

Connecting Forever—Together

Establishing a resilient wetland habitat in Coldstream Canyon

Coldstream Canyon is a mecca for recreational users including backpackers, rock climbers, mountain bikers, and bird watchers. But, it has been degraded from a long history of overuse. Railroad construction in the 1850s, logging, road building, and gravel mining have severely impacted Cold Creek and the 12 miles of rugged watershed it drains. What was once a dynamic stream system now pulses tremendous amounts of sediment during high-flow events, damaging habitat and eroding the streambanks.

In partnership with California State Parks, we now have the opportunity to re-create wetland habitat in areas impacted by the railroad and gravel mining, to improve stream channels on improperly constructed roads, and to re-establish the natural

Connections are what make a watershed work—from streams to their floodplains, from wildlife to its habitat, and from us to our community.

BRENDA GILBERT

functions of the watershed by restoring a one-mile reach of stream channel.

Through our projects in Coldstream Canyon, we will be:

- Restoring one mile of Cold Creek, which will reconnect 50 additional acres of stream channel and floodplain, and reestablish riparian habitat.
- Improving drainage on 13 miles of dirt roads, reducing erosion and the amount of sediment entering Cold Creek.

- Recreating a natural and resilient ecosystem that can withstand high stream flows.

It takes a dedicated team to do what we do.

Thank you to our partners: California State Parks and Sierra Pacific Industries.

Thank you to the funders who are making this work possible: The donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council, Martis Fund, US Environmental Protection Agency, and CA Water Resources Control Board.

Coldstream Canyon's railroad culvert impedes the normal function of Cold Creek, causing pollution from sediment during high flow events and damaging habitat downstream. Restoration will create a more resilient system.

Donated photos credited; others owned by TRWC.



EBEN SWAIN

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Volunteer for a Resilient Future

Everyone can be part of the solution. Help connect the watershed and your community.

River Talks—now also virtual! The Truckee River watershed is a place full of beautiful meadows, streams, and forests that we all experience and appreciate. Join us for a 45-minute virtual presentation about how human impact has damaged the Truckee River watershed, what we are doing to reverse the damage, and what you can do to help keep our shared home resilient for the future.

- Hear about our restoration projects and get updates on our work
 - Meet and connect with fellow nature-lovers
- Call Sue at 530.550.8760, 5#

Become an Ambassador. Connect others to help address the problems facing our watershed. Invite 10 of your friends and host your own River Talk! All you need to do is tell your friends, we take care of the rest. Call Sue at 530.550.8760, 5#



MISSY MOHLER

How Do I Get involved?

SUBSCRIBE to our weekly e-newsletter and follow us on social media to stay up to date with upcoming events.

FIND A PROGRAM OR EVENT you're interested in and RSVP to the staff member.

Truckee River Day, October 18, 2020.

Connect at the source. Engage in a solution and work with family, friends, and your community to help repair our mountain home. Volunteers will:

- Restore selected sites
- Plant native vegetation
- Protect sensitive areas
- Create resiliency to buffer drought, flood and wildfire
- Repair our mountain home

Call Michele at 530.550.8760, 4#

Adopt-A-Stream. Participate in important biology and chemistry monitoring through our Adopt-A-Stream program. There are several ways to practice watershed science. We train and equip you.

Be a biologist:

- Collect aquatic organisms
- Learn field collection techniques and habitat assessment skills
- Learn about aquatic insects
- Identify benthic macroinvertebrates (BMIs)

Call Beth at 530.550.8760, 1#

**Unfortunately, we will not be holding field collection this summer. Stay tuned for updates on the winter lab season!*

Be a chemist:

- Monitor water temperature
- Measure conductivity
- Assess chemical pH readings
- Evaluate dissolved oxygen
- Measure turbidity
- Collect nutrient samples

Call Eben at 530.550.8760, 7#



JOHN BAIOCCHI

A Note from Lisa Wallace, Executive Director

COVID-19 update

We hope that this newsletter find you doing well and staying healthy, mentally and physically.

As we all adapt to the realities and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we take comfort in our incredible community, full of compassionate, resilient people who consistently help others. We are grateful to the essential workers who make it possible for us to stay safe, to the medical professionals on the front lines, and for the strength that our community has shown.

