

STEWARDS OF THE LAND

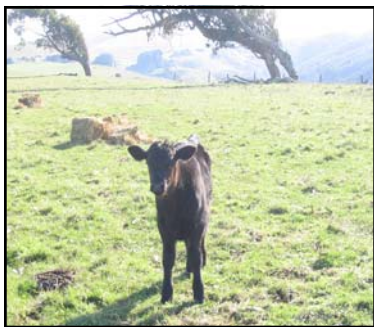
NEWSLETTER OF GOLD RIDGE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

FALL/WINTER 2006

Protecting our natural resources benefits our economy and environment,
contributing to our quality of life, now and in the future.

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

The Estero Americano Watershed Management Plan



The 2002 California Water Quality Assessment Report published by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) listed the Estero Americano and Americano Creek as impaired waterbodies due to agricultural non-point sources of pollution. The Estero Americano Watershed Management Plan was funded through the SWRCB as part of a planning grant to focus efforts on assessing these sources of pollution as well as identifying management solutions through a collaborative and voluntary planning process. The Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD) applied for and received funding to conduct this planning study in the spring of 2004.

Over the years, the RCD has formed productive, long standing relationships with the agricultural community in the Estero Americano Watershed. Given the RCD's commitment to valuing both the ecological health and economic productivity of agricultural lands in our District, we felt well positioned to produce this document and to oversee the collaborative planning process on which it is based. The primary goal of the Estero Americano Watershed Management Plan is to provide a "plan of action" for improving the ecological health of soils, water, vegetation and habitat that will also improve the quality and economic sustainability of agricultural production in the watershed.

The Estero Americano Watershed Management Plan was developed over the course of two-and-a-half years of planning efforts involving numerous resource agency staff, watershed landowners, and other interested parties. A large part of the work that went into developing the plan involved characterizing and assessing the ecological conditions of the watershed based on a compilation of existing studies as well as the creation of new information derived from environmental map data such as soils, vegetation, and hydrology. Two public meetings were sponsored by the RCD and numerous interviews with watershed residents were conducted to gain valuable on-the-ground information about changes in the watershed, the value of its resources, along with any problems encountered in the management of these resources. The Action Plan and Agricultural Best Management Practices chapters of the document are an attempt to synthesize landowner identified objectives and strategies with the water quality objectives of local, state and federal agencies.

If you would like to obtain a copy of the draft Plan, please contact Patricia Hickey at (707) 874-2907 or visit our website at <http://www.goldridgercd.com/documents/documents.htm>

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Fay Creek Flats Gets Some Help from Local Salmon Creek Residents

It just happened to be one of the hottest days this summer as a group of volunteers organized by Russ Spangler from AmeriCorps worked to weed and un-cage plants, as part of a California Department of Fish and Game funded restoration project that started four years ago.

On the corner of Joy road and Fitzpatrick lane there is an overgrown, retired potato farm now replanted with natives grown at Appleton Forestry. This was part of a DFG grant given to GRRCD, as part of an effort to reduce sediment into Fay creek and enhance native biodiversity. This land however was left untended for two years and many of the plants had outgrown their protective cages. There was also concern about the emergent invasive Italian bull thistle population, and the possibility of the thistle out-competing the natives.

Eight to twelve volunteers spent all day working hard in the hot sun and were rewarded not just with a job well done but with a fantastic lunch provided by Andy’s Market, Trader Joe’s, Village Bakery, Target, Fiesta Market, Raley’s and Safeway. Volunteering on such projects is a great way to meet your neighbors, the people in your watershed who are acting to make a difference, and using your time in a fun and effective way.



Hummingbird Nest in Newly Planted Vegetation



Volunteers Hard at Work



Salmon Creek Photo by Steve Killey



Watershed Planning in Salmon Creek

The Gold Ridge RCD has been awarded funding from the State Water Resources Control Board to develop an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (WMP) for the Salmon Creek Watershed. This program will include continuation of volunteer water quality monitoring, a geomorphic analysis (classifying reaches of the stream corridor by physical characteristics and channel evolutionary processes), and more focused sediment monitoring (embeddedness, macroinvertebrate assemblage, V*, thalweg profile variation, and Large Woody Debris frequency).

