

Grant Agreement #: 68-3A75-6-128
 Grantee Name: Pit Resource Conservation District
 Project Title: Cooperative Sagebrush Steppe Restoration
 Initiative/Implementation
 Project Director: Thomas W. Esgate
 Contact Information: twesgate@sbcglobal.net , 530-310-0146

Period Covered by Report: 8/10/2006 – 8/31/2009
 Project End Date: 8/31/2009

A summary of the work performed over the course of the project/Compare actual accomplishments to the project goals in your proposal:

Our projects treated 4,436 acres and produced 48,717 tons of chips, broken down as follows:

NRCS Conservation Innovative Grant #68-3A75-6-128

Individual & Total Project Accomplishments/Deliverables

| Project | Acres | Tons of Chips |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Ash Valley Ranch I | 1,156 | 15,028 |
| Ash Valley Ranch II | 479 | 1,916 |
| Butte Creek | 550 | 9,900 |
| Gold Run | 240 | 1,200 |
| McClelland Ranch | 637 | 10,829 |
| South Knob Ranch | 620 | 4,344 |
| Stones Landing | 500 | 5,500 |
| Susanville Indian Rancheria | 254 | 0 |
| Total | 4,436 | 48,717 |
| Required Accomplishments | -2,000 | -10,000 |
| Over Achievement | 2,436 | 38,717 |

We followed a strategy, as stated in our Project Description, of leveraging funds with numerous partners in order to treat more acres over a broad and varied landscape. A discussion of the benefits to Producers and the community that includes increased forage production, restoration of critical wildlife habitat, an improved water cycle and reductions in hazardous fuel loads, sediment transport and soil erosion is provided in our attached Vegetation Monitoring and Results paper.

What follows is a summary of our overall operation and our individual projects:

Project Planning

Planning for all our projects was accomplished during the course of implementing a previous NRCS Conservation Partnership Initiative Grant. A 2.1 million acre landscape level plan and 10 individual conservation plans were developed during the course of the project.

Capacity/Administration

Modoc and Lassen Counties provided us with \$255,000 which funded the bulk of our administrative and capacity needs. One of the factors that influenced the Lassen County Board of Supervisors to support our project financially was that we ensured them that we would implement a substantial portion of our treatments within the various Wildland Urban Interfaces within the county. The counties support allowed us to put the NRCS investment to work on the ground for landscape scale restoration treatments. The county funds helped pay for the costs of our Project Director, Project Specialist, Pit RCD Business Manager, project accounting, cultural resource surveys and project related travel expenses.

