

SOTOYOME RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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Resource Conservation News

Sotoyome RCD Recognized by Pena Creek Landowners

For the last three years the Sotoyome RCD has been working with landowners in the Pena Creek Watershed to assess potential sediment sources throughout the watershed to improve fisheries habitat. This spring the Chamise Road Association recognized the RCD for their efforts in locating funds and coordinating restoration work in the watershed.

The Pena basin has both Steelhead trout and Coho salmon populations. The watershed area of Pena Creek is approximately 22.3 square miles, with approximately 11.2 miles of blue line stream. In the winter of 2005-6 two slides occurred on Chamise Road, potentially contributing a huge amount of sediment to the drainages below. Through California Department of Fish and Game Adaptive Management Funds applied for in Spring of 2006, the Chamise Road Association purchased ditch relief culverts and completed work related to culvert placement at four treatment sites within a 2 mile slide area along Chamise Road (two separate slides). The Association contributed approximately \$45,000 for the work completed, and Department of Fish and Game provided a cost share for an additional \$23,370 in culvert costs and other repair work. The repair was completed in October 2006.

The project was a good faith measure provided by Department of Fish and Game for the growing commitment of the residents in the Pena Creek watershed to address sediment



Slide Repair on Chamise Road

issues. Residents in the watershed are also participating in RCD sponsored road assessments being completed by Pacific Watershed Associates to identify additional sediment sources. Additional funds to implement the prescriptions identified in these assessments are currently being pursued.

If you are a Pena Creek Watershed Resident and are interested in having your roads assessed of have other erosion concerns please contact the RCD at 569.1448.

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In the works...

*Sotoyome Resource
Conservation District*

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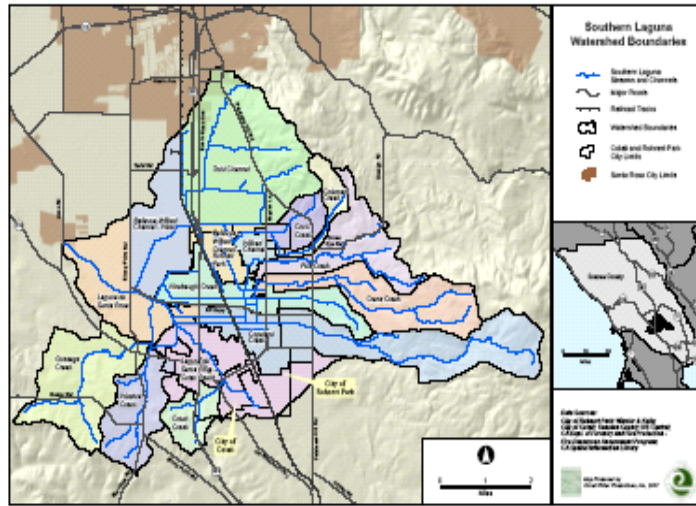
Daniel Schellenberg

Program Manager

Ruth Ark

Resource Conservationist

Southern Laguna Watershed



The City of Rohnert Park has contracted with the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District to prepare a resource about the Southern Laguna Watershed to assist residents and policy makers within Rohnert Park and Cotati with their local decision-making process.

City Council members and stakeholders representing both cities identified the need for such a document through a Creek Master Planning Sub Committee formed in April 2006. Both cities share some of the waterways and related management needs for the natural resources in their respective jurisdictions.

Natural resources within and beyond the City's limits are managed by various agencies, including local, state, special districts, and federal jurisdictions. Residents and non-governmental groups, ranging from individuals, neighborhood groups, to formal non-profits also play a role in the management of natural resources.

The document will identify the Southern Laguna Watershed, which incorporates creeks and drainages within and beyond the urban limits of Rohnert Park and Cotati. It will synthesize resources and findings about creek maintenance, watershed restoration, and public access, and will provide basic awareness of city creeks.

The document will be completed along with kick off event associated with the Coastal Cleanup Day on Saturday, September 15th.

For more details contact Rick Kaye at rkaye@sotoyomercd.org.

Did you know?
Sotoyome RCD receives an annual property tax allotment of approximately \$34,000. The remainder of funds to retain staff and services is derived from grants. We return approximately \$21 to the community for every dollar received in the form of restoration services and technical assistance.

Watershed Habitat Improvements and Future Opportunities

Upper Mark West Watershed

Early summer low flows and warm weather make the torrential rainfall of December 2005 seem like a distant memory. But for those who rang in the 2006 New Year by watching their roads and driveways wash out, the challenges of winter may not be so easily forgotten. For this and many other reasons, the Sotoyome RCD is pleased to report that road repair and upgrades associated with the first phase of the Upper Mark West Creek Sediment Source Reduction Project have been successfully completed.



