

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

New congressional bill that provides landowners tax benefits for conservation easements.

Drafts of the Watershed Assessment and Monitoring Plan are now available.

First phase of the Demonstration Site is complete.

**INSIDE  
THIS  
ISSUE:**

**Project Updates** 1

**Altering the Balance** 2

**What is a Conservation Easement?** 3

**Landowner and Technical Advisory Committee Meetings** 4

**Conservation Planning Process** 4

## Project Updates

### Watershed Assessment

A draft of the Watershed Assessment is now available for review. The Assessment compiled information on natural resources in the watershed focusing on the lower watershed. HT Harvey and Associates, under contract with the RCD and funded by the CALFED Watershed Program, surveyed the lower watershed documenting vegetation and channel morphology. The Assessment has documented change in the watershed and will identify the source problems attributing to state of the lower watershed and make recommendations of how to address reducing the impact of the source problems on natural resources. This assessment will help the RCD make a case to landowners and local, state, and federal agencies for the need to change the resource management in the lower watershed.

If you are interested in a digital copy of the assessment please call Ajay Singh at (530) 934-4601 x126.

### Demonstration Site

The RCD and River Partners have concluded the first phase of the demonstration site in the lower watershed. The project will demonstrate the different techniques for controlling Arundo and Tamarix by cost, efficacy, and the advantages and disadvantages of each technique. This will help landowners decide what type of technique is most appropriate for their property and their budget.

The Demonstration Site will be re-vegetated with native cottonwoods and willows near creek banks to reduce velocity and stream power. This will help reduce future bank erosion on the site. The second phase of the project will occur in March and April of next year.

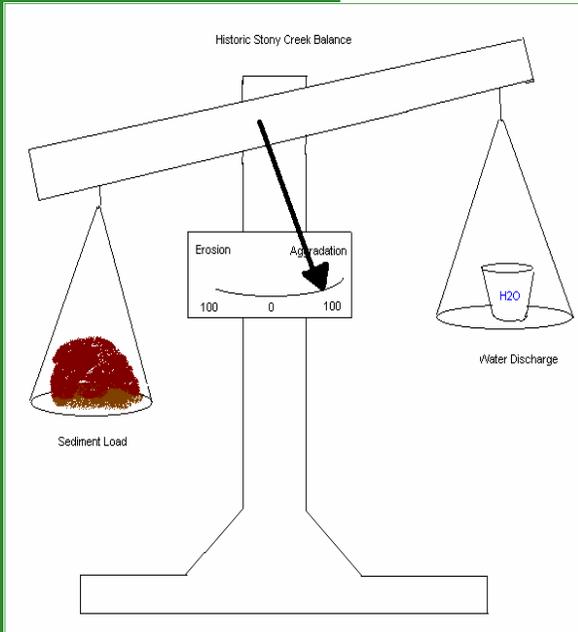
Workshops will be held for the public to demonstrate the different controls and revegetation techniques. The RCD and River Partners will distribute a workbook that will provide information on the techniques. These workshops will be held in the spring and fall of next year.

### Monitoring Plan

The RCD is developing a monitoring program with the assistance of the Department of Water Resources to help the RCD assess the benefits and impacts of projects to reduce bank erosion and remove Arundo and Tamarix. The purpose of this project is not only to show the benefits of conservation projects but to ensure that, in the long-term, there is no increase in bank erosion or Arundo and Tamarix. The Monitoring Plan will help the RCD demonstrate to landowners and government agencies that the projects are performing the way that they were designed, that no further work needs to be done, and that no negative impacts occurred due to the implementation of the project.

A draft of the Monitoring Plan is now available. If you are interested in a digital copy of the plan please call Ajay Singh at (530) 934-4601 x126.

# Altering the Balance



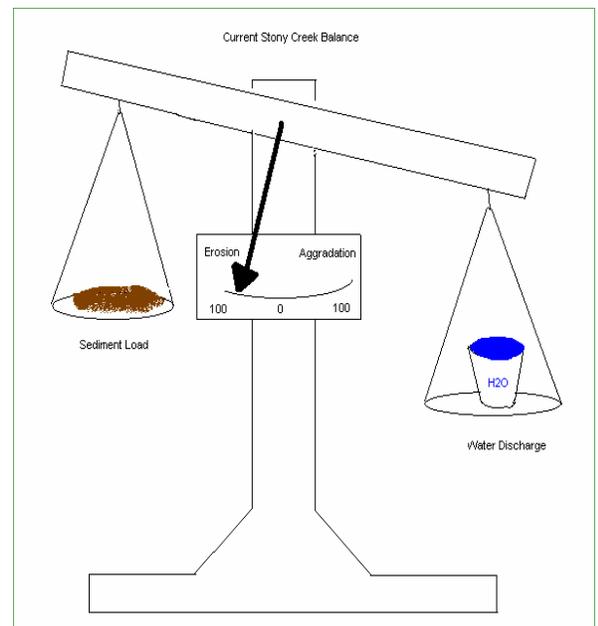
Lower Stony Creek has had its water, sediment, and vegetation changed over the past 40 years due to the construction of Black Butte Dam and the introduction of non-native plants. How to reduce the impacts of the dam on the lower watershed is complicated due to the need for flood control, irrigation, and coordination between landowners and government agencies. The RCD is concluding a watershed assessment that has assessed why there is an increase in bank erosion and non-native plants.

