



# Annual Report

July 2002-June 2003

## YOLO COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### Water, Weeds, and Working Together — the RCD in 2003

Another year of challenges has presented the District with new partnerships and the continued drive to support the resource conservation needs of Yolo County landowners and organizations. Besides work in the field, we grappled with untimely rains, the Ag Waiver, and the state budget crisis; and we participated in the Cache Creek Watershed Forum, the Yolo County Habitat Joint Powers Agreement, and delivery of the new Farm Bill over the year leading up to June 2003.

Our new partnerships with local, state, and national groups enhance our work and inspire us to move forward. The Yolo County Farm Bureau is taking the leadership role in establishing a Water Quality Coalition Group in response to the Ag Waiver. Drawing on our experience working with on-farm water quality management and monitoring techniques, the RCD will provide technical support. The Yolo County Agriculture and Public Works Departments have developed roadside vegetation management programs and a permit process that enhance the possibilities for landowners desiring to manage their roadsides with native grasses. The Wallace Foundation has included the RCD as a partner in developing proposals for evaluating and promoting performance-based conservation incentive programs such as the Conservation Security Program introduced in the 2003 Farm Bill.

New grants awarded during the year have provided us with improved resources for supporting area conservation. We now have new equipment, including a native grass seeder, a pull-behind mower for roadside projects, and a Geographical Positioning Unit with grants from the CA Department of Conservation (DOC) and the University of Montana. The District received funding for photography and production of 16 new pages for the *Know Your Natives* vegetation guide thanks to the NRCS and DOC. The RCD also received resources for new projects such as the Mobile Water Lab and a

Vegetated Ditches evaluation and extension project through a US Bureau of Reclamation grant, a Reclamation District 108 truck donation, and a State Water Resources Control Board grant.

Over the past year, the RCD has implemented numerous vegetation management, watershed planning, educational and farm water management and monitoring projects throughout the county, with focus in the Willow Slough and Cache Creek Watersheds. Established partnerships with the USDA NRCS, USDA Ag Research Service, Yolo County Ag Department, Audubon California and FARMS Leadership, Inc. enable the RCD to accomplish far more than it could on its own by linking financial and technical resources. The bulk of the RCD's current grant funding comes from the CALFED Bay-Delta Authority.

In the coming year we will be actively pursuing grants to enhance our conservation practice effectiveness monitoring and implementation support, weed management projects, and work on behalf of the Yolo County Ag Waiver Coalition Group. We are also looking into non-grant funding in order to maintain service to the county in the future when grant-based funding is not so plentiful. The last page of this report includes a summary of last year's budget and recent audit, including the source of our funding and how we spent it. Because we derive only 1.5% of our budget from property taxes, we are dependent on our ability to successfully compete for grants to continue our work. Current grant funding runs to the end of 2004. Continuation and expansion of our current projects depend upon us finding ways to extend that window. We are hard at work on that task. If you have any ideas, please contact us. 



Cover Crop Field Meeting

Paul Robins, Executive Director

**RCD Directors**

Tom Muller, Chairman  
 Robert Becker, Director  
 Wyatt Cline, Director  
 James Mayer, Director  
 Scott Stone, Director  
 David Gilmer, Assoc. Director  
 Rudy Lucero, Assoc. Director

**RCD Staff**

Paul Robins, Executive Director  
 Jeanette Wrynski, Program Manager  
 Jennifer Drewitz, Veg. Mgmt. Specialist  
 Vance Howard, Watershed Coordinator  
 Susan McCloud, Administrative Assistant  
 William Spang, Water Quality Specialist  
 Rebecca Bresnick Holmes, Program Assistant  
 Christina Owens, Monitoring Intern

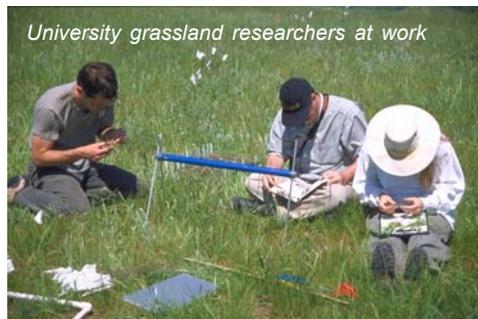
**NRCS Staff**

Phil Hogan, District Conservationist  
 Stephen Jaouen, Range Conservationist  
 Shirley Leeper, IT Specialist  
 Ha Truong, Agricultural Engineer  
 John Weatherford, Soil Conservationist