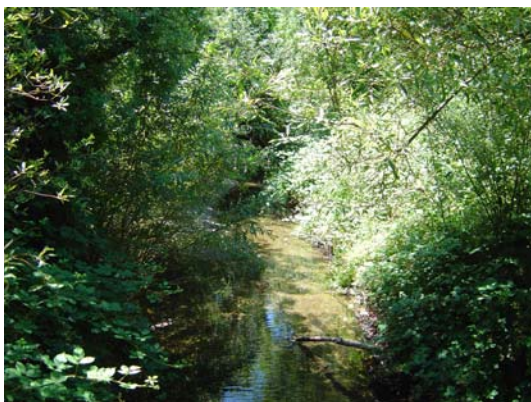
This project, underway for six years (assessment, planning, implementation), included the participation and support of over 70 landowners. It leveraged over \$570,000 in public funds and nearly \$60,000 in private funds matched by landowners.

The project, a partnership between the Sotoyome RCD, Pacific Watershed Associates, Charles Hope Construction, funding by the California Department of Fish and Game, NOAA Habitat and Incident-Specific Restoration Fund and the many participating landowners resulted in the improvement of over 12 miles of unpaved, private roads. The work will prevent an estimated reduction of over 14,000 cubic yards of fine sediment from entering Mark West Creek. In addition to the habitat and water quality improvements, the road upgrades improved the road drainage, which will result in less road maintenance and associated costs for landowners.



The Upper Mark West Creek Sediment Source Reduction Project, as well as other habitat restoration projects implemented in the upper Mark West Creek watershed, originated through the Sotoyome RCD Russian River Creek Stewardship and Volunteer Monitoring Program (RRCSP). A general watershed overview and summary of monitoring activities conducted in the Mark West Creek watershed through the RRCSP are available in several monitoring reports available on the SRCDD website at www.sotoyomercd.org.

In an attempt to comprehensively address fine sediment reduction in upper Mark West Creek watershed, the SRCDD, with funding support from the Sonoma County Water Agency, is interested in working with landowners on additional unpaved road spurs to inventory and improve their roads. Please contact the RCD at 569.1448 for more information and the criteria for participation in future funding assistance requests.



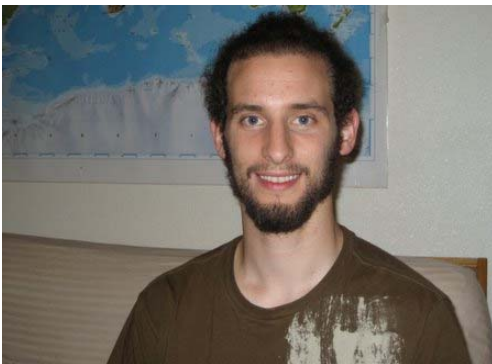
In addition to assisting with additional sediment reduction projects, the Sotoyome RCD is working with landowners and the Friends of Mark West Watershed to design an Upper Mark West Watershed Restoration and Management Plan. We aim to create an interactive plan to assist landowners and residents in the Upper Mark West Creek watershed area to better understand the physical and biological gem in which they live and to provide tools to best manage their properties to maximize and enhance watershed health and connectivity. We look forward to the opportunity to work with the watershed community assist landowners to plan and fund their voluntary habitat restoration projects.

Sotoyome RCD Welcomes New Staff



Ruth Ark joined the Sotoyome RCD staff in January 2007 to complete her internship for her Environmental Conservation/ Watershed Management certificate from Santa Rosa Junior College. Since completing her internship in June she has been asked to stay on and assist with the Creek Stewardship Program Water Quality Monitoring activities and other research and education programs. A Midwest transplant to San Francisco in the 1970s and a Sebastopol resident since 2000, Ruth manages several acres of orchard and vegetable gardens. Ruth's goal is to enhance wildlife habitat where possible by using permaculture principles and sustainable farming practices. Ruth has a Career Certificate in Sustainable Agriculture, a Certificate in Environmental Conservation/Watershed Management, from Santa Rosa Junior College, and completed a Permaculture Design Consultancy Course at the Regenerative Design Institute. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from San Francisco State University. Ruth

feels that working at SRCDD is a wonderful opportunity to work alongside a greater community helping to solve land management issues, and to practice land Stewardship.