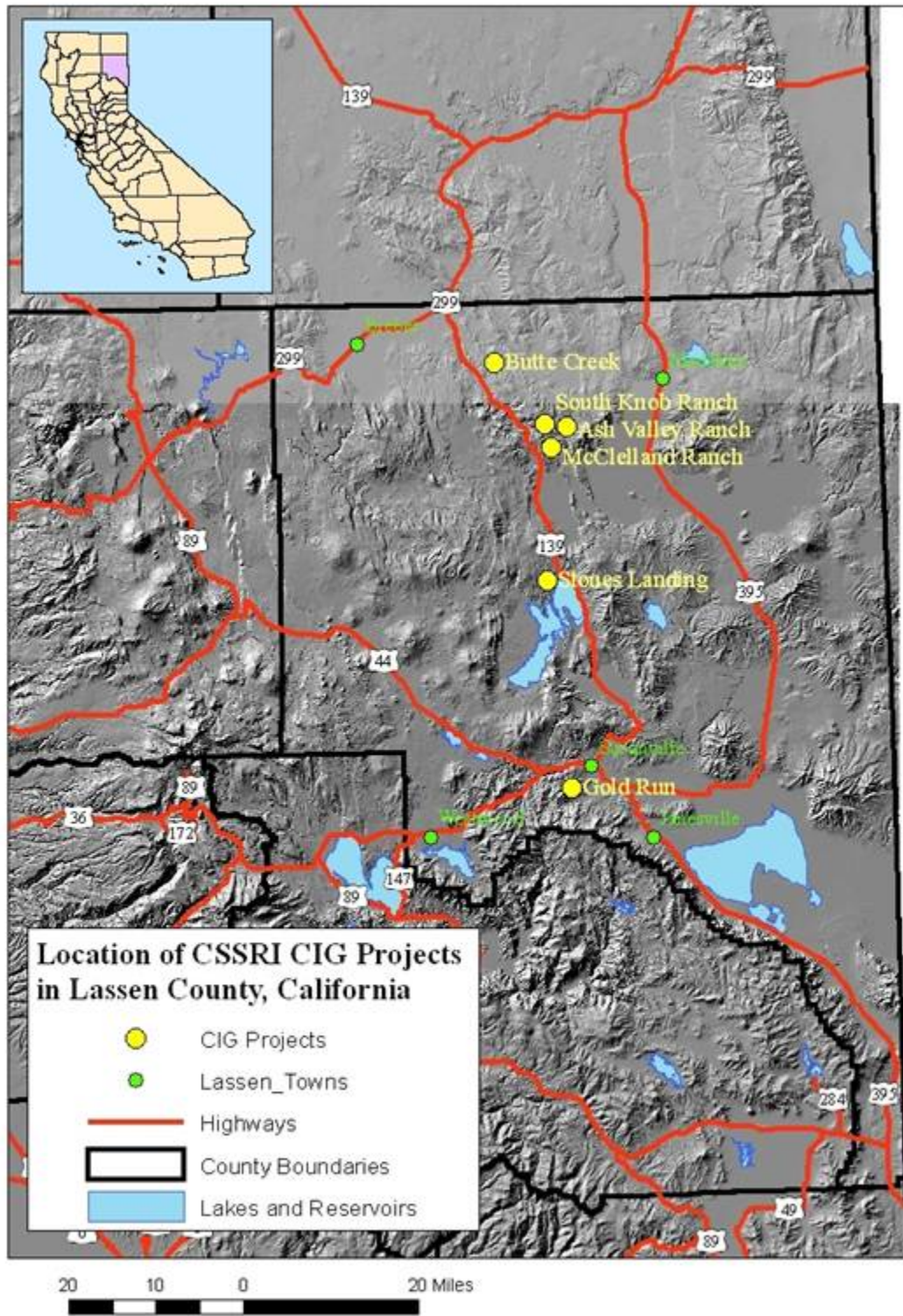
Numerous groups and individuals visited our sites to observe and learn about our treatments and prescriptions over the course of the project. They included our California NRCS State Conservationist, Ed Lincoln Burton, Oregon Department of Wildlife Resources, representatives of the Owyhee County Idaho Sage Grouse Working Group, a Sierra Nevada Conservancy Annual Meeting tour, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, our Congressman's representative, Representatives from Biomass Power Producing Facilities, University of California Cooperative Extension, BLM personnel from 2 Field Offices, USFS personnel from 4 National Forests, County Supervisors, Staff from the NRCS State Office, our local District Conservationist, and our NRCS Technical Contact from the Western Regional Office

During the course of the project we made presentations to 3 International Soil and Water Conservation Society Conferences, 2 International Society for Range Management Conferences, the California Fire Alliance, the 2008 Cooperative Sagebrush Initiative Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, California Fire Safe Council Community Wildfire Protection Plan Workshop and 2009 International Wildfire Management Conference in Sydney, Australia. At all these meetings we emphasized our landscape scale treatment prescription, the strength of partnerships and the importance of leveraging the NRCS investment.

Individual Project Summaries

All our projects focused on the restoration of sagebrush steppe and eastside forest ecosystems through the removal of invasive western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*). Our primary treatment technique was mechanical, using Licensed Timber Operators who used Timbcos, shears, skidders, chippers and grinders. Once the material was processed on site it was hauled in semi-truck vans to commercial wood biomass power plants where it was used as fuel for production of electricity. Most of our projects also had a hand treatment component where crews removed junipers that could not be treated mechanically or where hand crews removed smaller juniper or limbs that remained on stumps.

The results of our treatments for all these treatments are included in our Monitoring & Results report prepared by our Project Specialist.





Ash Valley I Photo Point Before Treatment



Ash Valley I Photo Point After Treatment

Ash Valley Ranch I

This is one of three projects that made up our largest landscape scale project we call South Knob, which spanned 3 adjoining ranches. The project is adjacent to approximately 3,400 acres of previously treated Bureau of Land Management and privately owned and managed land. It started in November of 2006 and was completed in August of 2009. 1,156 acres were treated. Partners we leveraged included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through their Private Stewardship and Partners for Fish and Wildlife programs, additional EQIP Wildlife contracts, producer resources and CalFire Conservation Crews from Intermountain Camp. In addition to our juniper treatments 7 miles of wildlife friendly fencing were constructed, 5 ponds were enlarged, haul road improvements were made, a solar powered watering facility was constructed and a 250 acre dedicated wildlife enclosure was established. Treatments were primarily mechanical with hand crew follow up treatments and hand treatments in areas where cultural resources were present.



Ash Valley II January of 2009-Juniper Uncut is on BLM Managed Land

Ash Valley II

This is a 479 acre project within the Ash Valley Wildland Urban Interface. Work began in January of 2009 and was completed in August. Partners we leveraged included the California Fire Safe Council, producer resources, CalFire Conservation Crews from Intermountain Camp and the Bureau of Land Management. CSSRI assisted BLM with a cultural resource survey and they in turn let a contract for a 900 acre project adjacent to ours, which is continuing. Treatments were about 60% primarily mechanical and 40% with hand crews along a stream corridor and areas where there was a low density of juniper.



