



**RESOURCE**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# Stony Creek Quarterly

WINTER / SPRING, 2010

**SPECIAL  
POINTS  
OF INTEREST:**

THE PLAN UNVEILED

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO  
BENEFIT LOWER STONY  
CREEK

WILDFIRE PLANNING IN  
THE WATERSHED

COLUSA GLENN  
SUBWATERSHED  
PROGRAM

THE VICES OF ARUNDO

GLENN COUNTY  
FARMERS' MARKET &  
MORE

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## Lower Stony Creek Watershed Restoration Plan

by Claudia Street, Conservation Planner

### The Formal Presentation of the Lower Stony Creek Watershed Restoration Plan

It is with great pleasure to announce the completion of the Lower Stony Creek Watershed Restoration Plan (Plan). The formal presentation of the Plan was provided by the Glenn County Resource Conservation District (RCD) staff at the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Landowner Advisory Committee (LAC) meetings on February 8, 2010.

The development of the Plan was a response to landowner concerns regarding bed and bank erosion and the adverse affects posed by the non-native plants, *Arundo donax* (Arundo) and *Tamarix spp.* (Tamarix) in Lower Stony Creek. To address these concerns, the RCD applied for and received grant funds through the CALFED Watershed Program in June, 2006.

The Plan is designed as a blue-print for landowners as they plan projects to address the resource issues noted above. It outlines the characterization of the Lower Stony Creek Watershed, provides goals and objectives defined by landowners and reviews short- and long- range approaches to restoration. Short-range approaches include stabilization and erosion control practices and management techniques of Arundo and Tamarix. The permitting, environmental protection measures, monitoring and conservation planning steps are outlined. Long-range approach alternatives look at the management of reduced flood flows from Black Butte Lake, maintaining water storage capacity through sediment extraction and infrastructure improvements to increase lake storage capacity.

The RCD is sincerely grateful to all who have provided technical advice, astute observations, comments, corrections, criticism and critiques during the development and writing process. A special acknowledgement is extended to the landowners along Lower Stony Creek. Their commitment and intimate knowledge of the conditions and habits of the creek were instrumental in the development of the Plan.

Our funding agency rightfully deserves our appreciation and gratitude. Funding was provided by the CALFED Bay-Delta Watershed Program under Proposition 50, The Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002. DWR is the implementing Agency for the Agreement between Glenn County Resource Conservation District and the State of California.

To view the Plan and the Lower Stony Creek Aerial & LiDAR Atlas (published to complement the Plan), please visit our website, [www.glenncountyrccd.org](http://www.glenncountyrccd.org). Follow the link on the Home Page under "Latest News" to access the documents. If you have any questions, please call the RCD at (530) 934-4601 x4.

# Lower Stony Creek Watershed Restoration Project Accomplishments

The age-old sayings are endless:

***“You have to go slow before you can go fast”***

Watching the Olympic downhill skiers, I am certain they all started their careers on the Bunny Hill . . .

***“Don’t put the cart before the horse”***

I’ve literally done this and it is a real wreck ~ believe me . . .

***“Build your house on a strong foundation”***

Whether you want to call this a Biblical reference or job security for permitting agencies or acknowledge it because you are just really practical and smart . . .

The RCD has been diligent and dedicated to landowner concerns over the years building on the basics, going slowly, keeping the horse where it belongs and setting stones for a solid foundation with the ultimate goal in mind to provide landowners with the tools to go forward with a project on their property. Here is a list of accomplishment towards that end goal.

## **Stony Creek Watershed Assessment**

*Completed February, 2007 by H.T. Harvey & Associates*

Includes **Volume 1: Lower Stony Creek Watershed Analysis** and **Volume 2: Existing Conditions Report**

The assessment involved the following four steps: 1) identified landowner and resource agency issues and concerns through a series of stakeholder meetings from November 2005 to February 2006, 2) gathered and reviewed information concerning existing conditions, 3) prepared an Existing Conditions Report for the Upper and Lower Stony Creek Watershed, and 4) analyzed the conditions and ecosystem relationship in the Lower Stony Creek Watershed to recommend solutions to the identified issues.

## **Demonstration Site, Landowner’s Manual**

*Completed September, 2007 by River Partners*

The manual explains the Demonstration Site Project that tested Arundo and Tamarix control techniques and erosion control measures suitable on Lower Stony Creek.

## **Arundo Mapping Project**

*Completed May, 2007 by California State University, Chico*

Provided the RCD with maps and measurements of Arundo colonies in the riparian areas of Stony Creek, quantifying the amounts and distribution of Arundo.

## **Monitoring Program**

*Completed October, 2007 by Department of Water Resources - Division of Planning and Local Assistance*

The Stony Creek Environmental Monitoring Program and Quality Assurance Project Plan provides a framework approach to monitor the effectiveness and environmental benefits of actions carried out during implementation projects that would involve the removal non-native invasive plant species and/or stream enhancement projects. Individual projects will be monitored for a minimum of five years.