The intent of this WMP is to bring together the above information to develop a plan that will define a vision for the watershed, contain long and short term goals, and develop an action plan that will identify strategies to achieve the goals. We expect this plan will be driven primarily by landowner input and contribution.

Participation in this process will be voluntary, but the more you as a landowner get involved, the more input you will have toward the direction that the RCD and funding agencies take in Salmon Creek. **We would like the agricultural community to have a strong voice in plan development.** To become involved in any way in this process, or to get more information, please contact Lisa Hulette at (707) 874-2907 or goldrdge@sonic.net.

Road Assessment Update 2006

This summer contractors have been hard at work improving roads in the Dutch Bill Creek Watershed. Gold Ridge RCD, in partnership with Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) wrote a grant to upgrade roads in Dutch Bill Creek in order to reduce sediment from entering the stream. Not only are these roads being enhanced for water quality improvements, but they also require less maintenance which lowers costs for land owners. This project was mostly completed in October before the rainy season. PWA has been hired by the RCD to assess roads, create plans and oversee construction of roads that are discharging sediment into waterways from problems like gullying, landslides, poor design or clogged culverts in both Green Valley and Salmon Creeks. This program will be similar to the project recently completed in Dutch Bill Creek watershed. PWA and contractors reconstruct the roads so that they are storm proof, erode less and water spends the least amount of time on the roads as possible.

Landowners, who would like more information on road improvements, or, Salmon Creek or Green Valley Creek Residents interested in participating in this grant, please contact Lisa Hulette at goldrdge@sonic.net or 707-874-2907.



Stewards of the Land



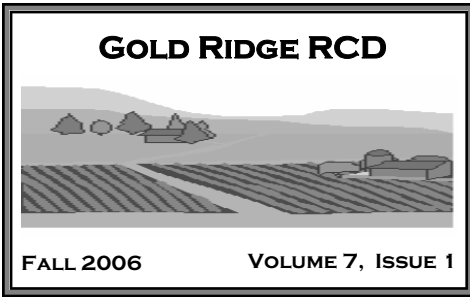
Coho Released into Dutch Bill Creek

In October 2006, over 2,500 young coho were reintroduced into Dutch Bill Creek by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) with help from the Army Corps of Engineers. This is the fourth time since 2004 that DFG has released coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) into tributaries of the Russian River. Winter survival estimates are expected to be around 56%, but according to DFG staff, a 30% survival rate is considered a success. These fish will migrate out to the ocean next spring and are expected to make their return about one year from now.

Although these fish were released into Dutch Bill Creek, they are genetically from Green Valley Creek through DFG's "Coho Captive Broodstock Program." Individual members of a species are taken from the wild and reared in captivity. The fish were carefully gathered in the wild, vaccinated to prevent disease and reared to adulthood in specifically designed circular tanks at the Don Clauson Warm Springs Hatchery near Geyserville. After two years these adult fish were spawned at the hatchery and their progeny subsequently reared to restock Russian River tributaries where coho have historically ranged.

University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) will monitor the survival rates of the released fish to determine the stocking strategy that has the highest chance of restoring coho to the entire Russian River. UCCE will be also be monitoring factors such as stream temperature, flow and the make-up of aquatic insects to search for clues to coho survival.

The subtlety of nature is greater many times over than the subtlety of the senses and understanding.
~ Francis Bacon



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RCD Mission and Vision:

The mission of the Gold Ridge RCD is to assist landowners in addressing concerns by maintaining a presence in natural resource conservation work in all watersheds within the District. The GRRCD can provide a conduit for landowners through whom local, state, and federal monies can be obtained to support and implement restoration programs and practices. The Vision of our District is to ensure the continuation of strong, productive, and viable agricultural endeavors in Western Sonoma County by improving soil and water quality in order to provide an economically and ecologically viable and healthy agricultural community.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS:

Third Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm

At the GRRCD Office
4008 Bohemian Highway,
Occidental, CA

MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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Joe Pozzi
District Manager

Lisa Hulette
Program Manager

Patricia Hickey
Resource Conservationist

Brittany Heck
Project Coordinator

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Newsletter support is provided by the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), California State Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Game, the State Water Resources Control Board and locally by the Sonoma County Water Agency.