

Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy News

Number 1

August 1997

By way of introduction...

As this newsletter is being sent to some who may have not been at one of our past meetings, let us take this opportunity to introduce the Conservancy, starting at the beginning.

All of us are aware that there is an increasing amount of regulatory activity which affects us here in our local watershed – regulations affecting ranching, farming, timber management, water diversions, and other land-use activities. These regulations come directly from state and federal legislation, or from regulatory agencies such as the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G).

While everyone is in favor of conservation – most of us came to this area because we liked the environment here – one sometimes has the feeling that regulations are imposed in a vacuum, without regard for the effects of regulations on local residents.

A number of us had discussed this problem from time to time, particularly with regard to the regulation of water diversions, but one legislative and environmental event brought these discussions from the informal level to the action level. This event was the proposed listing of the spring-run Chinook salmon as an endangered species.

The spring-run Chinook salmon lost most of its habitat on the Sacramento drainage when Shasta Dam was constructed. It survives in small runs on a number of Sacramento tributaries. Some of the best remaining habitat for this fish, according to the CDF&G, is on Battle Creek, so a listing of this fish as an endangered-species could have significant impact upon local water diverters, power plants, and other users of the riparian corridor.

Our first action was to find out more about the situation, and what landowners on other local creeks were doing about it.

We learned that there is a large number of organizations supporting watersheds and creeks in northern California, and that these organizations are working closely with the regulatory agencies and having a significant impact upon regulatory activities.

After talking with CDF&G and members of the Deer Creek and Mill Creek conservancies it seemed that a conservancy on Battle Creek offered the best way for local landowners to band together and have some say in the future of our area.

With the assistance of the Tehama County Resource Conservation District (RCD) and Western Shasta County RCD we have held three meetings in the Manton area. Interest has been good, and additional meetings are being scheduled for Mineral and Shingletown.

The goal of the conservancy

The conservancy is being formed with the following draft goal:

“To preserve the environmental and economic resources of the Battle Creek watershed through responsible stewardship, liaison, cooperation, and education.”

The critical issue is to balance economic considerations along with environmental considerations. We hope to achieve this through good land-use practices on our own part (stewardship), through liaison and cooperation with regulatory agencies, and through education of ourselves and our children.

What a conservancy can do

There are many agencies and outside forces acting upon our watershed. The Conservancy can bring to its members news of regulatory and other activities important to the area, it can bring the concerted views of watershed residents back to these agencies, and it can help bring conservation planning down to the local level.

We can achieve these goals through education:

- We need to educate ourselves, to learn what is going on in the outside world that can affect our area, through participation in agency meetings and cooperation with other citizens' groups with similar interests;

What a conservancy can do, continued

- We need to educate those regulatory agencies which can affect us as to what is and what is not reasonable in our specific situation;
- We need to learn more about our own watershed, so that we can make intelligent suggestions about the future of our area.

A conservancy made up of landowners who understand the local situation, and who take voluntary action to preserve the quality of their own property, is in an excellent position to take an active part in the regulatory process to ensure that local concerns and ideas are taken into consideration when outside agencies decide the fate of our area.

And what a conservancy is not

A conservancy is not another layer of regulation. The conservancy has no powers over its members or the community other than the power of suggestion.

The conservancy is not a political lobbying organization. While it may attempt to influence regulatory activity, under the terms of its tax-exempt status it cannot engage in substantial legislative lobbying.

Next steps for the Conservancy

The Conservancy is extending its reach with meetings in Mineral and Shingletown. The steering committee is working on bylaws and plans for incorporation as a non-profit organization, so that contributions will be tax deductible. In the spring of 1998 a general meeting will be held to elect a board of directors and begin formal operation.

At the same time the Conservancy will continue to send representatives to important agency meetings, and report to the community through this newsletter.

We encourage you to contact us so that you can take part in the organization of the Conservancy and help define it (see "Contact us" below).

Spring-run Workgroup Hosts tour in Eagle Canyon

Residents in the Battle Creek Watershed are invited to attend a joint meeting of the Spring-Run Chinook Salmon Workgroup and the Battle Creek Watershed Project in Manton and participate in a tour of the Eagle Canyon area on

Tuesday, September 16th, 1997. The Spring-Run Workgroup meets in numerous areas in Northern California to learn about issues related to the spring-run Chinook salmon.

The meeting will be from 10:00 AM to noon at the Grange Hall on Forward Road. Sack lunches will be available for those needing a lunch. Following lunch, the meeting will continue in the Eagle Canyon area. The tour will be led by fisheries experts from several organizations. The primary focus will be the interface between hydropower and the fishery in Battle Creek.

As the terrain is rugged, access is limited to those able to hike in steep areas. Call Laurie Aumack at 527-4231 for details.

What is a Spring-run Chinook Salmon?

Salmon are anadromous fish, borne in fresh water. In the winter or early spring the juveniles travel to the ocean, where they remain for several years. They return to the waters where they were reared to spawn and continue the life cycle of their species.

