalk near Glenshire Elementary to re-route foot traffic that was damaging a wetland. Volunteers also revegetated the old route.





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What's Happening in the Truckee River Watershed?

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 winter lab season runs November 2009 through May 2010. Call 550-8760 or check www.truckeeriverwc.org

Erosion Control Landscape Demonstration Garden

In partnership with Sierra College and the Sierra Nevada Alliance, we have installed an erosion control demonstration garden at the Truckee Campus of Sierra College. The garden shows methods and techniques homeowners can use to prevent erosion in their yards. Signs are installed (until we get heavy snow) for a self-guided tour. Guided tours will resume in summer 2010. For more info, see the article in this newsletter.

Donner Lake Basin

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. Thanks to a grant from the Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation, we're partnering with the Truckee Donner Land Trust to restore three critical sites. Watch for a presentation on the restoration design in early 2010.

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 the 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 early 2010.



This gravel drain filters pollutants out of driveway runoff.

Backyard Erosion Control Program for Homeowners

Erosion and water runoff are the biggest contributors to water pollution in our watershed. Homeowners can help protect the Truckee River by becoming more skilled in dealing with erosion from their yards. To help, the Watershed Council is bringing the Backyard Conservation Program to our watershed. The program offers free Best Management Practice (BMP) site evaluations and recommendations for dealing with grading, driveway paving, runoff and infiltration, irrigation, soils and planting designs. The program starts this fall. Watch for announcements at www.truckeeriverwc.org

Restoration Update: Martis Valley

Chris Gray-Garcia, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Sacramento District

We are particularly grateful to Jacqui Zink of the US Army Corps of Engineers for her dedication to this project. Funding for work this year came from The Martis Fund and our donors. Work in past years has been supported by the Lahontan Community Foundation, The Nature Fund of the Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation, the Northstar Community Services District and our donors.

More than 200 volunteers celebrated the 14th annual Truckee River Day at Martis Creek Lake. Volunteers completed relocation of a trail and planted native grasses and trees along a stretch of Martis Creek.

A program of the Truckee River Watershed Council, Truckee River Day aims to educate and involve the community in restoration projects in the Truckee River watershed. Martis Creek runs through the Corps-managed Martis Creek Wildlife Area before joining the Truckee below the Corps' Martis Creek Lake Dam.

Local residents and volunteers from area Boy and Girl Scout Troops, the Ritz-Carlton Highlands Lake Tahoe hotel and the A Thyme to Plant landscaping company helped advance the Martis Creek Restoration Project, a cooperative effort between the Corps and the Watershed Council to return the stream back to its natural state.

Heavy foot traffic on the trail along the stream had been steadily eroding its banks, disrupting its flow and ecosystem. The trail, a former cattle path adopted by hikers, had become one of the most popular hiking trails in the area. The Corps, with volunteer help and a \$37,500 grant from the Martis Fund, finished moving the trail away from the stream Sunday, completing a critical phase of the restoration project.

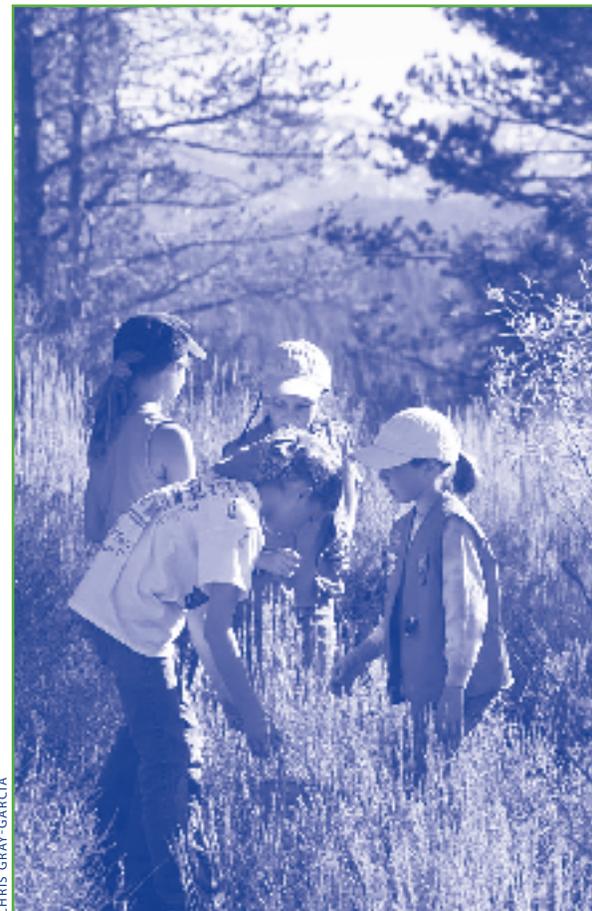
"With our volunteers' help today, we're finally done with the trail relocation needed to continue to restore Martis Creek," Martis park ranger Jacqui Zink said. "It's very exciting."