Every creek and river is in a state of dynamic equilibrium in which the creek tries to find a balance between erosion, deposition, and stream velocity. Each has their own balance between the level of water discharge and the amount of sediment that it carries downstream. Diagrams of the historic and current balance of Stony Creek show that the balance changed from a sediment heavy system to a system that has had its sediment cut off and an increase in the frequency and duration of a water discharge that is able to move sediment downstream, causing bank erosion. In order to reduce bank erosion landowners and government agencies must address the problem of sediment starvation as well as bank stabilization.

**The creek has down cut an average of almost 5 feet and widened by more than 35% since the construction of Black Butte Dam.**

The watershed assessment has found that the creek has down cut (incised) an average of 2.5 feet between 1967 and 1990 and 2.4 feet between 1990 and 2006. In some parts of the creek elevation has dropped 13 feet. In addition a study commissioned by CALTRANS in 1990 found that the active stream channel has widened by 35% between 1968 and 1990. These two effects are due to the fact that there is no sand, gravel, or silt entering the lower watershed and an extraction of what has been previously deposited causing the creek to be disconnected from its historic floodplain. Adding to the problem, the creek is only allowed to flood to a maximum of 15,000 cfs which is the capacity of the active stream bed. By constricting the water into a defined channel and flooding up to the banks causes the banks to be "sawed off." The material that is sawed off enters the creek and is carried downstream to where gravel is extracted.

In order to alter the balance landowners and government agencies should advocate for the augmentation of sediment at the top of the lower watershed, create incentives for off-stream sand and gravel mining versus instream mining, plan bank stabilization projects at a reach scale using a geomorphic-bioengineering design approach, and reduce *Arundo* and *Tamarix* in the stream channel and current floodplain. The RCD will discuss these options at the next LAC and TAC meetings.



# What is a Conservation Easement?

Conservation easements have increased in popularity over the past few years to help landowners protect their land from future development and extract equity from the property while still holding the right to farm or ranch. Due to the popularity and need for easements President Bush signed a bill into law this year that allows landowners to receive tax breaks up to the amount of the easement value.

Not all property can be put into a conservation easement or receive tax incentives however. The property must have at least one of the following in order to qualify for an easement: historic value, targeted as open space in a government policy, open space for scenic enjoyment, significant natural habitat, a place for public education or recreation.

There are misconceptions about what a conservation easement is. Some people believe that they are selling off their right to use or manage the property. As is stated below in a description of what an easement is and what it is not, all easements are negotiated with the landowner; there is no "cookie-cutter" agreement. The landowner and the organization holding the easement agree on the management practices that will meet the needs of the landowner and guarantee the conservation of natural resources.

## ***A conservation easement is ...***

1. A legal agreement a property owner makes to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on his or her property. The easement spells out the rights the landowner retains and the agreements on the use of the property. Each of these are negotiated between the landowner and the conservation organization holding the easement.
2. Tailored to the resources of the particular property and to the desires of the landowner.
3. Held by a nonprofit organization or public agency. Examples include local land trusts such as Northern California Regional Land Trust or by public agencies such as a Resource Conservation District.

## ***A conservation easement is not...***

1. Necessarily a prohibition on the use of the land. The allowable uses are based on the resources on the site and the desires of the landowner.
2. Necessarily a requirement to allow public access to the property. Public access can be included if the landowner wishes it and the resources allow it. However, public access is required for deductibility of conservation easements for public recreation or education.

## ***The concept of perpetuity....***

In order to be eligible for federal tax deductibility, conservation easements must be dedicated in perpetuity. This means that the easement remains in force forever and "runs with the land." Therefore, all subsequent landowners are bound by the easement. The concept of perpetuity does *not* mean, however, that the easement cannot be modified.

For more information please contact Jamison Watts at the Northern California Regional Land Trust at (530) 894-7738.

**A conservation easement is tailored to the resources of the particular property and to the desires of the landowner.**

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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## Glenn County Resource Conservation District



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### Landowner and Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

There will be a Landowner Advisory Committee meeting on November 30th at the Carnegie Library in Orland at 7:00 p.m. The Watershed Coordinator will present drafts of the Watershed Assessment and Monitoring Plan. The committee will also discuss future steps to implementing the recommendations of the Watershed Assessment.

The RCD will also give a presentation on the approach to conservation planning of bank stabilization and Arundo and Tamarix removal projects.

A Technical Advisory Committee meeting will be held on December 13th at 8:30 a.m. at the Carnegie Library in Orland. The Committee will be discussing any changes needing to be made to the drafts of the Watershed Assessment and Monitoring Plan. The RCD will also discuss the implementation of recommendations, prioritizing the recommendations, and future projects the RCD can accomplish in the next year.

If you have any questions regarding these meetings please call Ajay Singh at (530) 934-4601 x126.

### Conservation Planning

The Glenn County RCD will begin to provide landowners reach scale and site scale planning to remove Arundo donax and Tamarix, stabilize banks, and alter the stream channel.

The first step will be a workshop with landowners to identify property boundaries, identify needed projects, identify the optimal stream course to reduce bank erosion.

The second step will be to work with landowners to create conservation plans for the property where they would like to perform work in the channel.

The third step will be to assist landowners in applying for permits that pertain to the project. This process will be expedited with the conservation plan.

The fourth, and optional step, is to apply for funding through private and public funding to complete the work outlined in the conservation plan. The landowner will be able to decide if they want monetary assistance and which funding program fits their needs. The RCD will assist any landowners wishing to apply for private or public funds.