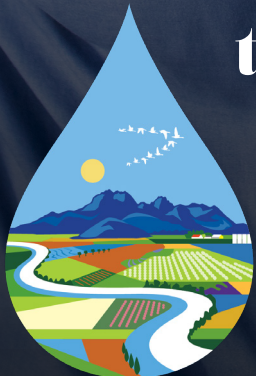


**“It is astounding what
you can accomplish
when you spend more
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collaborate.”**



- Brent Hastey

Pictured: Brent Hastey

NCWA
Northern California Water Association



Son of a Rancher's Daughter

A trail of dust swirled behind the '57 Chevy pickup as it barreled down the path in an attempt to keep the herd in the pasture. Not one's typical choice to prevent the cattle from veering off course, but when you're nine months pregnant, it is a bit easier to maneuver when you have a 160 horsepower, V8 engine on your side.

As a cattle rancher's daughter, June did whatever was needed at the time to get the job done. A trait that she would pass on to the child that would be born later that day.

Brent Hastey grew up on that very same ranch in Yuba County, but he wouldn't follow in the tire tracks of his mother. Cattle ranching would remain dear to his heart, but he was set to create his own path.

It was 1986 and California was dealing with what the press called a "tropical cocktail." But this was no vacation. After a week, two plus feet of rain was measured in the Sacramento Valley. So much liquid fell from the sky that bridges were ripped away from their foundations and holes were left in levees. In Yuba County, 20,000 people from their homes in a matter of seconds.

When the sun finally appeared again, people demanded action. The entire Reclamation 784 Board Directors quit or were replaced, and Brent was asked to step in at the age of 26.

Hastey would learn that his own "tropical cocktail" would come a decade later. The New Year's Day flood of 1997 saw the South Yuba River rise 26 feet above normal. Neighbors watched in horror as trailer homes, sheds, trees and anything else near the banks floated down the river.

As Brent canoed his family through their house to safety, he knew this was going to tear the community apart or bring it together. It did the latter. Once an adversary, the South Yuba River Citizens League and Hastey found common ground in the raging flood waters.

A partnership was born in one of the darkest times for Yuba County, giving a ray of light to the future of water and habitat management – something that was hotly debated for decades in the county. The Yuba Water Agency and the South Yuba River Citizens League started working together on critical habitat for native species. The blend of flood control and conservation has become a model for others in the state to emulate.

"It is astounding what you can accomplish when you spend more time on the positive aspects and truly collaborate."

Hastey is now taking this approach on a statewide level in his role as President of the Association of California Water Agencies. He hopes similar results can materialize that will encourage new collaboration and develop stronger coalitions to solve the state's water problems.

As for June, she is now in her late 80s and is still out there in the field. Albeit this time, she's not driving a truck but riding a lawn mower.