## **Permit Coordination Program**

*Completed May 15, 2007 with the CA Department of Fish and Game and Natural Resources Conservation Service*

A private landowner may apply through this program to obtain a Fish and Game Code Section 1602 Agreement to implement habitat enhancement and protection projects on their property.

## **Implemented Smith/Baker Ranch Project**

*In Progress with Smith/Baker Ranch, private landowners along Lower Stony Creek*

In October 2007, removal of Arundo began below Black Butte Dam. Riparian restoration is near completion.

## **Tamarix Bio-Control Beetle Releases**

*In Progress with CA Department of Food and Agriculture*

The CDFA and RCD are working to build the population of leaf beetles in Lower Stony Creek to aid in the control of Tamarix.

## **The Lower Stony Creek Watershed Restoration Plan**

*Completed February, 2010 by GCRCD with Graham Matthews & Associates*

Project description on page 1 of this newsletter

# **MORE STONY CREEK NEWS: FIRE PROTECTION PLANNING**

## **WESTERN GLENN COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN**

*Remember the catastrophic fire events of 2008 in Northern California? The California Fire Safe Council, through a Fire Safe Council Grants Clearinghouse, provides a competitive process to apply for funds to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (Plan). The RCD approached Western Glenn County landowners and community members, the Board of Supervisors and local fire departments in Western Glenn County to see if there was an interest in developing a Plan. With support from these groups, the RCD applied for and received funds to begin this planning process.*

Situated adjacent to the Mendocino National Forest, the western region of Glenn County is at risk from catastrophic wildfires originating from within the forest and from excessive fuel loads that exist in the lower chaparral and blue oak woodlands. Fire regimes have been altered and continue to pose great risks to rural communities, federal forests, surrounding Wildland Urban Interface, commercial timberland, privately owned rangelands, watershed resources and the entire ecological diversity of the landscape. Within the forest, the increased use of forest roads by tourists and hunters continue to pose threats of fires ignited by misuse. In the lower rangelands, invasive weeds have significantly reduced the economic value of rangelands while increasing fuel loads along rural roads frequented by visitors to the Mendocino National Forest. As western Glenn County, including rangelands and the Mendocino National Forest, continues to show an increase in recreational use and as unmanaged fuel loads increase, the corresponding risk of fire escalates exponentially. A collaborative, unified effort to address fire and land management issues is seen by local residents and resource agencies as a necessary tool to meet the needs of fire safety, fuel load reduction, education and outreach, communities at-risk and the management of all valued natural resources. Following the fire storms of 2008 in Northern California, the need for planning on a landscape scale is seen as paramount to preventing such devastating events from occurring in Western Glenn County.

The Glenn County RCD, with input from rural residents, community members and resource agencies, will develop a landscape-scale fire plan that encompasses the eastern portion of the Mendocino National Forest, the western rangelands of Glenn County, the at-risk community of Elk Creek and Wildland Urban Interface areas situated within the region. This landscape-scale fire plan will utilize the Community Fire Plan Template developed by the California Fire Alliance and Fire Safe Council. All stakeholders will be consulted and will address the specific ecological and economic issues. Fire management efforts already in place will allow for the coordination of landscape-wide planning and strategies. Planning will allow for fire management efforts aimed at improving existing fire regime class (FRCC), plant composition, wildlife habitat, rangeland health and diversity, watershed resources, community safety and recreational use. An integral component of the planning process will utilize a comprehensive mapping system that correlates access routes with landowner/community contact information. This information will be critical to providing wildfire response time within remote areas. In addition, smaller scale fire management units will be defined by natural and man-made fire breaks, assets at risk, available communication systems and agency jurisdictions so strategies can be tailored for each specific unit. Combined, the landscape- and small-scale approaches will identify and develop a variety of fire and fuels management strategies.

Planning meetings will soon be scheduled. If you have any questions, please call the RCD office at (530) 934-4601 x4.

# Water Quality Monitoring on Stony Creek - Present and Future

By Larry Domenighini,  
Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program

Water quality testing of the Stony Creek watershed is currently being performed by your local subwatershed group, the *Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program*, with the assistance of the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (SVWQC). This is part of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (IRLP) that was mandated by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) in 2003. The IRLP was implemented to monitor and manage storm and irrigation runoff from irrigated agriculture in the Central Valley. Intensive monitoring of the Stony Creek watershed began in 2005 and continued through 2006. Monitoring was conducted bi-monthly during the winter storm season after significant rainfall events and monthly during the irrigation season. The sampling site was at the Highway 45 bridge area. The purpose of the monitoring was to establish a baseline of data for the watershed. Sampling in June, August, and September of 2005 showed exceedances of the State Water Quality Objectives for aquatic and sediment toxicity. In July of 2005 sampling showed an exceedance for the pesticide chlorpyrifos (Lorsban, Whirlwind, Lock On, Govern, and other trade names). In March of 2006 sampling showed exceedances for Diazinon and Simazine. Beginning in 2007 sampling has been done only during the storm season. In February and December of 2007 sampling showed sediment toxicity.

