Working Collaboratively for Successful Restoration

by Kevin MacKay, ICF International & SERCAL President and 2014 Conference Chair

As you’ve seen from this year’s conference literature and our website, this year's conference theme is "Working Collaboratively for Successful Restoration." This concept is an important one to me as the majority of restoration projects that I’ve worked on over the past twenty years (at least the successful ones) have involved some level of collaboration or partnership — collaborating with civil engineers to design a flood protection project that includes riparian habitat restoration, working with landowners to control streambank erosion while enhancing aquatic habitat for steelhead and salmon, or partnering with local stakeholder groups to obtain grant funding to improve water quality, restore habitat, and provide recreation and environmental education in urbanized watersheds. Although restoration projects may be initiated by different groups for different purposes, they all require practitioners to recognize and balance multiple physical, ecological, social, and political issues, and interact with educated and motivated stakeholder groups and the general public. In addition, the economic downturn that we’ve experienced over the past 5+ years has required

Cohos salmon in the Central California Coast have declined more than 95 percent from historic population levels, and are listed as an endangered species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Just a half hour from the San Francisco Bay Area’s urban centers, the Lagunitas Creek watershed is one of the most important waterways left for wild coho salmon, supporting 10 to 20 percent of all Central Coast coho salmon surviving today.

This Pre-Conference Highlights issue was compiled by SERCAL President & Conference Chair Kevin MacKay

Ecosis is published quarterly by the California Society for Ecological Restoration, a nonprofit corporation, as a service to its members. Newsletter contributions of all types are welcome and may be submitted to any of the regional directors (see page 2). Articles should be sent as a word processing document and accompanying images sent as jpg or tif files.

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practitioners and implementing agencies and organizations to move beyond single purpose projects and “partner” with other stakeholders to leverage funding and work together to implement projects that not only restore habitat, but also provide flood protection, recreation, environmental education, water quality improvement, and other benefits for the local communities.

My goal for this year’s conference is to highlight the innovative and creative ways that practitioners, local, state, and federal agencies, and stakeholder groups and organizations are working together to plan, design, and implement restoration projects in Northern California. The conference will also provide opportunities for us to discuss our successes and failures (we often learn more from our failures than our successes), share restoration techniques and strategies, and develop new approaches for working collaboratively with stakeholders to successfully plan, design, fund, and implement habitat restoration projects.

Our conference begins on Tuesday, May 13th with field trips to restored coastal dunes and wetlands at Point Reyes National Seashore, enhanced salmonid habitat in the Lagunitas Creek Watershed, restored North San Francisco Bay tidal wetlands, and enhanced urban streams in the City of Sonoma. More detailed information on these exciting opportunities is provided later in this issue.

We formally kick-off the conference on Wednesday morning, May 14th, with the Plenary Session and a keynote address from Grant Davis, the General Manager of the Sonoma County Water Agency. Mr. Davis will talk about his experience working with multiple agencies and organizations throughout the San Francisco Bay area to improve water management and provide flood protection, while supporting broader regional benefits such as protecting and restoring the natural resources of Sonoma County and the San Francisco Bay-Delta Watershed.

After a quick break, we’ll begin the first series of technical sessions: Coastal Wetland Restoration; Restoration of Special-Status Fish and Wildlife, and Upland Habitat Restoration and Management.
Sacramento Rivers, restoring habitat for Western burrowing owl, and restoring fish passage in Marin County. Led by Chad Aakre and Andrew Rayburn, the Upland Habitat Restoration and Management session will span the breadth of California’s upland communities, from coastal scrub and prairies, interior grasslands, grazed rangelands, and southern deserts. Reflecting the collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of ecological restoration projects in California, presenters will include a diverse mix of private-sector consultants, university researchers, and agency scientists. Topics will include grassland-scrub mosaics, mycorrhizal fungi, mineland restoration, exotic species invasion, ecosystem services, renewable energy, nitrogen deposition, wildlife responses to restoration, and habitat mitigation.

After completion of the first day’s technical sessions, we’ll all have a chance to unwind during the cocktail reception. The reception also provides a great opportunity to meet and connect with your fellow restoration practitioners and view the poster presentations.

