

Students bring a watershed to life

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Students from Christian Brothers High School in Sacramento install a bluebird box Thursday along Dry Creek near Winters. Courtesy photo

Students from Christian Brothers High School in Sacramento volunteered Thursday to help restore the watershed around Dry Creek near Winters. The project provides educational opportunities to the students as they work to re-establish an ecological connection between the Dry Creek tributaries and the main channel of Putah Creek.

Four miles of riparian buffer will be restored as volunteers remove exotic invasive plants and plant native plants. Since the project began last fall, volunteers have:

- * Planted 1,200 native trees and shrubs, including valley, blue and live oaks; foothill pines; Western redbud; toyon; and coyote brush;

- * Installed 20,000 feet of drip irrigation;
- * Built five bluebird boxes and two burrowing owl boxes; and
- * Planted 25 acres of native perennial bunch grasses.

Several organizations have contributed to the Dry Creek restoration effort including:

- * Audubon California, which facilitates habitat restoration projects on private lands under its Landowner Stewardship Program. The Dry Creek restoration project will create a viable wild way managed by local landowners.
- * Center for Land-Based Learning, which brings high school students to habitat restoration projects under its Student Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship (SLEWS) program. This is the third time students from Christian Brothers High School in Sacramento have volunteered to restore Dry Creek along with student mentors from UC Davis.
- * Nature Restoration Trust, a collaboration between Pacific Gas and Electric Co. and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to bring public and private resources together to conserve and enhance the natural habitats of fish and wildlife.

Major funding for the program comes from PG&E, which has committed \$1 million over 2008-10 to support projects throughout the company's Northern and Central California service area. The Nature Restoration Trust contributed \$40,000 toward the Dry Creek Restoration project.

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