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An environmentally sensitive stewardship organization protecting river, tributary and watershed property rights.

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This newsletter is published by:

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RRPOA Receives Conservation Innovation Grant

PETALUMA, June 26, 2008—The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has awarded a \$270,000 Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) to the Russian River Property Owners Association (RRPOA) to promote conservation and recovery of salmonid fish populations on the Russian River. This is one of 45 NRCS grants in 40 states that will develop and refine conservation technologies.

The RRPOA is part of the Sonoma County Salmonid Coalition which was formed in 2005 to restore, protect and enhance habitat and to promote recovery and maintenance of salmonid fish populations. The

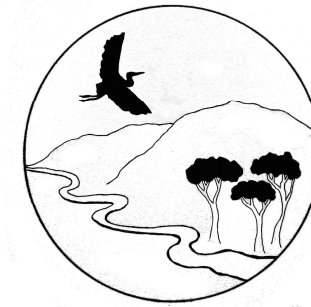
Coalition membership includes a broad spectrum of local public agencies, private landowners and landowner associations.

RRPOA President Al Cadd said, "The Coalition is committed to the protection of salmonids and the regional water supply. We and our technical advisors believe that by working together cooperatively, we can achieve the greatest conservation outcomes while also keeping agriculture and private industry in business. The way we feel about it is, without healthy fish, there won't be healthy agriculture."

The NRCS is one of several governmental technical advisors, including

National Marine Fisheries Service, the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District, CA Dept of Fish and Game, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, University of CA Cooperative Extension and others.

NRCS administers CIG, which is part of their Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS provides technical oversight for each project. Grantees provide technical assistance required to successfully complete their projects and provide matching funds toward the grant.



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Salmonid Coalition Update

Salmon and Water Update Conservation Projects Identified and Funded

Thanks to the agriculture community, the RCD, DFG, NMFS, NRCS and the Sonoma County Water Agency several projects identified in Dr. Horton's November 2007 Habitat Assessment Plan, are now either in the planning and/or engineering stages.

Watershed Approach

Numerous participants in the Salmon Coalition sent a letter to the State Water Resource Control Board (State Water Board), supporting a "watershed approach" to determining impacts on the watershed relative to issuance of water rights permits. Utilizing Dr. Adina Merenlender and Dr. Matt Deitch's spatially explicit model, agriculture producers as well as State Water Board staff, can determine (via a course lens) appropriate placement of off-stream reservoirs for storm water collection. This has the potential to relieve stress on the system and salmon populations and assist agriculture in securing water for crop production.

To assist in qualifying as a watershed approach, the Merenlender Research Group at the University of California, Berkeley is currently conducting a stream flow investigation in the Russian River Basin. Over one dozen tributary stream sites are being visited within the Alexander and Dry Creek Valleys to improve our understanding of seasonal flows. Dr. Merenlender is inter-

ested in adding more sites in order to obtain a more complete picture of seasonal water flow conditions in the Russian River Basin and your property may be an ideal place to collect additional data. If you have a creek or creek access on your property the Salmon Coalition would like to work with you to gain access to the creek to conduct measurements. Dr. Merenlender would be happy to explain the purpose of the project and its benefits to the agriculture community in more detail. If you are interested please contact Alea Trafton at (707) 744-1270 alea@nature.berkeley.edu for more information."

The more we understand about what is going on in the watershed, the better able we are to craft a workable solution.

Farm Bill

This year's Farm Bill includes language and funding for regional watershed approaches (AWEP) is likely to be vetoed by the President, however the general feeling is that there are enough votes in the House and Senate for an over-ride. Assuming it passes in its current form, the conservation section, which references regional watershed approaches, has \$60 + million available annually.

Individual or a collection of participants in the Salmon Coalition could and should seek funds from this for the purposes of construction of off-stream irrigation reservoir siting, engineering and construction.

Water & Wine

Numerous wine producers have joined with Trout Unlimited and landowners on issues around AB2121, flows and conservation of salmonids. An educational and marketing campaign is under development that ties fish, agriculture and water together in a collaborative and productive way. The first event was at Quivira, here in Dry Creek, and the second event celebrating "water and wine" was held at the Log Cabin in San Francisco. The wineries associated with the program along with TU have formed a relationship to meet the goals of preserving all three: fish, agriculture and water.

Thanks to Pete Downs, Bob Anderson, Nick Frey, Richard Rued, Al Cadd, Allen Nelson, Duff Beville, Rob Weinstock, Jim Young, Tom Mauritson, Michel-Schlumberger, Richard Mounts, Rodney Strong, Simi Winery, Steelhead Wines, Wine Creek Vineyards, as well as other growers and TU the events were a success. We anticipate growing the partnership over the next 6 months.

Local Support

The RRPOA, through a committee of its Board of Directors, has attended numerous Salmonid Coalition meetings. They have provided information plus other support which helped the Salmonid Coalition attain recognition and approval of its ideas.

Website Updates

Check out - www.russianriverpoa.org for additional information, updates and presentations

2008 General Membership Meeting

The RRPOA General Membership Meeting was held at the Villa Chanticleer Annex. An excellent dinner with local wine was catered by Ken Rochioli and his crew.

65 members and 8 guests attended.

At 7:50 PM President Al Cadd called the business meeting to order so he could report on the state of the organization. President Cadd thanked everyone who helped make the RRPOA a successful

organization this past year. It was quite a long list pointing out it takes many talented people to make our organization successful. Our volunteers attend meetings, write letters, publish newsletters as well as network with other like minded groups and individuals

After the business meeting adjourned we listened to two very informative speakers.