Point Reyes National Seashore incorporates 71,000 acres of relatively undeveloped coastal area, including sensitive and unique habitats such as wetlands and coastal dunes. Tidestrom’s lupine (Lupinus tidestromii) is endemic to the coastline of California just to the north and south of the Golden Gate in Sonoma, Marin, and Monterey Counties.

Led by Michelle Orr, the session on Coastal Wetland Restoration, will cover the range from subtidal to upland ecotone habitats along the length of the California coast. The session will begin with discussions of efforts to support California Clapper Rail through marsh enhancements and through creation of high tide refuge islands moving up to large scale restoration of the wetland-upland ecotone. The latter half of the session will focus on research into wetland restoration being undertaken in San Francisco Bay with examples of how this has been translated into design. Our focus then moves to the ocean and to bar-built estuaries along the Central coast and to estuarine habitat restoration in Humboldt Bay.

The Restoration for Special Status Species session, led by Ross Taylor, will explore issues related to designing and implementing restoration projects for special status fish and wildlife species. The nine presenters will share information from various professional perspectives (non-profit, private consultant and agency) and on varying scales (project site-specific, watershed-level, and regional-level). Topics will include enhancing and restoring salmonid habitat on the Lower American and Sacramento Rivers, restoring habitat for Western burrowing owl, and restoring fish passage in Marin County.

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After a quick cup of coffee, our second day begins with technical sessions on: Riparian Restoration; Integrating Restoration and Other Land Uses, and Project Implementation and Monitoring – Lessons Learned.

The Riparian Restoration session will present projects split evenly between large-scale river enhancement efforts and smaller projects. All of the work emphasizes multiple benefits and/or multiple objectives, which is in line with the current emphasis of most restoration funding sources. These projects consider the fluvial dynamics of the riverine system and the geomorphic setting that can help guide restoration success. Monitoring results and evaluations of project effectiveness and limitations will also be presented. They include both floodplain and inset channel restoration. Geographically, the papers presented will describe projects on the San Joaquin, Sacramento, Napa, Yuba, and Trinity Rivers, along with work on Redwood Creek (Marin County), and the hydraulic geometry for creek restoration in a number of streams in Marin and Sonoma County.

The session on Integrating Restoration and Other Land Uses, led by Carol Presley, will explore the interconnectedness of ecological restoration with a variety of other benefits. This not only includes how restoration can occur in conjunction with other land uses but also with how ecological restoration overlaps with societal values, such as agricultural preservation, flood management, water supply sources and community education. The session will include presentations on topics such as Integrating Habitat restoration with Stormwater Management and Flood Control, Grazing to Benefit California Red-Legged Frogs and Tiger Salamanders, and Integrated, Multi–Objective Landscape Scale Conservation.

As we all know, when we’re immersed in the day-to-day details of restoration projects, it can be easy to forget that habitat restoration is a relatively new science and that we are still riding the back side of the learning curve wave. The speakers for the Project Implementation and Monitoring: Lessons Learned

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session will share their project-specific, hands-on experience in restoration planning, design, implementation, and monitoring and the lessons learned during the process. Topics will include channel rehabilitation and riparian restoration on the Trinity River, seasonal wetland creation in diked agricultural wetlands in the northern San Francisco Bay region, channel margin enhancement on the Sacramento and Lower American Rivers, wetland restoration design in Truckee, the development of stream restoration agreements for the Mono Basin, and the role and opportunity for community involvement for restoration projects.

We’ll conclude the conference with trips to restoration projects implemented on two local streams, Dry Creek and Tolay Creek, and a visit to the Pepperwood Preserve, a 3,120 acre nature preserve located northeast of the City of Santa Rosa. Visitor access to the Preserve is limited, so this will be a one of a kind opportunity to glimpse the management and restoration activities that are being implemented at this site.

As you can see we have a conference packed with thought-provoking technical sessions and exciting field trips that will showcase the state of habitat restoration in Northern California and provide insight into how practitioners are collaborating with local agencies and organizations to implement successful projects. I hope to see you there!

Start the conference off right!

Join our pre-conference, full-day field tours on Tuesday, May 13.