Butte Creek Photo Point before Treatment



Butte Creek Photo Point after Treatment



Butte Creek Photo Point during Treatment Cutting



Butte Creek Photo Point after Treatment

Butte Creek

This was a 550 acre project within the Wildland Urban Interface southeast of the community of Adin, California. Work began in August of 2006 and was completed in January of 2007. Partners we leveraged included the California Fire Safe Council, Lassen County Resource Advisory Committee, CalFire Conservation Crews from Intermountain Camp and producer/landowner resources. Treatments were about 90% mechanical and 10% with hand crews along a stream corridor.



Gold Run during Treatment Cutting

Gold Run

This was a 240 acre project across two adjoining producer operations within the Susanville Wildland Urban Interface. Work began in August of 2007 and it was completed In January of 2008. Partners leveraged included the California Fire Safe Council, Lassen County Resource Advisory Committee, CalFire Conservation Crews from Antelope Camp and producer/landowner resources. Treatments were about 90% mechanical and 10% with hand crews around a spring and in ephemeral stream corridors. In this project we also flew on seed in order to out compete a non-native annual grass community (cheat grasses). The seed mix included mountain brome and blue bunch and Ephraim crested wheat grasses.



McClelland Ranch Photo Point before Treatment



McClelland Photo Point After Treatment

McClelland Ranch

This is another of the South Knob projects which covered 637 acres. Work began in October of 2007 and was completed in August of 2009. Treatments were entirely mechanical and also included haul road improvements, the enlargement of a spring fed pond, construction of 2 miles of wildlife friendly fencing and the construction of a solar powered watering facility. Leveraged resources included a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Private Stewardship Grant, an additional EQIP Wildlife contract and producer resources. The project was implemented on the producer's private land and BLM managed land that is part of his grazing allotment.



Portion of South Knob Ranch after Hand Treatment

South Knob Ranch

This is the third of the 3 South Knob projects. 620 acres were treated with a 60/40 split of mechanical and hand treatments along with the construction of a solar powered watering facility and haul road improvements. Leveraged resources included extensive use of CalFire Conservation Crews for Intermountain Camp, an additional EQIP Wildlife Contract and producer resources. The hand crew work focused on a 32 acre aspen grove on the producer's BLM grazing allotment and small junipers and shoots on juniper stumps that the mechanical process could not accomplish.

Stones Landing

This project lies within the Stones/Bengard Wildland Urban Interface. 500 acres were treated by mechanical methods. Leveraged resources included funding from the California Fire Safe Council, the Stones Bengard Community Service District, producer resources and the Lassen County Board of Supervisors.



Susanville Indian Rancheria

This project lies within the Susanville Wildland Urban Interface on federally recognized Tribal land. The Susanville Indian Rancheria (SIR) Natural Resources Department (NRD) worked with CSSRI and utilized the plan developed with NRCS CPI funding to apply for and receive \$254,000 in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Hazardous Fuel Reduction (HFR) funding to remove western juniper from of sagebrush steppe and grassland habitats. The SIR NRD employed the SIR Forestry Crew to implement hand treatments on 254 acres of tribal property directly north of the City of Susanville (within the Susanville WUI). Projects were implemented over a three year period 2007-09 and concentrated on areas adjacent to homes and roads in order to reduce the spread of wildfire in these areas while improving habitat conditions.



Tribal Fuel Crews Conducting Hand Treatments



Lessons learned:

Here are some of the important lessons that were learned during the course of our project (other important information is contained in our Monitoring and Results Report).

1. Our treatment prescription relied, in part, on skidding across the landscape rather than dedicating specific trails for skidding. Timber operators that performed the work have been trained to use skid trails. It took an immense amount of effort to keep them from going back to their learned behavior.
2. We have seen consistent hydrological responses to our landscape scale treatments in the form of previously dry areas remaining saturated on and below the surface even under drought conditions in mid to late summer. We have also noticed anecdotal evidence that spring fed ponds seemed to be holding higher water levels after our treatments. Those implementing juniper restoration treatments should keep this in mind and plan accordingly. Work on ponds that are in need of cleaning or enlargement should be done prior to treatments. Hauling operations should be sequenced in recognition that some areas may become wetter after treatments.
3. Asking a Licensed Timber Operator if his fire pumper is on site may not give you the correct answer. You need to ask him, "Is the fire pumper on our XXX project site at this very moment?"
4. Some Licensed Timber Operators believe that if the water truck breaks down they are not required to water the roads.