Due to newsletter limitations this

issue of the newsletter will only report on General Membership meeting speaker number one's presentation.

Speaker number two was Matt St John leader of the North Coast Water Quality Control Board's TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) unit. We will print a recap of his presentation in a future newsletter.

- Johanna Vannoni

The Truth About Sediment

General Membership meeting speaker number one was Mitch Swanson, President and CEO of Swanson Hydrology and Geomorphology located in Santa Cruz, CA.

Mr. Swanson has studied the Russian River for 15 years so the RRPOA Board of Directors asked him to explain to Alexander Valley property owners why they are experiencing problems with the Russian River plus how they can mitigate the problems.

Since the last ice age ended 10,000 years ago this area has experienced climate change plus numerous earthquakes and floods. Earthquakes have uplifted and/or dropped the river bed and adjoining land through constantly moving fault lines that fracture rocks plus loosen earth - this material feeds into the river causing it to deposit tons of silt and gravel as it, for centuries, naturally meandered over the relatively flat Alexander Valley.

A Mediterranean climate zone now dominates our area so historically the Russian River, with its deep gravel deposits, only flowed on top of the ground in the wettest time of year.

After Eel River water was diverted into the Russian River the Russian River has flowed on top of its main channel all year long.

Mr. Swanson explained that over centuries of time the Alexander Valley developed like a big spoon, wide and fairly flat, with the river depositing silt and gravel while it naturally meandered back and forth through the valley unchecked till it hits a natural narrow river channel passage way out near Jimtown.

Because of this narrow passage way out of the Alexander Valley plus the valley's fairly

flat layout it is normal for Russian River flood waters to slow up spread out and deposit tons of silt and gravel while it ponds and backs up on to the land bordering the main channel.

For the last 150 years modern man has tried controlling the river's natural rhythm of building high bars and then meandering over to form another main channel. Man has built levies, removed gravel and straightened the river channel in some areas of the Alexander Valley. The Army Corps of Engineers participated in some of this work in the 1950s especially in the Geyserville area.

Then river management was almost completely abandoned as gravel mining plans, the county general plan and other government laws limited where and when gravel can be removed from the river.

Typical of unmanaged river areas the Russian River has resumed its normal pattern of developing high bars in the Alexander Valley. Its main channel can no longer effectively transport flood waters without doing damage as it is forces these waters to cut sideways into the river banks on your property.

Mitch Swanson's studies explain how the river is naturally depositing much more silt and gravel in the Alexander Valley than most people realize. During flood events the river's forces cause significant economic loss by damaging buildings, land, bridges and roads that county and state government as well as private property owners must bare the costs of repairing.

The old Geyserville Bridge is a good example of major damage caused by the river cutting into its west side bank causing it to undermine one of the main piers holding up

this bridge.

The bridge had to be replaced but the high gravel bar causing the damage still exists so future flood events will continue to pose a danger to the new bridge, farm and home owners located along Highway 128, River Lane and River Road outside Geyserville.

Our endangered fish suffer too as high gravel bar build up cuts off access to creeks like Gill and Crocker Creeks. Adult fish can not get there to spawn and young fish cannot swim to the main stem of the Russian River and the Pacific Ocean.

Mr. Swanson explained to us:

1. The river can be managed in an environmentally sensitive way.
2. The river's flood water carrying capacity needs improving and excessive gravel, silt and high bar build up managed through proper gravel removal out of the main stem of the river
3. A river management plan needs to be developed. Property owners must unite then ask for and help write an effective Russian River Alexander Valley river management plan.

Mr. Swanson's presentation is available for you to access via the RRPOA web site. Information is located in this newsletter.

- Johanna Vannoni

Message from our President - Meandering River

Dear Members and Friends,

I have been gently nudged by the editorial staff to do a President's Message. So I guess I had better get to work.

I am sad to report that the Sonoma County Salmonid Coalition has been attacked in the form of a letter to NOAA Fisheries (cc to every agency and politician they could find addresses for) by the Sonoma County Water Coalition. They are opposed to the participation of property owners and businesses.(The same as the watershed Council. When it was formed, we were told by environmental organizations that property owners were not welcome, as we might have a conflict of interest.)

They accuse (and I quote) "the coalition of wanting to give the appearance of an environmental protection and sustainability coalition that includes all stakeholders. In truth we feel that it falls far short of this representation and actually is an alliance of industry and property right groups such as Russian

River Property Owners Association which do not represent public interests."

The letter was signed by their president who holds a PHD. You would think that someone with a scientific background would do a little research before making rash accusations.

RRPOA has been a leader in the restoration field. We started over five years ago working with NOAA Fisheries and Cal Fish and Game to develop a Fisheries Management Plan. We have spent a great deal of time working with SCSC. I might add that our committee members, Allen Nelson, Dave Fanucchi, Pete Dayton, and I are the majority of those attending who are not on a payroll.

The association has at, our own expense, completed a restoration project in cooperation with Cal Fish and Game on Grape Creek , and are planning several more. Some of our members are working with Sotoyome RCD on an experimental program to remove Arundo Donax from the riparian area

along the Russian River. Others are doing small erosion control practices at their own expense without fanfare or publicity.

We have been unfairly accused and I personally resent it! Why haven't they come to a meeting to find out what we are all about before criticizing our efforts?

This kind of arrogance can only lead to the ultimate collapse of the entire restoration effort. Why can't we work together?

Wishing you all a great summer.

Regards Al



Al Cadd, President RRPOA

Become a Member of the RRPOA, Sign up a friend or renew your membership!

Name _____

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