CHOOSE FROM RESTORATION SITES AT:
Lagunitas Creek Watershed
Point Reyes National Seashore
North Bay Tidal Marsh
Nathanson & Fryer Creek Watershed

These field tours are FREE but you must PRE-REGISTER for the conference and your tour choice in order to participate.
Saturday, January 18: Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge

January 18 was a clear, sunny, and bird-filled day at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge in Glenn County. Although human attendance for the SERCAL-led field trip was low, waterfowl attendance was astounding. SERCAL members Gerrit Platenkamp and Harry Oakes and ICF fish biologist Jeff Kozlowski attended the event. The great weather conditions allowed for great views and photo opportunities.

A total of 51 bird species were observed, including 13 waterfowl, 6 raptor, and several shorebird species. The NWR is a mosaic of open water, emergent marsh, and mudflats. Snow geese and Greater white-fronted geese were the most abundant species with numbers in excess of 10,000. There were several opportunities to view large flocks take to the air and great close-up views. Other waterfowl highlights were close-up views of Hooded mergansers and Ring-necked ducks. We had a great look at a Sharp-shinned hawk perched near the visitor’s center bird feeders, a Peregrine falcon soaring eye-level over the marsh, and four immature Bald eagles.

Clockwise this page from above: Female Ring-necked duck (Aythya collaris). Three birders, outstanding in their field. Snow geese (Chen caerulescens) take off at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. Northern pintail (Anas acuta) pair demonstrate complex two-can-tango moves.
Saturday, January 25:
Cosumnes River Preserve

January 25 provided yet another clear, sunny, and bird-filled day. This trip was held at the Cosumnes River Preserve in southern Sacramento County. We had intended to spend some time exploring the riparian forest and scrub habitat but the birding was so good in the wetland complexes that we spent most of the time there. Gerrit, Jeff and I participated and attendance grew by 33% compared to the previous weekend because my friend Evan joined the trip. The great weather conditions once again allowed for great views and photo opportunities.

A total of 30 bird species were observed. This was fewer than the previous week's trip but we didn't cover as much ground because we were focused on taking photographs. The preserve's walking trail and boardwalk adjacent to seasonal ponds allow for close encounters with waterfowl. A small group of Sandhill cranes were very close to the boardwalk and didn't seem to mind all of the onlookers. Other trip highlights that made for great photographs were a group of Blue-winged teal, a Sora adjacent to the boardwalk, a cooperative Snipe, and a brightly-colored male Common yellowthroat.

Clockwise this page from top: Sandhill cranes (Grus canadensis) and Greater white-fronted geese (Anser albifrons) at the Cosumnes River Preserve, California. A male Common yellowthroat (Geothlypis trichas) stands out in the mostly leafless vegetation while an elusive Sora (Porzana carolina) tries to sneak away from the SERCAL paparazzi. A Snow goose (Chen caerulescens) at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge — the orange head results from rooting among the roots of wetland plants that are rich in iron oxide deposits.
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<td>Poppy Day Plant Sale: Theodore Payne Foundation.</td>
<td>theodorepayne.org</td>
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<td>April 5-6</td>
<td>11th Annual Theodore Payne Native Plant Garden Tour.</td>
<td>10549 Tuxford Street, Sun Valley 91352. theodorepayne.org</td>
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<td>April 9</td>
<td>Nature in the City and Shaping SF Public Talk: “Urban Farming and Urban Nature: Are We Competing or Cooperating?”</td>
<td>Eric Quezada Center for Culture and Politics, 518 Valencia St., San Francisco. <a href="http://www.shapingsf.org">www.shapingsf.org</a></td>
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<td>April 19</td>
<td>Theodore Payne Foundation’s and California Native Plant Society’s Native Plant Week Symposium, Wildflower Show, and Plant &amp; Book Sale.</td>
<td>Sepulveda Garden Center, 16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino 91436. lcnpns.org</td>
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<td>May 4</td>
<td>Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tours and Plant Sale.</td>
<td>Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.</td>
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<td>May 10</td>
<td>UC Berkeley Jepson Herbarium Workshop: “Restoration Ecology.” UC Berkeley.</td>
<td>ucjeps.berkeley.edu/workshops</td>
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<td>June 14</td>
<td>CNGA Workshop: “Introduction to Grass Taxonomy and Identification.” Point Reyes Dance Palace, Point Reyes Station, Marin County.</td>
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