

## Healing Hazel Meadow—balancing ecological recovery and recreation



(Left) Meredith Branstad of Foothill Associates explains the proper technique for planting to the group. (Center) The group of volunteers hard at work. (Right) Girl Scouts working together also had the opportunity to earn a badge.

What does it take to restore a meadow? On Saturday, October 18 of this year, it took tenacious Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, their leaders and parents, EID employees, consultants from Foothill Associates, and a lot of industrial-strength elbow grease!

The volunteers literally “dug in” with enthusiasm after donning gardening gloves and choosing garden tools—from small pick-axes to spades, shovels, and trowels. The purpose was to plant numerous varieties of native grasses, thousands of plants in all, along a hard-packed drainage channel at Hazel Meadow in Sly Park Recreation Area.

Overcast skies threatened rain as the crew lined up for instructions, but EID’s environmental review specialist Dena McCann enthusiastically declared “NO RAIN!” She prevailed, and the work began.

As project manager for the Hazel Meadow restoration project, Dena coordinated this community-based venture, sponsored by EID and the California Department of Fish and Game. “We definitely wanted the assistance of the Girls Scouts and Boy Scouts,” she said. “Sly Park and Jenkinson Lake are special public places that have given youngsters and their parents so much over the years, and we think it’s important for children especially to have a chance to give something back. What a great opportunity to learn about environmental restoration and how to protect the quality of water.

“As the meadow continues to heal and provide habitat for wild animals, the kids can proudly say, ‘We were part of that!’”

Hazel Meadow joins the northeastern shore of Jenkinson Lake, surrounded by Hazel Creek to the south, Hazel Creek Campground to the east, and Lake Drive to the north. The meadow has long been a popular spot for hiking, picnicking, and horseback riding—so popular that visitation has contributed to the need for restoration. Heavy use has helped to compact the soil, making it difficult for vegetation to grow.

The planting of native species in mid-October was an important step in the restoration process. Still to come? Dena says we can all look forward to a new boardwalk and overlook, a drainage channel that works like it should in a natural meadow, and many happy memories of a beautifully healed open space.

### The role of the meadow—a natural filter

A fully functioning Hazel Meadow is a huge asset to the larger ecosystem at Jenkinson Lake. Yes, it’s a great spot for picnics and relaxation in a spectacular outdoor setting. But it also prevents flooding by slowing and spreading flood waters. And meadow plants and grasses naturally filter out sediment, trapping any pollutants that might otherwise flow from the nearby road and campground into the lake. Jenkinson Lake is a major source of drinking water for EID customers, and a healthy, functioning meadow provides many long-term benefits for customers and outdoor enthusiasts alike.

## GOING BATTY IN HAZEL MEADOW

The much-maligned and misunderstood bat plays a vital role in ecosystems around the world and right here at home. Bats prey upon—and thus help keep in check—many night-flying insects and agricultural pests. They work hard at it, too. A single bat can eat more than 1000 insects a night.

Today, bat populations are declining because their habitats are shrinking and because people are afraid of them. Long associated with darkness and tales of blood-draining vampires, bats have a huge public relations problem. But out of nearly 1000 bat species, only three feed on the blood of mammals, usually domestic animals like cows, or birds. And all three species live in Mexico and farther south.

Because bats are a big help in ecosystems such as Hazel Meadow, we’re placing two bat boxes 12 feet to 15 feet above the ground near the Hazel Creek campground. Each of the cedar boxes has three compartments where we hope bats will roost.