



2014 Year End Update

Bob Powers Gateway Preserve – the drought continued, so there have been no waterfowl or Tricolored Blackbirds. The first tests of the new well occurred at Thanksgiving time, so we had a little water then.

New Well !! - You'll recall that we were part of a coalition that received an Audubon California 2014 Tricolored Blackbird Partnership Program grant. The funds were to be used to drill a well and install a solar powered submersible pump at BPGP, intending to keep water in the pond through the nesting season.

It turned out that, due to the drought, many people were increasing the depth of their wells or drilling new ones. Drillers' lead times became substantial and prices skyrocketed. Our original driller was in the process of retiring, and we didn't move fast enough for him. He sold his rig and went on an extended vacation. We were unable to replace him within the time constraints of the grant and without raising significant additional funds.

Steve Spradlin, our Secretary and Board member, pursued another possibility. The Lake Isabella Community Services District (LICSD) has a well, which was idle because the water is not suitable for drinking. Since the well is very close to the Preserve's access easement, Steve thought it might be useable for providing water through the TRBL nesting season.

LICSD agreed to explore this possibility. The well was examined and determined to be suitable for our needs. An agreement was negotiated whereby KRVHF installed a pump and associated items to make the pump operational and LICSD provides the use of the well and power access to run the pump. Audubon agreed to this change in the grant funds' use. Then Steve and Bruce Vegter, our Preserve Land Steward and Board member, got underway to make it happen. Here are a few photos.



Bruce is putting the finishing touches on the system, including fittings for plant irrigation and control valves and has been testing the system to understand its limitations and how to best operate it.

Upstream Berm - California Department of Fish & Wildlife staff members had other business in the area and our Board member Bob Barnes was able to arrange a tour of the BPGP. From Region 4- Central, Lands Unit in Fresno, they were impressed with the Preserve and agreed to work with Bob to identify possible funding sources for the Upstream Berm. The State Wildlife Grant Program was identified and work began on an application. We asked the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for assistance and Sarah Campe & Elissa Brown reviewed and commented on Bob's drafts. The application was finalized and submitted in mid-December with significant input from Krista Tomlinson of CDFW. With some luck the application will be successful and construction can take place in late summer or fall of 2015. In the meantime we are looking for possible backup grants.

Stewardship - Beyond maintaining the tree and screening plant irrigation, getting the well system up and running took most of Bruce and volunteers available time during this period. Normally in December, under Dan Portway's direction there would have been selective mowing in the Alkali Mariposa Lily areas. However, the visiting cattle, earlier in the year, did a good job of keeping the Lily competition short, so the December mowing wasn't necessary.

Visitor Center - Near year end the KRV Chamber of Commerce, through the efforts of Marsha Smith, formed a small community committee to push the BPGP visitor center as the logical site for re-locating the FS visitor center when it is moved as a result of the Dam modifications. This is a very complex situation with multiple parties involved, often with conflicting desires. Early in the new year representatives of the parties will meet to discuss their various needs and constraints, in anticipation of the economic and recreation Environmental Impact Statements and then the public hearings that will be held near the end of the first quarter.

Rain

There were a couple of light rains in the middle of December. Between the rain and the supplemental water from the well here is how the pond looked, as seen from the Freeway off ramp, on December 23rd.



More detailed information about the Kern River Valley Heritage Foundation and the Preserve can be found on GuideStar at: <http://kernfoundation.guidestar.org/NonprofitProfile.aspx?OrgId=1066720>. In addition, the Strategic Plan is available there.