We want to take a moment to emphasize that the Truckee River Watershed Council has been fortunate to be able to continue working and that we are on track to achieve our restoration and policy goals for 2020 and 2021. Watershed assessments, restoration designs, construction of meadow and stream restoration projects, and monitoring of completed restoration sites are all underway. Over this summer and the next, we will assess hundreds of acres of forests, and restore 400 acres of meadow, 11 acres of wetlands, and over 4 miles of stream.

These projects will buffer the impacts of flooding, drought, and fire, while improving water quality and habitat for wildlife, fish, and birds—all of which are vitally important.

As we have seen people turning to the outdoors in greater and greater numbers over the past few months, we know that everyone reading this note deeply values the beauty and importance of fresh air, clean water, and natural systems. We are committed to preserving and restoring these places, working for both the watershed and for our community.



SUE DRAKE

TRWC staff have been getting out in the field, with social distancing, completing project improvements and water quality monitoring.



FAIRTHEN FELIX, UC BERKELEY SAGEHEN CREEK FIELD STATION

How Does My Gift Make a Difference?

Every donation to the Truckee River Watershed Council is invaluable, but did you know when you donate to TRWC, your gift doesn't just help us keep on lights on—it can be leveraged in grant applications to fund our projects. Each project first requires building a partnership, planning, permitting, fundraising, and engineering design well before dirt can be moved or vegetation can be planted. Your \$100 donation grows to \$10,000 through grants! Interested in giving? Visit our website: www.truckeeriverwc.org

Sardine Meadow

Reconnecting Davies Creek to 350 acres of meadow floodplain

Located north of Stampede Reservoir, Sardine Meadow is the largest meadow in the Davies Creek watershed. The meadow has been degraded by historic logging, road and railroad construction, and grazing. What was once a lush wetland is now primarily a sagebrush plain. Davies Creek is confined to a single, straightened channel—with eroding stream banks and threatened aquatic habitat.

In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, we restored meadows along Davies Creek, upstream and downstream of Sardine Meadow. Now we have the opportunity to further improve the resilience of this watershed by bringing back Sardine Meadow. Between now and the end of summer 2021, we will be:

- **Restoring 350 acres of meadow and three miles of stream.** Returning Davies Creek to its numerous natural channels on the meadow surface will reconnect the floodplain, elevate the shallow groundwater table, and allow wet meadow habitat to return.
- **Revegetating meadowlands and reconnecting habitats.** Sardine Meadow is an important link in a chain of meadow habitat, forming a critical migration corridor.
- **Defending from drought, fire, and flood.** A healthy meadow slows down the flow of water, providing a steadier stream, preventing damaging floods, and mitigating droughts. The wetter meadow will also hinder fast moving wildfires.

It takes a dedicated team to do what we do. Thank you to our partner, The Trust for Public Land.

Thank you to the funders who are making this work possible: The donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council, Bella Vista Foundation, California Wildlife Conservation Board via Prop 68, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



BETH CHRISTMAN

Historic surface channels like this one crisscross Sardine Meadow. Davies Creek used to regularly flow through them, recharging groundwater and sustaining wet meadowlands across the plain. Now, with the channels empty, the soil has dried out and sagebrush has pushed out the native grasses.



BETH CHRISTMAN

This photo, taken in Perazzo Meadows this spring, is an ideal example of what Sardine Meadow could look like in the future. After we reconnect Sardine's dry surface channels to Davies Creek, water will once again pool and spread over wide areas of the meadow, restoring valuable wetland habitat.

DEFINITIONS

CHANNEL INCISION: When a stream bed becomes deeper over time, disconnecting the stream from its floodplain

HEADCUT: When erosion results in an abrupt vertical drop in a stream bed

OVERBANK FLOW: When flows leave the stream channel and water the meadow

FLOODPLAIN: Low-lying area adjacent to a stream that receives flow during high flow seasons

Bear Creek Meadow

Bringing back a disconnected meadow

Tucked in the shadow of Ward Peak, the Bear Creek Lower Meadow is often overlooked. Many people drive past it on their way to the Five Lakes Trailhead or Alpine Meadows Resort, but don't realize that it used to be a vibrant, wet meadow with multiple small channels crisscrossing its surface. Unfortunately, a long history of past land uses and rapid development beginning in the 1960s has degraded the meadow. Bear Creek is now confined to a single channel, accelerating erosion and cutting off the meadow's supply of surface and groundwater.

