Tuolumne River Trust Outreach

Getting the citizen along the Tuolumne River outside, aware and active with the river.

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Executive Summary

The Tuolumne River Trust (TRT or simply “The Trust“) is the Voice for the river. The Trust has offices in Sonora, Modesto, and San Francisco California, all areas that benefit from the river and effect the Tuolumne River. The Trust’s mission is to promote stewardship of the Tuolumne River through education, community outreach and outdoor interaction. The Trust also works with other organizations with promoting outdoor stewardship which include the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge and Knights Ferry Recreation Area. The Trust is also involved with on the ground restoration projects with River Partners, another nonprofit river organization in the area and throughout the state. The Trust also works with local farmers, local land owners and array of stakeholders to further better the interest of the Tuolumne River. The Trust seeks to make the Tuolumne River a healthy river, one that is safe for drinking, swimming and fishing.
The Trust is also interested in a river that is full of fish and wildlife and a river that is preserved for future generations. As a part of the Modesto branch, the big picture is to try to make more of a natural floodplain in and around the Modesto area for people to enjoy and for wildlife to thrive. My role was to help in planning, organizing and hosting numerous information and fundraising events for The Trust and also learning and understating how a nonprofit water organization operates. In addition, I was tasked in participating in educational filed trips and after school activities with local schools to get kids outside and have an appreciation for the river and all surrounding areas. I was also part of gathering water samples, making maps, data entry, and numerous training exercises that include leading a youth group hiking, learning how to organize a group, lead a group down a river on a raft, and be a team leader in river and community clean ups.

**Project Objectives**

Originally I was interested in soils and becoming a soil conservationist technician with the Natural Resources Conversation Service. The Trust works with all aspect of the river which include dealing with soils related to local farmers around the river and other soil issues. But the goal changed to do more outreach and work more with educating local residents about the river and good sustainable practices. Which is also something that I want to learn more of if I want to work in a management position in the United States Forest Service.

One of my first tasks with The Trust was to help with an after school program in the Modesto Airport neighborhood. The program “Get Up and Go” was a way to get young kids from Orville Wright Elementary fascinated with the outdoors and to get them
outside all while learning why the river is so important. Because of its geographic location, the Modesto airport neighborhood is a crucial part in promoting awareness of the Tuolumne River. Airport neighborhood residents are directly next to the Tuolumne River and Legion Park, a beautiful park that runs along the river in Modesto that is great for outdoor use. The general idea was to get young kids in the airport neighborhood aware of the wonderful opportunities they have living near the river and a park.

During the same time frame as the Get up and Go program, myself and other internes also worked on other outreach events. One include having a family fun day at Legion Park every two weeks. The events where always river based and or environmentally based. The purpose was to have all people in the airport neighborhood experience how fun it can be to learn about the river, the flood plains and local habitat. Myself and other interns also helped in hosted fund raising events in Groveland CA to promote “Paddle to the Sea” and raise money for the local office and other regional offices. In addition, The Trust had interns help with several information booths set up at local events to help the public understand what The Trust does and why the Tuolumne River is so important.

Threw out the whole process I was actively involved in water quality monitoring for every mouth expect for the summer mouths of June, July and August. The main task was to measure phosphate, nitrate, pH, turbidity, air and water temperature in five locations along the river; Dry Creek in Modesto, River Park in Waterford, Ceres River Bluff in Ceres, and Riverdale Park in Modesto. The water monitoring was not only very important for the wellbeing of the river and the habit, but also to make sure the water was clean enough for people to swim, fish and do other recreational actives in.
Most of my work for last fall, winter and this spring have been oriented around the stewards program. The program is designed for people wanting to make a change in surrounding neighborhoods and promoting outdoor stewardship. In the process The Trust is hoping to train several individuals on how to properly manage many tasks that are vitally to The Trust which include; helping in planning and executing an outing with local students to state parks, learning how to guide a raft and eventually lead a group, plane several after school actives that involve the river, plan or help plane raft outings and clean up events and also take the lead in helping with organize tree planting and other outdoor events. Threw out the process The Trust hopes to train several individuals as contractors to do the many activities mentioned above and also give each steward skills that best suits their needs to further enhance there job skill for future employment. I have been involved in several of steward projects that include being a crew leader in this springs river clean up in the Airport neighborhood, I have also been tasked with making a large display map for The Trust, and also learning how to operate a raft and guide a group of adults or kid down the river on a raft and a canoe.

**Project Approach**

I worked close with all my supervisors, Meg Gonzalez, Ramsses Vera, Karhla Davies, Jose Gonzales and Edward Aguilar and did some communication with Analisa Freita and Karyn Bryant. Ramesses and Karhla where my fist supervisors, and they had me do a verity of tasks that where mostly related to helping plan events and help host them. A majority of my work involved working with after school program Get Up and Go at Orville Wright. When I returned for the fall semester and the spring my supervisor and my tasks changed. Meg Gonzalez and Jose Gonzales had me focus more on outreach
with middle school kids and surrounding areas. The goal was to establish a good relationship with river through outdoor field trips and reaction actives in and around the river. I was tasked to help plan and host many similar events in order to achieve these goals.

**Project Outcome**

Throughout my internship there was a steady rise of people interested in the park and the river. The biggest thing that is lacking in the Modesto area is awareness of outdoor recreation and access to it. Specifically with the airport neighborhood and other low income areas The Trust worked with, access to nearby state, federal and county parks was difficult to achieve without the help of The Trust. Conversely, access to the river was less difficult for most surrounding areas. Just an awareness of it being close buy was all people need to use it more often. My thoughts on the experience, has shown how important and powerful outreach and stewardship ship can be in the preservation of the river and its surrounding areas.

**Conclusion**

My goals of learning how nonprofits work and how to run outreach programs was something that I accomplish in this internship. I understood what steps need to be taken in order to keep an organization like The Trust functioning. One important thing that was of vital importance was outreach and marketing. I understood that a big part of any nonprofit is getting money that allows many organizations like The Trust to stay fighting for the thing they are passion about. Some of the biggest goals for me was leadership and management skills that I can apply to any Job including a career in the USDA.

I do plan on staying involved with The Trust, my future goals would be to be
more independent and have more leadership thinking of new ideas on how to get more
people involved with the river. Ideal my career aspirations would have me outside all the
time, but I understand now that a lot of time is need in the office planning and organizing
events to provide a better outdoor experience for the public and future generations.