

Nurturing Community & Restoring the Land

Ongoing restoration activities at the Farm aim to restore riparian, oak woodland and wetland habitat while engaging citizens and partners in creating an economically vibrant community and a biologically diverse landscape. Our efforts will enhance the biodiversity and function of important wildlife habitat, support organic farming practices and involve the community in land management and resource stewardship. Restoration activities also improve water storage capacity, nutrient cycling functions, water quality and biological diversity of the natural areas of the South Fork American River Watershed, and by extension, the American River Watershed and lower Sacramento River Basin.

The American River Conservancy (ARC) was recently awarded a grant from the California Natural Resources Agency through the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Grant Program to create a Community Farm, Native Plant Nursery and complete a 1-mile wheelchair accessible trail around the large pond. The \$336,000 grant award has been matched by additional funding from Intel, Sam's Club, American River Conservancy, 4H Fundraising 4 Farmland Project, as well as thousands of hours of support from volunteers. Boy Scout Troop 134 from Folsom also came out to build a new kiosk as part of Jacob Snodgrass' Eagle Scout Project. The Wakamatsu Community Farm & Accessible Trail Project brings fresh new partnerships and ultimately will provide fresh produce for ARC events, nearby schools and food banks.

One aspect of the project that is particularly exciting for the Stewardship Program at ARC is the creation of a Native Plant Nursery, where staff and volunteers are growing locally-sourced native trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers. These native plants will be used for on-site restoration projects as well as habitat enhancement projects at other nearby sites managed by the American River Conservancy. In fact, the soon-to-be-completed trail at the Wakamatsu Colony site will provide self-guided interpretive signage identifying important native plants, their traditional uses and importance to wildlife. A native plant demonstration garden and plantings throughout the Community Farm site feature drought-tolerant and pollinator-attracting native species.

This undertaking is larger in scope and scale than a traditional Community Garden – it's truly a Community Farm, in that it provides a working "Farm System" where visitors can interact with the land, row crops, orchards and eventually farm animals. We've already started by planting bare root asparagus and rhubarb crowns, about 50 fruit trees of different varieties, and have sowed winter cover crops. The layout of the row-crop area and the orchard utilize permaculture design techniques including capturing precious runoff, utilizing perennial crops and plants, cover-cropping, practicing no-till agriculture and utilizing tons of mulch. Once we have at least one growing season under our belts, the Community Farm can be used as a resource for local schools and members of the community who desire to learn more about sustainable agriculture, native gardening and simply want to connect with the land.

Elena DeLacy, ARC's Stewardship Director, can be contacted to learn more about ongoing restoration, trail and other land management activities at the Farm.

Habitat restoration activities include the restoration of seasonal wetlands, pond and riparian zones, installation and maintenance of hedgerows, and prescribed burns and grazing rotations on the landscape to manage non-native invasive species. Indigenous management techniques will be a focus for oak woodland and wetland habitat enhancement and restoration. The American River Conservancy is currently working with the Sierra Native Alliance, Cosumnes Culture and Waterways, and the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok to establish and manage traditional plant gathering areas at the Wakamatsu Community Farm that incorporate traditional ecological methods and management techniques. Working in partnership with the local 4-H Program, Ag In-The-Classroom and other partners to offer experiential, standards-based lessons, we will integrate habitat restoration techniques with agricultural management practices. The American River Conservancy will continue to develop infrastructure and restore historic buildings that promote our vision for the Wakamatsu Colony Farm. We need your help to make this happen. We have many opportunities for volunteers and the general public to get involved. Donate to the project today!