It is time for us to fix this. Our restoration will work to slow the flow of water through the channel, redirect flows towards their historic channels, and reconnect the meadow to Bear Creek's floodplain. By building in-stream features to slow down the flow of water, stabilize the banks, and encourage multiple stream channels, this project is set to restore:

- 30 acres of meadow
- Native wetland and riparian plant species
- 3,000 feet of Bear Creek
- Habitats for fish, birds, and mammals

The benefits of this project will have rippling effects through the meadow and the rest of the watershed. Once restored, the Bear Creek Lower Meadow can filter up to 60% of the excess sediment and remove it from the stream before it connects to the Truckee River. The re-watered meadow will also be able to support diverse, native vegetation, and sustain the wildlife like frogs, birds, and mammals that depend on it.

It takes a dedicated team to do what we do. Thank you to our partner, the US Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest.

Thank you to the funders who are making this work possible: The donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council, Martis Fund, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife via Prop 68, and Placer County.

Giving with Greater Impact

There are many ways you can become a supporter of the Truckee River Watershed Council's work:

1. You can support critical restoration efforts and may be able to enjoy tax benefits when you make a gift of stock. By making a gift of appreciated securities, you may be able to deduct the current value of the gifted security while avoiding the taxation of capital gains
2. The IRS Charitable Rollover allows individuals 70½ and older to make charitable gifts directly from a traditional IRA account without incurring federal income tax on the withdrawal.
3. Giving "In memory of" honors a friend or loved one's passion for restoring and protecting our rivers, streams, meadows and forests.
4. Create a birthday fundraiser on Facebook and ask your friends to share in your support of our projects.



BRIAN HASTINGS, BALANCE HYDROLOGICS

Bear Creek's stream banks are eroding and water is cut off from the meadow, causing it to dry out.



ALLY HOLMES

Eroded banks and headcuts add significant amounts of sediment to Bear Creek. Without a functioning meadow to filter this sediment, it makes its way to the Truckee River, polluting it.

We thank the following donors who have contributed since 2018. Together, they provide the resources to fund solutions to protect, enhance the Truckee River Watershed.

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Thank you members of the Together for the Truckee Society.

Your multi-year generosity has shaped the Truckee River Watershed Council's work and inspires meaningful changes in our community and watershed. Thank you for your support.

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If we missed or misidentified you or your organization, please let us know: 530.550.8760 5#

Martis Wildlife Area

A floodplain reconnected, a landscape revived

The Martis Wildlife Area encompasses one of our area's most breathtaking—and environmentally significant—meadow wetlands. The restoration project last summer restored 70 acres of meadow, 2 miles of stream, and involved planting acres of native grasses and plants. Check out what all that work has turned into so far!

'After' doesn't mean over! Construction has concluded, but the restoration will continue to take its full effect over the next several years, as vegetation fully regrows and we continue to monitor its progress.

It takes a dedicated team to do what we do. Thank you to our partners: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Northstar California Resort, and Northstar Community Service District.

Thank you to the funders who are making this work possible: the donors of the Truckee River Watershed Council, Bella Vista Foundation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife via Prop 1, The Martis Fund, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

BEFORE



MICHELE PRESTOWITZ

Before restoration, Martis Creek did not have access to the meadow floodplain. Steep banks eroded and water was contained in the channel.

AFTER



SAM ZABELL

During the restoration process, the steep banks were pulled back to allow the creek to flow up and over the banks, watering the meadow floodplain surface, creating suitable habitat for native riparian habitat, and reconnecting the creek to the floodplain.

BEFORE



MICHELE PRESTOWITZ

Before restoration, a straight channel, disconnected from the meadow floodplain surface, carried sediment downstream and limited the infiltration of water in the surrounding floodplain.

AFTER



MICHELE PRESTOWITZ

During restoration, a meandering stream path was created, increasing the creek's access to the meadow floodplain allowing water to flow up and over the banks during high flows. This recharges ground water, creates cooler temperatures for fish habitat, enhances wildlife habitat, and slows the flow of sediment downstream.