

Labor that teaches

Program passes on cooperative spirit to students

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Woodland High School students were busy helping restore native plants and habitats at a local farm Thursday morning as part of the Yolo-Solano Conservation Partnership for Habitat on Working



One of the many volunteers with the Student and Landowner Education and Water Stewardship program works out in a farm on Thursday. (Lizeth Cazares/Democrat)

Lands project.

The students are a part of the Student and Landowner Education and Water Stewardship program, or SLEWS, a project that works with local wildlife groups and farm owners to restore wildlife habitats.

"Throughout the school year the kids participate in different parts of the restoration work," said Paul Robins, executive director for the Yolo County Resource Conservation District.

While several high school groups participated in

the project, a WHS group of students made their way to the farm of Sheana Butler near Madison earlier this week and spent the day installing irrigation systems and planting native trees.

The students gain experience while the project gets much needed help.

"This was a situation where the Audubon Land Stewardship Project had money to do work, but they were short on labor, and the Center for Land-based learning had a lot of kids who wanted hands on learning, so they stuck them together," Robins said.

The project is part of a \$2.25 million grant, given by CALFED and partnered by 10 local organizations - including the Yolo County and Solano Resource Conservation districts, the Audubon Land Stewardship Project, and the Yolo County Flood Control District - that will help restore 20 water sites in Solano and Yolo County.

"We got a grant to work with all these people, to do a bunch of projects like this one, frog ponds and canal bank re-vegetation, with the idea that you can have a farm doing its thing while still having a wildlife habitat," Robins said.

The project also brings several groups together that usually seem to be at odds.

"Organizations (about) which you think, 'That's left-wing, that's right wing, that's green, that's brown, they don't play together.' But actually they play together," he said.

It also helps spread cooperation to the next generation.

While it does take a few acres of farming land, local farm owners like Sheana Butler also benefit from

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restoring those pieces of land.

So far this project is a testament to walk can be accomplished when different groups work together.

"This is a model for how people in agriculture region can develop wildlife habitats in public and private partnerships, and still have great farming," he said.

Not only is this a benefit to local farms and wildlife, but the students get to use the information they learn at school first hand.

"These kids have been so tested in our test-crazed curriculum, but when do you test the tests?" said Jerry Delsol, Woodland High School Ag and Environmental. "You have to go out and do something practical. This is an opportunity to come out and it helps them to see why we do this."

Students have been able do plenty of practical work by planting vegetation, irrigation, photo monitoring and seed collection at the site.

Woodland High School students are enjoying going outdoors and putting what they learn to use.

"We're outdoors and we get hands-on experience. I'm interested in Environmental science, and I just like the fact that we're giving back to the community," WHS student Hilaree Nachondo said.

It was the fourth time Woodland High School students worked at the site. They will return once more in the year to continue working on the project

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