

Scouts restore oak groves along river

[By Susan Meeker/Staff Writer](#)

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In partnership with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, River Partners hosted more than two dozen Cub Scouts (Colusa Pack #12) and 7 Boy Scouts (Colusa Troop #5), who planted oak trees and native grass at the Packer Unit of the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday.

“We wanted to help with preservation,” said 7-year old Wolf Pack member Erik Wrynsinki, of Colusa, who planted about 11 young trees on the west side of the levee, just south of Butte City in Glenn County.

Ruben Reynoso, River Partners’ Senior Field Manager, organized the field day, which included planting a total of 200 oak trees and native grass around the visitors’ kiosk.

The trees were grown by Colusa High Schools’ Ecology Class through River Partners’ School Oak Tree program.

The trees will have a lifespan of about 100 years, Reynoso said, and will help restore some of the area’s native habitat.

Monroe Green, 8, planted about 15 trees.

“I’ve planted trees before,” Green said. “I planted walnut trees on my grandpa’s farm.”

The scouts said they were happy to plant the trees along the river to benefit the restoration of native valley oak woodland on the refuge.

River Partners and refuge officials said it was a great partnership.

“By working to the enhance the refuge, the scouts experienced first hand the wonders of the Sacramento River and learned why it is important to save its surrounding habitat,” said Julie Pokrandt, of River Partners.

The scouts also had the opportunity to do community service and work towards their forester and environmental science badges.

“It’s all part of the scouts’ connection with nature,” said Jim Pingrey, Scouting Community Chairman. “It’s just the sort of thing the boy scouts do for rank advancement.”

USFWS official, Denise Dachner, Outdoor Recreation Planner for the Sacramento NWR, said the work done Saturday by River Partners and the Colusa scouts will benefit wildlife in the area and the public.

“The Packer Unit is a little known spot,” Dachner said. “It a beautiful place to visit for bird watching, and there is a nice walking trail.”

The Packer Unit, comprised of about 400 acres, is part of the six wildlife refuges in the Sacramento NWR complex, which includes the Sacramento NWR headquarters in Willows, Delevan, Colusa, Sutter, Butte Sink and Sacramento River refuges.

The complex is part of a network of nearly 540 wildlife refuges managed by the USFWS to protect over 95 million acres of habitat, Dachner said. River Partners is a nonprofit organization that specializes in river habitat restoration.

Since 1998, the organization has planted over 1 million native trees, shrubs and plants and initiated restoration on over 6,000 acres along the Sacramento, Feather, Tuolumne, Stanislaus, Mokelumne, Bear, and San Joaquin Rivers.

Its mission is to create wildlife habitat for the benefit of people and the environment, Pokrandt said.

Following Saturday's tree planting, the Colusa Regional Medical Center Foundation, represented by board members Tina Beckley, David Weld and Kathy Whitesell, served a hot dog lunch to the scouts, who braved the chilly weather to restore the habitat along the river.