Daniel Schellenberg joined the Sotoyome RCD staff in April 2007 as Program Manager after moving to Sonoma County in January from Virginia. Daniel manages a number of activities at SRCDD including coordination with private, non-profit and government partners, in-house contract management and personnel progress tracking, *Arundo donax* Removal Program regulatory compliance, landowner permitting assistance and grant writing. Daniel brings a diversified skill set as a result of his educational and professional background in landscape management, glasshouse horticultural systems, organic and sustainable vegetable field research and scientific writing. One of Daniel's main interests is to develop strategies to bridge stewardship of ecological resources with agricultural sustainability. Daniel has a B.S. in Horticulture from the Higher Agriculture School Den Bosch, The Netherlands, a B.S. in Natural Resource

Sciences from University of Maryland, College Park and a M.S. in Horticulture from Virginia Tech in Blacksburg.



Amy Richards joined the Sotoyome RCD staff in January 2007 as our new book-keeper. Amy is responsible for the management of all accounting activities including payroll, Accounts Receivable, and Accounts Payable, Federal, State and Local Audit reports, annual budget preparation and financial reports. Amy is also responsible for the administration of the Wright Preservation Bank operated through the Sotoyome RCD for the California Department of Fish & Game and the Laguna Valley Mitigation Bank. Amy has been self employed as a book-keeper specializing in non-profits for seven years. Her clients include Project Avary, Marin Community Food Bank, and Boyer House Foundation.

Small Acreages Program: Publication and On-Farm Workshop

Sotoyome RCD's Small Acreages publication entitled *"Managing Land & Water Resources: Tips for Small Farm and Livestock Owners"* will be available to landowners in September. It will provide resources for a variety of small farm management needs including livestock grazing recommendations, manure management, erosion control, wildlife conservation, invasive species removal, fire safety, and more which will provide tips for best management practices that protect water quality alongside small farms in urban and rural areas. Two demonstration projects are being implemented in association with the project.

Sotoyome RCD will sponsor a workshop on Wednesday September 26th for landowners and resource professionals. The workshop will tour related demonstration projects for manure management, and filter strip/wetland re-vegetation. For more information contact Rick Kaye at rkaye@sotoyomercd.org:



Installation of three bin compost system

Other Sotoyome RCD Workshops

Sept. 8th– Identifying Sediment Sources on your Property - Pepperwood Preserve.

Sept. 15th– Coastal Clean-Up day event –Rohnert Park.

Sept. 26th– Best Management Practices on Small Acreages– Wetland Enhancement and Compost Systems-Quetzal and Forget Me Not Farm.

Sept. 29th– Sonoma County Forest Stewardship Workshop.

Mark West Watershed, Alpine Hall (to be confirmed).

Oct. 17th- Austin Creek Landowners Roads Workshop, contact Sierra Cantor at: Scantor@sotoyomercd.org.

Nov (TBD) Hillside erosion control (bilingual) for vineyard managers and workers.

For more information contact Rick Kaye at rkaye@sotoyomercd.org.

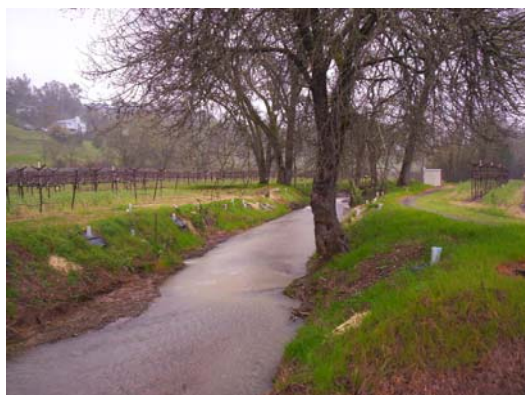
Assessing Salmonid Habitat in the Russian River Watershed

Through funding from the Sonoma County Water Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Services the Sotoyome RCD is currently participating in a cooperative effort to restore and enhance Salmonid habitat in the Russian River. These efforts are being spearheaded by the Salmonid Coalition, whose mission is to *“protect and enhance existing habitat, and to restore historic habitat to promote the recovery and maintenance of Salmonid fish populations in the Alexander, Dry Creek, and Knights Valleys of the Russian River Watershed; and to create sustainable partnerships, both public and private that allow property owners, public agencies, and conservation groups the ability to contribute to these efforts while balancing the need to provide for regional economic viability...”*

SRCD staff has conducted outreach in 15 tributaries to the Russian River, requesting access to enter and evaluate current creek conditions. Over 95% of the parcels on these streams are privately owned, totaling approximately 460 separate parcels and 250 landowners. Thus far, outreach efforts have secured access to 12 of the 15 target creeks, representing approximately 32.3 miles of creek. After obtaining permission from landowners to enter the creek, biologists from NOAA fisheries, SRCD, and/or Department of Fish and Game, walk the creek to determine whether or not existing stream survey data truly reflects the current state of Salmonid habitat in those target creeks.

