

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

The GCRCD receives a grant to develop conservation plans.

The GCRCD is entering into an agreement with Fish and Game to streamline the permitting process.

Stakeholders Meeting July 17

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Conservation Planning

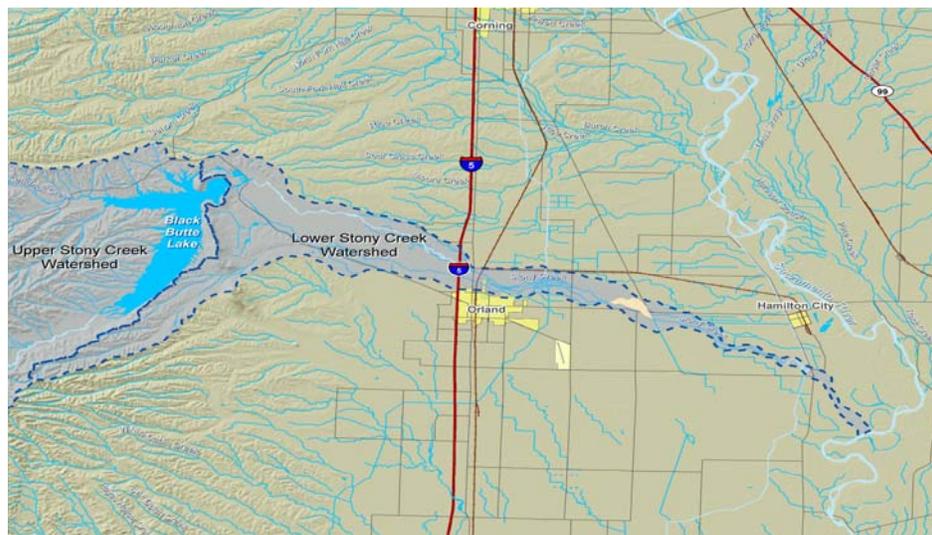
The Glenn County Resource Conservation District has received a grant from the California Bay-Delta Authority's Watershed Program to help the GCRCD and NRCS provide technical assistance to private landowners. This grant will assist the development of conservation plans for Arundo and Tamarix removal, native plant re-vegetation, and bank stabilization for the lower Stony Creek Watershed. The project will begin in January, 2007.

Conservation plans will help landowners identify what practices will be most appropriate for their property given physical, economic, and regulatory constraints, help apply for regulatory permits, as well as apply for funding with private and public organizations. The project will use the NRCS planning process to create the plans. The NRCS uses a process that allows the landowner to choose practices that they feel is most appropriate. An NRCS trained planner and engineer will then create a design the landowner can use to construct the project.

The conservation plan will also assist landowners obtain regulatory permits from the Department of Fish and Game (see next article), Army Corps of Engineers, and Regional Water Quality Control Board. The GCRCD will help landowners apply for the permits so work can begin on the ground in a timely manner.

By creating a plan, a landowner will also know how much the project will cost and if they may need financial assistance. The landowner may then ask the GCRCD for assistance in applying for private or public funding opportunities. Once the conservation plan is created, the GCRCD and the landowner will then be able to attach the plan to help communicate what the project is and what the public benefit will be, as well as help communicate what exactly will be completed and how.

This project will ultimately help landowners move forward in repairing and enhancing their property along lower Stony Creek. The GCRCD will be holding a Landowner Advisory Committee meeting later this year to discuss the project further.



The Project Area in the Lower Stony Creek Watershed

Dam Affects on Stony Creek

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must find what the
source problem is
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The stream channel below Black Butte Dam is a highly impacted stream. Evidence of this is not hard to come by. Looking from the creek banks one can see a large, incised channel and is, in some spots, more than 4 tenths of a mile wide. Landowners along the stream have been watching their banks erode and are frustrated by regulatory constraints as well as a lack of government that will do anything about it.

In order to “fix” the problem we must find what the source problem is and how to change the source problem to reduce or eliminate its impact. In order to do so we must understand stream geomorphology (how water shapes the land) as well as how Stony Creek used to act and how it acts today.

Stony Creek used to be a high gradient (steepness) stream with a flashy hydrology and a high amount of sediment consisting of silt, sand, and gravel. As the creek transitioned from the foothills to the floodplain it would begin to braid due to the creek’s high velocity and large amount of sediment. After Black Butte Dam was built, the stream lost 90% of its suspended sediment (the silt and sand in the water column) and heavy material such as gravel and cobbles, as well as lost the peak water discharges that would create the braided channel. Today, the dam reduces the peak flows to control flooding downstream which spreads out the release of water but has also created a narrow, highly sinuous (a stream’s wavelength) single channel that had less sediment being deposited in the floodplain. This created bank erosion and a wider stream channel that we see today.

Other affects of the dam are also evident. Because of a loss of sediment deposition there is stream incision (down cutting) just below the dam. Evidence of this is the increase in exposed clay hardpan. Adding to the problem is the “hungry” water effect. Because sediment has deposited behind the dam, water is pushing and carrying away sediment that was deposited before the dam was erected.