**Lower Union School Slough Watershed Improvement Program**

July 2003 marked the middle of the second growing season of CALFED-funded work in the Unions School Slough Watershed. Staff continued to make progress along the three primary lines of work have included installation of on-farm soil, plant, and water management projects and monitoring of their effects; monitoring of Union School Slough sediment and nutrient content to determine primary sources in the watershed for prioritizing future work; and development of the Online Agricultural Conservation (OAC) Planning Tool through a subcontract with the USDA Agricultural Research Service and Oregon State University's Computer Science Department. Specific accomplishments of the past year include:

- Installation of three riparian-edge hedgerows in coordination with the SLEWS program in which high school students implemented all project activities.
- Installation of four sediment traps on cooperator ranches and collection of water samples for analysis of trap water quality benefits.
- Periodic evaluations of canal bank stability related to vegetation cover.
- Periodic monitoring of wildlife use of project sites.
- Completion of an upper watershed sediment delivery inventory.
- Analysis by our USDA ARS partners of over 800 water samples taken throughout the year and completion of the database work for the erosion analysis tool of the Yolo OAC Planner.
- Presentation of five landowner-focused conservation workshops.
- Production of a county watershed brochure and a sediment trap brochure and three "profiles in conservation" of Yolo County RCD farmer-cooperators.



**Willow Slough Rangeland Stewardship Program — Audubon, CA**

Under this program, Audubon California staff provide direct technical and financial assistance to individual landowners in the watershed to implement conservation and restoration activities. The program co-implemented SLEWS with FARMS Leadership, through which high school students adopted sites and participated in implementation of restoration projects. FARMS Leadership and Audubon also formalized a Farm and Nature Center at Sierra Orchards by

hiring a center director (to begin 1/1/04). The program implemented riparian enhancement along the Winters Reach of Putah Creek and conducted prescribed burns with landowners and California Department of Forestry in 45,000 acres of rangelands of Putah Creek, Willow Slough, and Cache Creek watersheds. Other projects implemented in 2003 included:

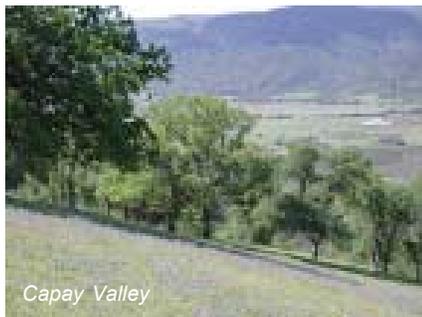
- Planning and initiation of two new riparian and wildlife pond enhancement projects.
- Rangeland enhancement in the upper watershed on five ranches, including prescribed fire, seeding with native perennial grasses, and controlled grazing.
- Enhancement of two stock ponds on one ranch including fencing to control livestock grazing, installation of an off-pond solar-powered stock watering system, and establishment of native vegetation.
- Riparian enhancement along upper watershed seasonal drainages on five ranches, including prescribed fire, seeding with native perennial grasses, establishment of native trees and shrubs, and controlled grazing.
- Wildlife pond and wetland establishment on two lower watershed farms.
- Technical assistance to Union School Slough projects.

The program also includes extensive monitoring by Audubon as well as five research subcontracts with U.C. Davis, Michigan State University, and USDA Agricultural Research Service. Research projects study the on-farm/ranch effects of the conservation activities on watershed resources including: plant and soil response, forage quality and selectivity, large-scale vegetation response (via remote sensing), birds, and correlates of successful native perennial grass establishment.

## Watershed Coordination Program

Grants from the California Department of Conservation and CALFED Watershed Program support our Watershed Coordinator (“Coordinator”) in facilitating watershed planning, conservation, and restoration project permitting and implementation in Capay Valley.

Our program’s two primary tasks have been to support the Cache Creek Watershed Stakeholders Group (“the Group”) with administration,



Capay Valley

watershed plan development, and private land conservation technical support and to link Capay Valley watershed work with similar work in neighboring watersheds. Our Coordinator’s many accomplishments include:

- Development and production of the 90-page *Capay Valley Conservation and Restoration Manual*. The Manual details over 30 conservation and restoration practices and includes instructions, material lists, per-

mitting information, watershed processes, plant lists, and cost-share program information.

- Helping the newly-formed Heather Creek Stewardship team formulate a plan to address concerns about flooding, streambank erosion, crop land soil erosion, and invasive noxious plants.
- Encouraging the formation of tributary stewardship teams in Capay Valley with direction from the Group.
- Developing goals, objectives, and recommended actions for the Capay Valley Watershed Stewardship Plan.
- Serving as a mentor for two SLEWS Program project sites and guided students through the field day activities.
- Assisting Lake and Yolo County representatives in organizing and funding the first Cache Creek Watershed Forum held in May 2003.
- Serving on the Stewardship Committee for the Blue Ridge-Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership and was selected to the Board of Trustees for the Sacramento River Watershed Program. ☞

