



Milestone for River Partners: One-millionth tree planted in riparian habitat by restoration group

By TONI SCOTT - Staff Writer

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MARYSVILLE -- A valley oak sapling planted on Wednesday afternoon marked the one-millionth tree set into riparian habitat by the restoration group River Partners.

On a 600-acre project site at the confluence of the Feather and Bear rivers, the planting of the tree commemorated a milestone for the organization, while foreshadowing the possible future of flood management.

The planting took place at the Bear River Levee Setback Restoration Project, a \$60 million effort that moved an existing levee south of Marysville to allow for greater flood control. Where the levee once stood, rows upon rows of native trees and shrubs now border the new levee, serving as an additional barrier for the homes just beyond the site.

The space, as an expanded floodway, contains more than 100,000 trees and shrubs and is an example of the work River Partners does restoring riparian habitat along California's rivers.

"Though the millionth tree is the culmination of our 10-year history, one of the reasons we chose to plant it at this site is because we feel that this really represents the future of flood-plain management in California," said John Carlon, River Partners founder and president.

Carlon said the project meets multiple objectives: increased public safety, increased wildlife habitat and decreased taxpayer costs for maintenance.

Carlon was joined by representatives from the Department of Water Resources, Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority and Riparian Habitat Joint Venture, all of whom praised the project for its innovative collaboration.

"This is the crown jewel of Northern California levees," said Paul Brunner, the levee association's executive director.

Riparian Habitat Joint Venture biologist Geoff Geupel announced the levee setback would be designated by his organization as a flagship project.

"This is an exemplary model for anyone doing restoration," Geupel said.

To share in the company's achievement, 75 students from regional schools, including Las Plumas High School in Oroville, helped plant several other trees on the site prior to the afternoon's planting ceremony.

Twelve students from Paul Olson's regional occupational program, all of whom have been studying horticulture, joined in the planting.

Olson's class has been working with River Partners for the past three years, growing thousands of oak trees in the school's nursery.

River Partners then buys the viable trees back from the class, helping the students to raise money.

Olson said some of the trees planted Wednesday likely came from his class, which provided the students an opportunity to see the fruits of their labor.

"This allows them to use all the skills they learn from working in class and apply them in a practical fashion," Olson said. "They get the chance to

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participate in a meaningful activity."

Olson said his relationship with River Partners has helped in teaching students basic skills in the classroom as well.

His students have learned more than 40 vocabulary words, such as riparian and restoration, simply from accessing River Partners' Web site, Olson said.

As all the students watched the millionth tree planted — two of them even helping — Brunner acknowledged their day's work, while honoring River Partners for their accomplishment.

"You are building into the future," Brunner said. "You are actually making history and improving Northern California."

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