Other impacts exacerbate, but are not the source cause of changes in the lower watershed. The construction of bridges and water diversions have create a situation where the stream has to “stay in its place,” not allowing it to meander north or south as it used to do. Arundo and Tamarix have also allowed banks to erode. Though introduced to reduce erosion, it has the opposite effect. Gravel mining also alters the stream channel by reducing the amount of sediment in the stream. In stream operations are mining the stream’s sediment “savings account” because there is no more sediment coming through the dam.

All of these influences will make it difficult to repair the damage that has been caused. However, if a plan is created and carried out that addresses the alterations that have already occurred, there could be a decrease in erosion. Some projects could be to augment sediment below the dam with sediment deposits in the Black Butte Dam delta, create incentives for economically viable off-stream mining, find a way to re-create a braided stream, reduce Arundo and Tamarix populations in the stream channel, re-shape the channel to create terraces, and plant native trees with large root structures along banks.

This problem is not endemic to Stony Creek. All creeks with dams and people living and working below the dam have one or more of the problems above. Dams do, however, provide security from flooding, irrigation and drinking water, and electricity. Though removing dams may seem like a good thing because there are environmental impacts, there are political and economic barriers in doing so. However, we must look at new types of solutions to reduce or eliminate environmental problems below dams. Stony Creek can be a case study for finding collaborative and innovative solutions to these problems.



Coordinated Regulatory Permit

Permits are sometimes a large disincentive for landowners to implement conservation practices on private land. Though the project might enhance the environment, reduce impacts, and/or increase productivity it must go through the same regulatory process as a housing development. Landowners sometimes do not do the project or not apply for permits, which could open themselves up to fines from federal or state agencies.

In order to reduce the disincentive to do good work on private land, the Glenn County Resource Conservation District is working with regulatory agencies to streamline the process. Currently the GCRCD is working with the Department of Fish and Game to coordinate the permitting process so that landowners can implement certain conservation practices. This will allow a landowner to come to the GCRCD/NRCS office to expedite the process by filling out and applying for the permit without having to go through the process on their own.

Though the GCRCD is currently building the program, the process in which a landowner will have to undertake is: sign a Cooperator Agreement with the GCRCD, create a conservation plan, and sign the permit. This permit process will only be for certain practices, such as Arundo and Tamarix removal and bank stabilization. The process will help cut down the red tape, but not eliminate it.

There are conditions in which landowners will have to adhere by in order to avoid temporary environmental impacts as well as potential disasters while working in the creek. Though the removal of Arundo and Tamarix and use of bioengineering practices will help the creek environment, regulatory agencies are concerned about the impact on water quality and harm to fish and wildlife from chemicals and equipment. The GCRCD has been working with regulatory agencies to specify what environmental protection measures can be used to avoid these potential impacts so that practices can be implemented.

Such conditions include: work can only be done between April 15 and October 15; if sensitive bird species are present then precautions will have to be taken to not spray them with chemicals; no threatened or endangered species can be killed; no work can be done in moving water without authorization; work to create a new channel will have to re-create the same or larger meander pattern as the old channel; any creek bank left bare by construction must be re-vegetated; no native plants over 4 inches round can be cut down without authorization in the conservation plan; no debris can be left in the channel; no asphalt can be used for bank stabilization; rock stabilization will only be used if bioengineering methods are inadequate; and chemical use will be minimized next to water bodies.

Though the conditions seem stringent, they are common sense and are not so stringent that work can not be completed. Currently, the GCRCD is going through a CEQA process (see next page). The GCRCD will also be holding a meeting in the fall to explain the conservation planning and permitting program. If you have any questions about permitting requirements please call the GCRCD office.



In order to reduce disincentives to do good work, the GCRCD is helping to streamline the regulatory process.

Please contact the Glenn County Resource Conservation District if you have natural resource concerns or issues you wish the RCD to address or natural resource projects that you want to implement on your property. This newsletter was funded by the CALFED Bay-Delta Authority's Watershed Program

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Conservation District*



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Notice of Preparation

The Glenn County Resource Conservation District (GCRCD) would like to announce the preparation of an initial study and mitigated negative declaration for the Lower Stony Creek Watershed Permit Coordination Program to fulfill the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This document describes the program and how it will potentially affect the environment. The document also outlines mitigation measures and avoidance procedures.

The GCRCD is asking for public comment on the document. If you are interested in reviewing the document please contact Ajay Singh, Watershed Coordinator, at (530) 934-4601 x126 or stop by the office at 132 North Enright Ave, Suite B, Willows, CA.

The GCRCD will take all comments into consideration and will alter the project if needed to avoid impacts on the community and environment.

The GCRCD will then hold a public meeting to make a determination on the project and if the mitigation measures are adequate to avoid predicted impacts.

EQIP Public Meeting

The Glenn County Resource Conservation District Invites You To An EQIP Public Meeting on July 17, 2006 from 12:00 to 2:00 PM. The meeting will be held at the Willows USDA Service Center located at 132 North Enright Avenue, Suite B in Willows, CA.

The goal of the public meeting is to assist the NRCS District Conservationist in preparing for this years round of local conservation priorities. During the meeting, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) program will be discussed, as well as local resource concerns and priorities brought forward by participants (landowners/managers/others).

The GCRCD encourages your participation in developing this years conservation priorities, so that we continue to be responsive to the local needs.

For more information regarding the program, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>.

For more information, please contact Kandi Manhart, District Manager, at (530) 934-4601 x120.