Creek assessments associated with this effort do not include the collection of new data but instead rely on data already collected by many state, federal and private entities with a history of work in the Russian River Basin. Those partners include but are not limited to the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (NCRWQCB), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District (SRCD), the City of Santa Rosa, and the University of California Berkeley (UCB).

The next phase of the project will focus on the analysis and integration of the information collected through the ground-truthing efforts into a summary report. This report will compare the conditions observed this spring to those summarized in existing assessment reports. In addition, restoration recommendations will be made and prioritized. The SRCD has funding to provide technical assistance through next Spring to landowners in Dry and Alexander Valleys who may have erosion and water quality concerns. To learn more about SRCD's role in the Salmonid Coalition efforts, please contact Kara Heckert, at (707) 569-1448 ext. 104, or email her at kheckert@sotoyomercd.org.



Russian River Weeds Mowed Down in a Flash

By Kerry Benefield

The following article appeared in the Press Democrat on Wednesday June 12, 2007.

With a mighty roar, a flail mower flattened a massive patch of bamboo-like weed Tuesday near the Russian River, doing in moments a job that has taken weeks for crews working by hand.

For four years, crews of conservationists have been trying to eradicate a fast-growing bamboo-like weed called *Arundo donax* from the banks of the Russian River.

Until now, they have worked the tight nooks around the river's tributaries, spaces the brush hog wouldn't fit, with high-powered weed-whackers, clippers and herbicides applied with paint brushes.

It was slow and painstaking, according to Kara Heckert, executive director of the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District, a leading player in the eradication program.

With much of the tributary work finished, the effort has shifted to the river itself where the banks are more accessible to mechanical cutters.

On Tuesday, drivers powered the machine over groves of 10-foot high weeds near the Geyserville Bridge, snapping the rigid stalks like twigs.

"I think this is pretty much the answer to the success of this project," Heckert said over the roar of the brush hog.

The weed is non-native and when living on riverbanks, sucks down three to five times the amount of water of a local plant, robbing salmon of habitat, Heckert said.

Native birds and animals have little use for the tall, skinny stalk and during the dry summer months, the weed becomes highly flammable, according to Noelle Johnson, outreach coordinator for Circuit Rider Productions, a Windsor non-profit agency that is working on the eradication effort.

"It's a huge fire hazard," she said. "There's a lot of dead material in there and it could just go up like a tinderbox."

The automobile-sized brush hog uses metal teeth to break the stiff stalks. The weed must then be chipped to pieces no bigger than two inches long or it could re-root, Heckert said.

In many cleared areas, crews have planted native species like willows, coyote brush and cottonwoods.

Yet for some landowners, even the prospect of ridding their property of the weed didn't make signing on to the eradication program easy.

The idea of inviting a government agency onto their land has some property owners skeptical of the plan.

"A lot of people are paranoid about that," said Rand Dericco, vineyard manager for Syar Family Vineyards where crews were working near his cabernet grapes Tuesday.

Some landowners worry that government officials coming to check out how grant funds are being used might nose around and interfere with other, unrelated business, according to Al Cadd, president of the Russian River Property Owners Association.

"The only concern is that landowners don't want government around," he said. "But I think the contract is pretty explicit in what they can and can't do."

Heckert said any state funders are required to give ample notice before coming on private property and their only duty is to make sure the weed eradication program is working.

Dericco, who said he's worked with the conservation district and Circuit Riders on another piece of Syar property farther up the river, said he's had no problems.

"If we look the other way forever, it's going to take over," Dericco said.



For more information about the *Arundo donax* Removal Program contact the RCD at 569.1448

SOTOYOME RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Conservation articles, events, reports, and other

Links on the RCD website at www.Sotoyomercd.org

Services Offered by the District:

The following are Sotoyome RCD services available for a fee:

- Project Permit Preparation
- Restoration Project Management
- Natural Resource Property Management
- Roving Naturalist Services K-12 Education

For more information on our Fee Schedule and services contact Kara Heckert at:

569.1448 ext. 104

The Sotoyome Resource Conservation District is committed to improving the sustainability of natural resources by developing leadership, exchanging of information, providing technical assistance, and implementing projects that balance environmental and economic interests.