Stefanie Olivieri, a director of the Martis Fund, said the fund chose to support the Martis project because, "It had a high priority for stewardship of the Martis Valley. The number of visitors we have here are loving it to death. It needs constant attention if we're going to restore it to its natural state. Plus, it builds community support and ownership of this special place."

With the trail successfully moved, volunteers planted native grass and tree seedlings and installed temporary fencing along the old trail to restore the bank's natural protections and discourage hiker traffic.

Valerie Forsyth, mother of one of the Girl Scout volunteers from Troop 1310, said the Troop's work planting seedlings, "teaches them about the environment, and the importance of preventing erosion. These girls live here, and they want to keep (the park) beautiful."

We thank the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their generous permission to re-print this article. Read more at www.army.mil.



CHRIS GRAY-GARCIA

Girl Scouts from Troop 1310 plant native grass seedlings along Martis Creek at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Martis Creek Lake on Oct. 18, as part of the Truckee River Watershed Council's 14th annual Truckee River Day watershed restoration project. More than 200 volunteers celebrated the Truckee River Day by completing a trail relocation and restoration project along a stretch of Martis Creek running through the park. Their efforts helped advance the Martis Creek Restoration Project, a cooperation between the Corps' Sacramento District and the Truckee River Watershed Council.



TRUCKEE RIVER DAY

Continued from page 1

Perazzo Meadows Restoration

Thanks to the 165 volunteers and the fabulous Group Leaders Randy Westmoreland along with Steve Disbrow, Jeff Glazner, Nancy Gordon, Sarah Green, Courtney Hart, Noah McBride, Garrett McCullough, Rachel McCullough and Kevin Thomas.

The entire Perazzo Meadows system was intensely used during the late 1800s and 1900s. Significant changes included road building, road use, logging, ranching, and dairying. Historic analyses show that both the Little Truckee River and Perazzo Creek through the meadows were rerouted, which caused severe erosion and meadows degradation—supporting smaller fish and bird populations than would be expected. This summer, Perazzo Creek was restored to its historic channel. On Truckee River Day, volunteers helped to seed and mulch the plugs, plant willows, and remove old fencing from the project site.

Tahoe Donner Erosion Control

Thanks to the 50 volunteers and the fabulous Group Bill Houdyschell with the Tahoe Donner Forestry Staff.

There is an extensive trail network maintained by Tahoe Donner. The trails are heavily used by residents and others. On Truckee River Day, volunteers worked on two sections of the trail network—at the Alder Creek campground and above Ski Slope Way. Volunteers helped to install various erosion control measures such as drainbars. The work of the volunteers will help to decrease erosion and to ensure the sustainability of the Tahoe Donner trail network.

Truckee River Cleanup

Thanks to the five volunteers and the fabulous Group Leaders Don Triplatt and Anne Liston.

The section of the Truckee River across from the Olympic Heights neighborhood is a popular area for hiking, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The California Department of Fish & Game manages the area for wildlife values. An old fence line runs through the area and there is a large amount of barbed wire and abandoned fence posts. Most of this presents a danger to wildlife, humans, and dogs. Volunteers worked to clean up the area and removed a large amount of barbed wire.

Merrill Valley Meadow Restoration

Thanks to the 15 volunteers and the fabulous Group Leaders Sarah Trebilcock along with Robie Litchfield and Jim Katt.

In the early 1900's Merrill Valley was logged and mills and railroad spurs were constructed to process and convey the logs. In this era, Merrill Creek was re-routed and straightened. This led to severe down-cutting and erosion through the large meadow. In 2008, as part of a large-scale restoration effort, Merrill Creek and its associated meadows were restored to



DAVID BUNKER

Above and left: 165 volunteers worked restore Perazzo Creek to its historic channel. They helped to seed, plant and mulch, and removed old fencing.

