

## Crews clear thick brush near old auto camp

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California Conservation Corps members, Harrison Kale, left, and Jason Moore pile brush Monday near the Diestelhorst Bridge along the Sacramento River. The corps had four crews and around 60 people to clear overgrown invasive plants at the old Diestelhorst Auto Camp as an Earth Day project for Redding

Four crews of California Conservation Corps members — about 60 in all — celebrated Earth Day four days early Monday by clearing thick brush clogging trails next to the Diestelhorst Bridge.

"We wanted to pick a project that you could see progress in one day," said Lynda Burkhalter, who is in charge of CCC member education in Redding.

In doing so, the crews finished brush removal started by volunteers in October 2009 during the fourth annual Community Creek Cleanup. The brush was a thick mix of Himalayan blackberry and Ailanthus, fast-growing invasive species that chokes out native plants.

"You didn't even want to be down here because it was so overgrown," Burkhalter said.

As an Earth Day donation to Redding, the CCC didn't charge for the Monday's cutting, hauling and burning of brush between the Sacramento River Trail and the river itself just west of the bridge, said Jimmy Galvan, a CCC project manager.

The work would have cost \$7,500 for the four crews combined, he said. The state agency, which teaches 18 to 25-year-old men and women to be trail builders and firefighters, looks for an Earth Day project to do each year around Redding.

Also working a chain saw Monday, Randy "Creeky" Smith, of the Rotary Club of Redding, was glad to have the more than a 100 extra hands.

A light cloud cover, calm winds and cool temperatures made Monday a good day to burn the five big piles of brush gathered by the crews, said John Vestal, a 25-year-old CCC member.

"So far, it's been perfect," he said as he ate lunch and kept watch on one of the piles.

Smith said the crews cleared five "viewscapes," or places where people will now be able to see from the trail to the river, while further revealing a piece of Redding history.

In preparing for the cleanup day in 2009 Smith discovered more than a dozen concrete pads that had been buried for decades beneath the brush. The pads are remnants of the Diestelhorst Auto Camp that offered places for people to park their cars and stay in riverside cabins during the early days of the automobile.

Motorists would come from all over the west coast to stay at the auto camp, which the Diestelhorst family ran in the 1920s and 30s, Smith said.

"In the summer this is the coolest place in Redding," Smith said.

A major flood along the Sacramento River in 1940, before Shasta Dam was finished, washed away the auto camp, he said. The "Great Flood of 1940" had river flows as high as 275,000 cubic feet per second. In contrast, recent high flows that swamped Park Marina Drive under the Cypress Avenue Bridge and flooded the amphitheater under the Sundial Bridge last month were 50,000 cfs. — or a less than a fifth of the 1940 flows.

Along with revealing the concrete pads, the CCC members opened up a tangle of dirt trails around and through the old auto camp.

Smith said he's hopeful the trails will entice people to "get off the asphalt" and explore the land along the river.

Walking along the paved Sacramento River Trail Monday with his dog Chipper, Steve Andrade, 62, of Redding, passed the busy CCC crews. He said he walks the trail about once a month and their efforts made the stretch by the Diestelhorst look "like a park."

"It looks good," he said.

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