

SOTOYOME



RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



BI-ANNUAL
REPORT

OCTOBER 2008

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This has been an extraordinary past two years for the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District (RCD). With our long positive history working with private landowners and the increasing public awareness of our services, we are seeing growing support throughout our district. This growth is shown in the scope of our projects, the diversity of our partnerships and relationships with individuals and partner agencies, and in the strength and numbers of our board members and staff.

The Sotoyome RCD implements conservation work with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve agriculture and natural resources, watershed monitoring to inform our education and restoration projects, and educational workshops and publications to assist landowners and residents in land stewardship. Our board includes recognized leaders from throughout the agricultural and natural resource community who share the vision of the RCD as a thriving resource for the constituents in our District and for Sonoma County's future.

Times are changing and the need for natural resource conservation and education is greater than ever. Thank you all for your commitment to the stewardship of our resources and the important work of the Sotoyome RCD. It is your support that makes our work to provide conservation education and land management assistance possible.

ACHIEVEMENTS

We feel great pride in the 2007-8 accomplishments of the RCD’s Watershed Planning, Monitoring, Education, and Restoration Programs.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Education is the cornerstone of all RCD programs and the Sotoyome RCD has a long history of providing educational opportunities to private landowners to help them steward their land. The RCD collaborated with several partners over the last 2 years to present educational workshops on a variety of important natural resource topics including: Implementing Road Restoration Projects, 3rd Annual Funding Workshop for Watershed Restoration and Conservation Practices, Livestock Grazing on Vernal Pool Landscapes, and Forest and Watershed Stewardship Workshops in Mark West, Austin, and Mill Creek Watersheds.

In addition, Sotoyome RCD completed several publications for landowners and land managers to assist them in the stewardship of their land, including the “Grazing Handbook, A Guide for Resource Managers in Coastal Watersheds” in partnership with Lisa Bush, “Management Tips To Enhance Land & Water Quality For Small Acreage Properties; Laguna de Santa Rosa Watershed,” and arriving in November 2008, “The Creek Care Guide for the Russian River,” in partnership with Prunuske Chatham, Gold Ridge and Mendocino County RCDs, and the Sonoma County Water Agency.

RESTORATION PROGRAM

Rural Road Improvement Program

The first construction season of the Upper Mark West Creek Sediment Reduction Project was completed in 2007. This project reduced approximately 14,106 cubic yards of sediment from entering Mark West Creek, a high quality salmon and steelhead stream. The RCD worked with 73 landowners on this project and was given an environmental achievement award from Congressman Mike Thompson for the project. Through this program, roads are also being assessed for sediment sources in other areas of Mark West and in the Pena and Austin Creek Watersheds.

Land Management in the Santa Rosa Plain

Sotoyome RCD continues to manage properties in the Santa Rosa plain that are owned by the Department of Fish and Game. Management activities include grazing plan development, oversight of grazing leases with local grazers, infrastructure improvement, and weed management.

Streambank Stabilization Projects

Three important streambank stabilization projects were completed

One of many successful workshops on natural resource topics that the RCD led over the last two years





This emergency streambank repair project is just one of several projects that the RCD implemented with landowners throughout the district in 2007-8.

in 2007 including a project on Sausal Creek in Alexander Valley and urban streambank repair projects on Matanzas and Spring Creeks.

Russian River Arundo donax Removal and Riparian Enhancement Program

Sotoyome RCD is continuing to work on this long term program in the Russian River with mainstem removal beginning in 2007 with over 260 infested riparian acres removed in 2007-8.

Arundo donax removal on the mainstem of the Russian River began in 2007 using mechanized equipment



WATERSHED AND CONSERVATION PLANNING

Austin Creek Watershed Restoration Program

Watershed planning in Austin Creek will include sediment source

assessments on roads throughout the watershed and the formation of a technical advisory committee.

Salmonid Coalition

The RCD is the technical advisor to a cooperative effort to restore and enhance salmonid habitat on selected tributaries in the Alexander, Knights, and Dry Creek Valleys. The RCD has assisted in assessing habitat on 12 of the 15 streams listed in the Coalition’s focus area and is assisting landowners in the development of habitat restoration projects.

MONITORING & ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

The monitoring and assessment program continues to inform and prioritize restoration activities by identifying habitat conditions and needs in key tributaries in the Russian River watershed.

Continuous Temperature Monitoring Program

Over the last two years, this program has doubled its temperature monitoring stations to better represent watershed conditions. In addition, we have augmented our program with additional bioassessment parameters including macroinvertebrate monitoring. This data assists greatly in evaluating long term water quality trends. Lastly, we continue to coordinate the Russian River temperature monitoring work group to better maximize the limited temperature monitoring resources throughout the Russian River watershed.

Synoptic Monitoring—Russian River First Flush

The RCD has been able to revitalize and continue this vital event after Russian River First Flush stopped in 2006. The First Flush sampling design has been overhauled to focus only on urban stormwater quality and its effect on the receiving waters of the nearby creeks.

UPCOMING

Restoration Projects

The RCD is in the planning stages of 3 fish habitat improvement projects in the Dry Creek Valley in partnership with the Sonoma County Water Agency under the conditions of the Russian River Biological Opinion. Two of the three projects will be completed early next summer.

Stewarding Small Acreages

The RCD is continuing the second phase of this program building off of the completion of the management tips for small acreage properties.