Below: Volunteers gather for a snapshot after installing erosion-control measures to help sustain the Tahoe Donner trail network.



BONNIE RILEY

decrease erosion, increase water storage capacity, and restore meadow habitat. This year volunteers helped finish off the work by seeding and mulching the restored areas and planting willows. We have found that the contribution that volunteers make on Truckee River Day has helped to speed along the restoration efforts.

Martis Wildlife Area Trail Re-Route, Revegetation, and Fencing

Thanks to the 220 volunteers and the fabulous Group Leaders: Jacqui Zink along with Jamie Adams, Shana Behan, Shelley Harris, Jake Hudson, Steve Kirby, Stefanie Olivieri, Chris Otto, Sandy Rademacher, Leora Sapir, Catherine Schnurrenberger, Georgia Smith and Bill Wendin.

Martis Wildlife Area is a popular walking area. Because this trail was never properly located, sections located along the tops of the creek banks were falling into the creek, causing sedimentation and other water quality problems. Starting in 2004, volunteers have re-routed the damaging trail away from the fragile creek banks. The final section was re-routed this year to an upland area and the old trail was blocked off using willows and other on-site materials. Volunteers also re-seeded and mulched the trail to promote native plants. They put up temporary fencing to limit access to the old sections of trail to help plants grow.

Little Truckee River Hill Climb Restoration

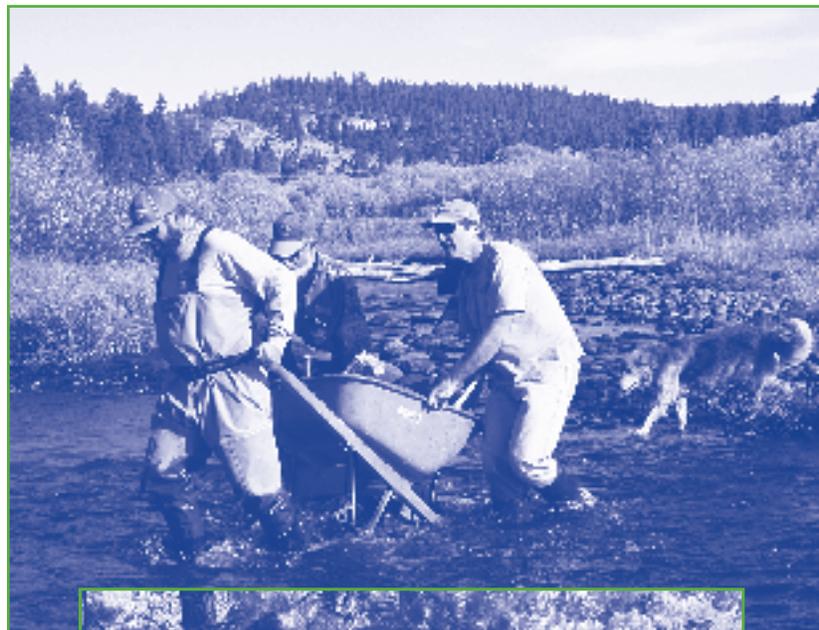
Thanks to the 50 volunteers and the fabulous Group Leaders: David Lass along with Tamara Anderson, Kris Boatner, Jim Schmidt and Deborah Urich

The Little Truckee River between Stampede and Boca Reservoirs is a sanctuary for birds and fish, and is a primary migration route for mule deer. The river in this section flows from the bottom of Stampede Reservoir, with cold, clear, and nutrient-rich water. Anglers, birdwatcher, hunters, bikers, hikers, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) users all come to the area. However, impacts from illegal OHV use are degrading the meadow and riparian zone and in-stream water quality. The Truckee River Day project closed off two hill climbs to restore the hillside, protect the meadow and reduce erosion in the Little Truckee River.

Truckee River Corridor

Thanks to the 30 volunteers and the fabulous Group Leaders Sara Taddo Jones with Andy Otto, Virginia Haliwell, Patty Kelley, Anne Knudsen and Steve Lieberman.

Areas along the Truckee River throughout the Truckee River Canyon are heavily used for recreation. Most of these sites have no formal river access so user trails and access points have been developed in an unplanned manner. This has led to erosion and degradation of the stream banks. On Truckee River Day, volunteers worked to clean up one of these access points. The volunteers removed trash, planted trees, re-vegetated with on-site materials, and improved access points to reduce erosion. The efforts will make the Truckee River accessible in a more sustainable fashion at this site.