## Yolo County Weed Management Area

The RCD Vegetation Management Specialist (“VMS”) worked with different cooperative entities and private landowners in conducting local weed management projects. This year our VMS, or “Weed Warrior:”

- Developed GIS weed and native species map layers for Union School and Chickahominy Sloughs.
- Led the RCD prescribed burn program, which included one roadside, one hedgerow site, and one rangeland site.
- Sprayed, wicked, hand pulled, and mowed on four established revegetated roadsides, installed one new site, and met with two landowners interested in implementing their own revegetated roadsides.
- Supported the local Ag. Office and Public Works in establishing a roadside revegetation permit and developed the standards of care required of landowners managing roadsides under the program.
- Drafted and reviewed a County Roadside Vegetation Management Program Strategy with the Roadside Vegetation Management Committee.
- Organized and conducted a tour of Yolo RCD and WMA project sites for 40 different agency representatives, members of the press, and private landowners. ☞



## FARMS Leadership Inc.

### FARMS Leadership Program

This statewide program now reaches ten sites, approximately 300 students, and 50 teachers from Sacramento to San Diego. The program received contributions from the L.A. County Farm Bureau and NRCS office in addition to other funding earmarked to start an L.A. County Program.

### SLEWS Program

The Sacramento Valley SLEWS (Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship) Program reached 13 schools and 12 restoration sites during the last year. Students worked nearly 8,000 hours initiating restoration projects on tailwater and wildlife ponds, riparian corridors, hedgerows, eroded gullies, and a wetland in the Putah-Cache Bioregion (Yolo and Solano Counties). ☞

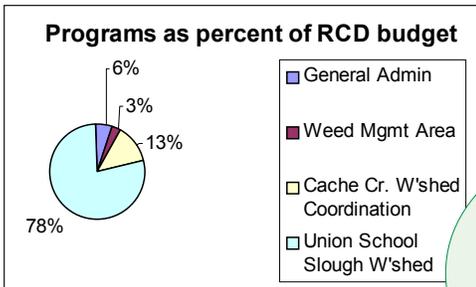


Wildlife pond planting day

*All RCD programs are implemented in close partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office, area agencies, non-profits, and state grant programs. All program staff work in partnership with each other, where the different programs have mutual goals, allowing us to ‘leverage’ outside resources and extend program effectiveness with limited funding.*

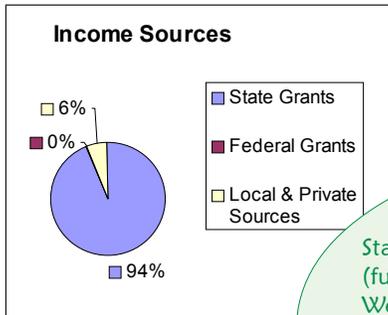
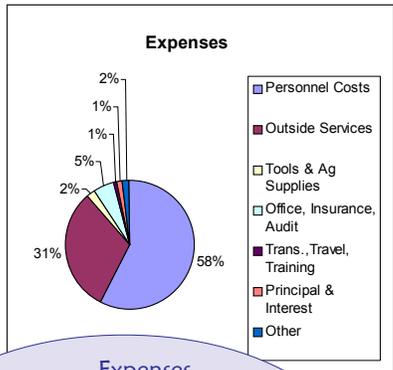
# Summary of Fiscal Year 2002-2003 Financial Information

(from FY '02-'03 audit by Macias & Gini Co.)



**Relative Budgets of Programs**

General Admin	\$28,313
Weed Mgmt Area	\$21,374
Cache Cr. W'shed Coordination	\$65,840
Union School Slough W'shed	\$401,140
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$512,667</b>



**Income Sources**

State Grants (funding for Cache Creek Weed Management Area, and Union School Slough)	\$481,276
Federal Grants	\$1,585
Local & Private Sources	\$29,806
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$512,667</b>

**Expenses**

Personnel Costs	\$322,897
Outside Services	\$176,734
Tools & Ag. Supplies	\$12,526
Office, Insurance, Audit	\$28,971
Trans., Travel, Training	\$5,777
Principal & Interest	\$6,979
Other	\$9,774
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$563,658*</b>

\* The difference between income and expenses reflects outstanding grant reimbursements due the RCD.



**Yolo County RCD/NRCS Field Office**  
 221 W. Court Street, Suite 1  
 Woodland, CA 95695

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically instead of by mail, please notify Susan McCloud at [mccloud@yolorcd.org](mailto:mccloud@yolorcd.org).

Nonprofit  
 U.S. Postage Paid  
 Woodland, CA 95695  
 Permit No. 31  
 Woodland, CA

Find project progress reports, events, links, and updated conservation articles on the RCD website at [www.yolorcd.org](http://www.yolorcd.org)