Water Conservation Program

In an effort to address a growing need for water conservation in our district, the RCD is working with agricultural producers and rural landowners to develop an innovative Water Conservation Program.

Upper Mark West Management Plan

Building on years of cooperation with landowners in the Upper Mark West watershed, the RCD has begun development of the Upper Mark West Watershed Management Plan. This will be an interactive, web-based tool stakeholders can use to make management decisions on their properties. 🌱



Russian River First Flush 2008 volunteers sampling at Piner Creek.

MISSION STATEMENT

“To provide technical, financial, and educational support to landowners in rural and urban communities to help sustain agriculture, the economy and the environment.”

BOARD MEMBERS

Ron Rolleri, President

Ron has lived in Sonoma County since 1971. Ron’s history in agriculture includes running his own landscape business, focused on the use of native plants and efficient irrigation, and managing his family vineyard in the Alexander Valley. As landowner, Ron has been active in resource conservation and riparian restoration efforts. Ron has served as President of the Sotoyome RCD Board of Directors since 2000, as a member of the board since 1998, and as an Associate Director beginning in 1996.

Dennis Murphy, Vice President

Dennis, a former partner in Murphy-Goode Winery and a partner in Murphy Ranches, has been a grape grower in the Alexander Valley since 1967, moving to Sonoma County full-time in 1973. Dennis served as an Associate Director for a year before becoming a Director in April 1999. He has been the Vice President of the board since 2000. Dennis also serves on the Sonoma County Planning Commission.

Richard Mounts

Richard was born and raised in Dry Creek Valley, where his family has been growing grapes since 1950. In 1969, Rich became a full-time vineyard operator on his family’s ranch. A second generation Sotoyome RCD Board Member, Rich served as an associate director prior to becoming a director in 1985, serving as the Board President from 1988 – 1992. Rich is also a commissioner of the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission.

Earle Cummings

Earle is from Geyserville. His family has been in Sonoma County since 1846, but he was born in Texas, raised in New York, and returned to California in 1965. He has worked in agricultural chemistry manufacturing and a variety of natural resources jobs for California agencies. He graduated from Sonoma State with a degree in Biology and from UC Davis with a Master’s in Wildlife Ecology. He manages a ranch near Lake Sonoma. Earle joined the Sotoyome RCD Board of Directors in 2001.

Walt Ryan

Walt grew up in Sonoma County in both the Bodega and Santa Rosa area. After earning a degree in Mechanical Agriculture from Cal Poly, Walt assisted his family part time on the family ranch in Bodega while working in the field of public works. He left the public sector in 2002 to manage the ranch where his family has been raising livestock for five generations. Walt has been on the Sotoyome RCD Board of Directors since 2005.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Steve Thomas

Steve has worked in the vineyard industry since 1981 after graduating from UC Davis with degrees in Soil and Water Science and Plant Science. Over the last 22 years, Steve has worked for premium wineries in Napa, Mendocino,

and now works at Kunde Estate Winery & Vineyards in Sonoma County. He is a California Certified Pest Control Advisor and is interested in vine health as well as sustainable agriculture. Steve has been an Associate Director since 2006.

Bill Roop

Bill was born in Southern California and earned his MA in Anthropology from San Francisco State University. As a partner at Agricultural Resource Service, Bill has completed hundreds of archaeological evaluations throughout Northern California, in urban settings, vineyards, grazing lands, orchard crops, and for agricultural infrastructure.

Pat Cummings

Pat moved to Sonoma County in 2001 after living and working in such widely diverse environments as Southern California, the Colorado mountains, and the plains of South Africa, experiences which Pat says “shaped a deep concern for the need to conserve natural resources in some way other than walling them off from use.” Pat is a geological engineer who is currently the training manager for a local geotechnical software firm. Pat has been an Associate Director of the Sotoyome RCD since 2006.

Matt Greene

Matt graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1999 with a degree in Forestry & Wildlife Management and began working for Edward A Tunheim Consulting Forester, a company that helps landowners promote healthy forests through long term sustainable management. Matt has been a Registered Professional Forester since 2003 and has written numerous harvest plans as well as conducted wildlife surveys for state and federal listed species. Matt moved to Plantation in western Sonoma County in 2003, and is our newest Associate Director, as of October 2008.

STAFF

Kara Heckert, Executive Director

Sierra Cantor, Watershed Biologist

Greg Fisher, Restoration Program Manager

Valerie Sherron, Project Coordinator

Trisha Meisler, Development Coordinator

Andre Gauthier, Project Assistant

Amy Richards, Bookkeeper



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RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT

Private landowners

CalFire

California Department of Fish and Game

California State Coastal Conservancy

Center for Ecosystem Management and Restoration

Circuit Rider Productions Inc.

City of Rohnert Park

City of Santa Rosa

Department of Water Resources

Friends of Mark West Watershed

Gold Ridge RCD

Gualala River Watershed Council

Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation

Mendocino County RCD

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Natural Resources Conservation Service

NOAA Fisheries

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

North Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council

Pacific Watershed Associates

Prunuske Chatham, Inc.

Russian River Property Owners Association

Sonoma County Farm Bureau

Sonoma County Water Agency

Sonoma County Winegrape Commission

Sonoma Land Trust

Southern Sonoma County RCD

Trout Unlimited

UC Cooperative Extension

US Fish and Wildlife Service

US Army Corps of Engineers

West Coast Watershed

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