The spring-run Chinook are unique in that they return in the spring to the cold, high-altitude waters of their youth, and hold there over the summer before spawning in the fall. In contrast, the fall-run salmon arrive in the main stem of the Sacramento in the late summer, and also spawn in the fall, but in the lower reaches of the river.

"Return of the Salmon" Fest

The "Return of the Salmon" Festival celebrates the resurgence of the fall-run salmon in the Sacramento River system, and specifically to Battle Creek and the Coleman National Fish Hatchery. The festival is an all-day event with tours of the facility, demonstrations, and educational activities about the life cycle of salmon.

Students attending schools in the Battle Creek Watershed will have a chance to learn about the salmon through presentations at their schools this fall. The presentations will be coordinated by the Battle Creek Watershed Project and the Conservancy. The festival will be a great follow up for kids (of all ages) with hands-on fun activities about salmon.

Plan to attend Saturday, October 18, at Coleman National Fish Hatchery, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. For details call Coleman at 365-8751.

Battle Creek Working Group

The Battle Creek Working Group is made up of technical representatives from various organizations with interests in fisheries issues on Battle Creek, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the CDF&G, PG&E and other power interests, and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

During their August 19th meeting the group decided to accept the role as an advisory committee to the "technical plan" that is being developed for Battle Creek.

The Working Group has solicited representation from the Conservancy and also from local aquaculture interests. If you are interested in participating, or if you would like further details, please call Laurie Aumack at 527-4231.

The next meeting of the Working Group will be held in Red Bluff on September 26, at 10:00 AM, at the Department of Water Resources, 2440 Main Street, Red Bluff.

What are RCDs?

Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) are comprised of local landowners representing the interests of those working the land, to carry out natural resource conservation programs at the local level. Both the Tehama and Western Shasta RCDs are involved in the Battle Creek Watershed Project because the watershed lies within the boundaries of their respective districts. The two RCDs are sponsors of the project, providing funding for operations through contracts with the Central Valley Project Improvement Act and Category III funding.

The project exists to help develop a landowner-driven, watershed-wide effort to deal with resource concerns in the Battle Creek Watershed. Laurie Aumack is the Watershed Coordinator, here to facilitate the whole process, which will be directed by those living in the area (that is *you*, so get involved to have your say!).

What RCDs are not...

RCDs are not far-off bureaucracies: they are run by local people who know the area, and they provide advice and coordination, not regulation. RCDs do not dictate to the Conservancy. They are helping the Conservancy get started, and helping us coordinate with other groups. The activities of the Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy will be decided by Conservancy members.

Thanks are due...

The Conservancy has held three meetings in the Manton area, with another scheduled for Mineral about the time this newsletter comes out.

Our thanks are due to the many individuals who have helped the Conservancy during these meetings, by offering advice, telling of their experiences in other conservancies, or describing the goals and activities of their agencies:

From the Tehama County RCD: Ernest White and Laurie Aumack; Western Shasta RCD: Phil Schoefer and Jeff Souza; CDF&G: Harry Rectenwald; Mill Creek Conservancy: Judd Hanna and Kerry Burke; Deer Creek Watershed Conservancy: Bill Berens.

Special thanks to Bruce and Elna Barron for providing an excellent dinner for over 40 people at their Waterwheel Park.

Contact us!

Give us some feedback! Contact the Conservancy:

- To get on the steering committee;
- To get more information;
- To get on our mailing list;
- To put your friends on our mailing list;
- To make suggestions or criticisms.

We can be reached at:

Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy
Post Office Box 606
Manton, CA 96059-0606
Fax: 474-1112

Don't hesitate to call the guilty parties:

Leland Davis 527-5071
Bob Lee 474-3966
Larry Lucas 527-4067(work), 527-6646(home)

In the next issue...

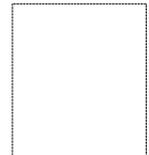
In the next issue of the *News* we will have reports on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) activities and future plans in the watershed (does BLM really want to own *all* of Battle creek?), current CDF&G activities involving Battle Creek water-flow management arrangements with PG&E, and the CALFED program which is funding many of the environmental programs on the Sacramento river system. Give us a call or drop us a line to make sure you are on the mailing list.



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- August 26 Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy general information meeting for Mineral area residents. Mineral Elementary School, 7:00 PM
 - September 10 Tehama County Resource Conservation District meeting, Ag Annex Building, Red Bluff, 9:30 AM
 - September 16 Spring-run Chinook Salmon Workgroup/Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy joint meeting – tour of Eagle Canyon. Manton Grange Hall, 10:00 AM
 - September 26 Battle Creek Working Group meeting, DWR office, Red Bluff, 10:00 AM
 - September 29 Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy steering committee meeting (call to confirm time and location, 527-4231).
 - October 9 “The State of the Watershed Conference 1997”, Sacramento
 - October 18 Return of the Salmon Festival, Coleman National Fish Hatchery, east of Cottonwood, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
 - October 21-24 Watershed Steward Planning Workshop, UC Berkeley, San Francisco
 - October 28 Spring-run Chinook Salmon Workgroup: Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

BATTLE CREEK WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

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