As a result of these exceedances for toxicity the Regional Board, under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, requires that a Management Plan be developed by the *Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program* and the SVWQC to address the causes of the toxicity. A Management Plan outlines steps the *Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program* membership must take to address exceedances. The main focus of this Management Plan at this time is surveying landowners and operators about their management practices. In the future, focus will shift to educating landowners and operators about management practices to minimize runoff contributing to aquatic and sediment toxicity. Adoption of management practices to protect surface water will help solve the water quality problem. If the *Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program* and landowners fail to solve this water quality problem through a Management Plan, it is possible that landowners draining into Stony Creek will be required to obtain individual permits called Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) from the Regional Board. Annual fees for a WDR range from \$800 to \$1,900 plus water monitoring costs and reporting to the Regional Water Board (annual per site water monitoring cost is approximately \$45,000).

The Regional Board is in the process of considering revisions to the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, to be known as the Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (L-T IRLP). Some of the alternatives being considered by Regional Board staff at this time include possible requirements for monitoring of groundwater, and more burdensome monitoring requirements for storm and irrigation runoff. The *Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program* and the SVWQC, along with other agricultural advocacy groups (Farm Bureau, California Rice Commission, etc.) are involved in this process closely and working to help develop a program that is workable and effective for agriculture. More information will be coming out later this year, hopefully by this summer, and we will keep you informed thru meetings, newsletters, and newspaper articles.

For more information, please call us at (530) 934-8036.

# THERE IS A THIEF AMONGST US STEALING OUR WATER!

by Claudia Street

It's true folks, there is no doubt someone, or some THING, is robbing us of one of our most precious resources. You've certainly heard about the drought, about farmers being denied water, of water cut backs, and about the need to conserve water because it is a resource as precious as gold. And despite those who like to own gold for it's economic value, that shiny metal doesn't even compare to the multiple benefits of water. I do actually own a few pair of earrings that have some gold-filled accents, and obviously could live just fine without them. Without water, however, I will die in a few days, whether or not I am wearing my fancy earrings.

So this THING is taking our water without asking, without providing you or me with any compensation, and doing nothing but taking more every year. In fact, if I told you IT was taking a conservative estimate of 450,000,000 gallons annually, wouldn't you want to take some kind of action? Wouldn't you want some kind of justice? Wouldn't you just want to be heard (okay, now I sound like a radical Lucy on the Charlie Brown Christmas Special)?

So, this THING is *Arundo donax*, commonly referred to as Arundo. Arundo is an invasive non-native plant with stems that resemble bamboo and leaves that look like corn. It is an extremely fast-growing plant that can grow up to 4 inches in one day and may reach a height of 30 feet. Arundo is found primarily in moist places (just look at Lower Stony Creek), usually along streams, but provides little food or habitat for insects, bird and other wildlife. In fact, it uses three times more water than typical native vegetation. Oh, and did I forget to mention it is stealing our water!

Taken from Texas A&M University, Department of Agricultural Economics study titled "**Economic Implications of Biological Control of *Arundo donax* in the Texas Rio Grande Basin**" the following information is vital to my calculations, and I quote "Bell (1997) identifies a water uptake of 528 gallons per standing meter<sup>2</sup> of *Arundo donax* per year for California." The Stony Creek Arundo donax Survey produced by Chico State University for the RCD in 2007 estimated that in the upper 10 miles of Lower Stony Creek, beginning from Black Butte Dam, there was 66 acres of Arundo within that section alone. There are a total of 24 creek miles in Lower Stony Creek and the Arundo infestation increases dramatically as you head downstream. I have made an educated, conservative estimation of 200 acres of Arundo in the entire 24 creek miles. 200 acres equals approximately 810,000 square meters. If you multiply 810,000 square meters by the 528 gallons per square meter consumption rate noted in the Texas A&M report you get just shy of my 450,000,000 gallons per year figure.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP? Landowners and small community groups can make a big difference in ridding our creeks and waterways of this noxious weed. Learn more and be part of the solution. In spite of the serious threat Arundo poses, it can be controlled. Increase your support for conservation projects that assist private landowners in addressing water quality, quantity and riparian restoration. Advocate for a decrease in disincentives to implementing conservation projects on private land. Advocate and support sustainable funding for the Glenn County RCD so we can continue doing our part.

Gosh, and I never even got around to telling you about the extreme fire danger Arundo poses. What a smart thief it is ~ creates a fire risk AND steals the water we would need to put the fire out!



2010 photo of Arundo in Lower Stony Creek  
at Highway 99 Bridge

Funds for this newsletter have been provided by a grant from the CALFED Watershed Program and administered by the Department of Water Resources

Please contact the Glenn County Resource Conservation District if you have natural resource concerns or issues you would like the RCD to address.

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## EXCITING EVENTS, PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

Glenn County Certified Farmers' Market beginning in June 2010  
Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator  
Xerces Society Rangeland Native Pollinator Project  
Western Glenn County Wildfire Protection Plan

For more information on these projects, visit [www.glenncountyrcd.org](http://www.glenncountyrcd.org) or call (530) 934-4601 x4

### From your RCD Directors, Associate Directors and Staff

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