DEBORAH URICH



On the Little Truckee River volunteers closed off two hill climbs to restore the hillside, protect the meadow and reduce erosion.

Restoration Update: Perazzo Meadow

Greyson Howard, Sierra Sun

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 the 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, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act and our donors.

On the ground restoration work for this year began in August and was wrapped up on Truckee River Day with the help of more than 150 volunteers. See photos in the Truckee River Day article.

At first blush, the steam shovels and loaders rumbling through the mud of the otherwise pristine Perazzo Meadows look ready to destroy something.

The machines, normally associated with construction, dig into a pond and pile a mound of earth, and the ground shakes as the steam shovel compacts it. But despite appearances, the machinery, and people of Plumas Corporation, are actually in the sub-alpine meadow for environmentally friendly purposes.



BETH CHRISTMAN

Equipment was used to remove the incised, degraded stream channel. After the October rains, Perazzo Creek once again flowed in its original channel.

The crew has been working with the U.S. Forest Service and Truckee River Watershed Council to put the little Truckee River back on track since mid-August.

“By getting this restored we’ll stop erosion, increase the filtration and capacity of the meadow and get habitat back,” said Randy Westmoreland, watershed program manager for the east side of Tahoe National Forest.

That means holding more water longer in the meadow after snow melts, regulating water downstream and creating a wet, lush meadow system for local plant and animal species.

Westmoreland estimated once the meadow is restored, it could hold two acre-feet of water per acre in the soil through the summer—basically water two feet deep across the landscape if it was sitting on top.

To accomplish this, workers are installing 27 “plugs,” basically damming parts of the river and forcing it back up onto the surface of the meadow, where it will find its old, smaller stream channel, said Jim Wilcox of Plumas. The river will flood more often, wetting the meadow and raising the water table, he said.

Fish had to be moved from the stretch of river being worked on to an up-stream location, said Deborah Urich, with the help of volunteers earlier this summer.

Fish will also profit from the restoration work, as the narrower natural stream channel will have more vegetation shade, keeping the water cooler and more habitable, Urich said.

“We are looking at this area as a Lahontan cutthroat trout reintroduction area,” Urich said.

The last plug was being installed Tuesday, and work is expected to wrap up next week, Wilcox said.

Overall, the work almost doubles the length of the stretch of stream, Westmoreland said.

So far, the work has been paid for by a Proposition 40 grant, changed to stimulus funds right before California’s bond freeze, said Beth Christman of the Truckee River Watershed Council.

She and Westmoreland estimated about \$575,000 is funded out of a needed \$600,000 to \$700,000 for the project.

We thank the Sierra Sun for their generous permission to re-print this article. Read more at sierrasun.com.



The donors below 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.

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

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Erosion Control Landscape Demonstration Garden

Water flowing from the top of the Sierra Nevada crest down to the main river systems defines the boundaries of the twenty-four major watersheds of the Sierra. Your yard is an important component of the Truckee River watershed.

The Truckee River Watershed Council, with the Sierra Nevada Alliance and the Villager Nursery, are sponsoring a demonstration garden in Truckee, California. The garden, located on the Sierra College campus, shows erosion control techniques at a scale and cost appropriate for residential landscaping.

Helping soil stay put is one of the most important things you can do in your garden to protect our rivers and streams. Soil erosion occurs as soil is carried away by water and wind. Erosion removes the organic matter that your yard needs to sustain vegetation. Erosion may not always be obvious. Low areas and swales (vegetated or unvegetated ditches typically found alongside roads) provide flow paths for water, and therefore are likely to show signs of erosion. Gullies, rills and dirty water are signs of erosion.

The demonstration garden shows several ways to control erosion. One is bio-mechanical stabilization. These techniques are used to control the flow of water and prevent soil from eroding. Flexible willow branches naturally sprout roots when given consistent moisture. These bundles of willow branches are held in place with live willow stakes, all of which root in moist soils, providing highly effective stabilization through permanent plant cover.

Visit the demonstration garden to see other erosion control gardening techniques.



Funding for this project has been provided in full or in part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, through an agreement with the State Water Resource Control Board.

