

# The Partnership Newsletter



ALAMEDA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Issue 8 March/April 2009

... Making Conservation Happen in Alameda County

## Wildflower Season Has Arrived



California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) at Sycamore Grove Park  
Photo by Pete Van Hoorn, RCD

Sneezing, sniffing, red puffy eyes? Not surprising, it's wildflower season! The Conservation Partnership website has information on how to find and identify your favorite wildflowers at [www.acrcd.org](http://www.acrcd.org) or the East Bay Regional Park District offers an online photo guide at <http://www.ebparks.org/stewardship/plants/flowers>.

## Special Funding Allocated to NRCS

*Katie Bergmann*

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was provided a special allocation of \$1.3 million to provide financial and technical assistance in the Alameda Creek Watershed in the recently signed FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act. According to sponsoring Congressman Jerry McNerney, the intent of the funding is to "demonstrate the use of bioengineered stream restoration practices, focusing on the control of stream flow and restoration of the Arroyo de la Laguna tributary to the Alameda Creek" (The Independent, March 5, 2009).

The NRCS will implement the funding through its Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program (Small Watershed Program) in conjunction with the Alameda County Resource Conservation District and other local partners. We are excited about this opportunity to work with existing and future partners. We anticipate that future projects will build on our experience during the 2006 Phase I Streambank Restoration Project. For more information go to <http://www.acrcd.org/PartnershipProjects/CreeksandWatersheds/ArroyodelaLaguna/tabid/76/Default.aspx>. More information on the 2006 project can be found on page 2.

## New RCD Board Officers Announced

The Alameda County Resource Conservation District (RCD) Board elected new officers in March.

The new officers are: Paul Banke, Livermore, President; Brenda Vieux, Fremont, Vice President; Becky Dennis, Pleasanton, Treasurer.

Contact information for board members is available on our website [www.acrcd.org](http://www.acrcd.org).



Arroyo lupine (*Lupinus succulentus*)  
Photo by Ling He, NRCS

**25th ANNUAL RANGE AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES CAMP**  
JUNE 21-26, 2009

Scholarships are available.  
See page 3 inside for more  
information.

## Update on 2006 Arroyo de la Laguna Project

*Katie Bergmann*

In November 2006, a demonstration streambank restoration project was completed along a 1,000-foot section of Arroyo de la Laguna owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), about a half-mile south of the Verona Road bridge between Pleasanton and Sunol. The project focused on reducing



Phase I Project Site February 2006

streambank erosion, establishing vegetation, and improving riparian habitat through a series of “biotechnical and bioengineered” stream restoration practices. The project was a collaborative effort by the Partnership and several local, state and federal agencies.

Arroyo de la Laguna’s channel drains approximately 400 square miles of Alameda Creek watershed in the Tri-



Phase I Project Site March 2009

Valley region and is the main tributary to Alameda Creek. The arroyo currently supports diverse riparian vegetation and habitat.

The Arroyo de la Laguna is experiencing bank erosion and channel widening along much of its reach as it adjusts to alterations in flow and sediment supply, channel modifications and the impacts of major storm events.

So far, the project has been successful at reducing bank erosion and allowing vegetation to take hold. In the last few years, willows, cottonwoods and other vegetation have been establishing at the project site, providing bank protection and habitat. The latest photos and project information can be found at <http://www.acrcd.org/PartnershipProjects/CreeksandWatersheds/ArroyodelaLaguna/tabid/76/Default.aspx>.

## Conservation Strategy Group Plans Public Meeting

*Karen Sweet*

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy (EACCS) is planning a public meeting to provide information about project plans in May. The exact date is yet to be determined. To become informed prior to the meeting you may want to review the basic information and draft maps on the website, <http://www.eastalco-conservation.org/index.html>. Also, Mary Lim, Zone 7 Water Agency will be able to answer your questions at (925) 454-5036.

EACCS was established to address conflicts between development, growth and infrastructure maintenance activities and the continued survival of endangered or threatened species; the agencies shown below are preparing the strategy.

EACCS will provide a blueprint for conservation in East Alameda County. It will streamline the environmental permitting process by providing guidance to project proponents on where and how to focus mitigation efforts to address potential adverse effects on focal species due to future development and infrastructure improvements.

EACCS Partners: The County of Alameda, The Alameda County Congestion Management, Waste Management Agencies, The cities of Livermore, Pleasanton, and Dublin, The Alameda County Resource Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Zone 7 Water Agency and East Bay Regional Park District.

**25th ANNUAL RANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES CAMP**

June 21-26, 2009



**\*\*\* 2009 Range Camp \*\*\***

25<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL RANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES CAMP  
JUNE 21-26, 2009

ELKUS YOUTH RANCH - HALF MOON BAY, CA

Presented by: California-Pacific Section of the  
Society for Range Management

Where students 15-18 years old can discover the science and management of our natural resources from experienced professionals and university faculty.

Sessions and Activities include:

Riparian Habitats  
Rangeland Ecology  
Wildlife Management  
Soils  
Forestry  
Plant ID  
Beach BBQ



Recreation  
Private & Public Lands  
Watershed Hydrology  
GPS / GIS Technology Applications  
Evening Campfires  
Tour of Working Ranch  
Team Project Planning Competition



Cost: \$350

**“Top Camper” Contest: Plant ID test, subject matter exam & peer/staff evaluation**

Top three placing students given opportunity to represent California-Pacific Section, SRM at the Society for Range Management’s High School Youth Forum, in Denver, CO\* (Feb. 2010; all expenses paid for top two students) and belt buckles. All campers receive t-shirts and camp completion certificates.

\*Must be a current high school student in Feb '10

**Sponsored By:**

California-Pacific Section of the Society for Range Management (SRM)  
U.C. Cooperative Extension  
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD)

Host District – San Mateo County RCD  
East Bay Municipal Utility District  
U.S. Navy – Natural Resources Program  
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

**For more information, including help finding financial assistance, contact:**

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Photos, Brochures and Applications are available at <http://www.rangelands.org/casrm/rangecamps.html>  
APPLICATIONS DUE MAY 08, 2009



2008 Range Camp  
Scholarship Recipient

The Alameda County Conservation Partnership will once again offer scholarships to youth ages 15-18 who wish to attend range camp. “It was amazing!” said Jessica Sweet, 2008 Camp Scholarship Recipient, “I want to go back and be a counselor when I am 18. It’s sad that more kids my age aren’t taking advantage of this opportunity.”

Applicants must first apply to the camp. Applications for camp are due May 8, 2009. Applications are available on our website [www.acrcd.org](http://www.acrcd.org). Look under Youth Education and scroll down to Range Camp. Once you are accepted to the camp, contact Peggy Kiefer for scholarship information at [peggy.kiefer@acrcd.org](mailto:peggy.kiefer@acrcd.org) or 925-371-0154 ext. 122.



**“Can You Dig It?” Poster Contest Deadline April 25**

Don’t forget to enter our poster contest. Prizes will be awarded for each age group! Go to our website for more information [www.acrcd.org](http://www.acrcd.org). or contact Peggy Kiefer, [peggy.kiefer@acrcd.org](mailto:peggy.kiefer@acrcd.org) or 925-371-0154 ext. 122.

## College Students Film Watershed Adventures Presentation

Amy Evans



Mariana O'Leary, lead film crew student from CSU East Bay, finding out what a 4<sup>th</sup> grader from Hesperian Elementary learned about sources of pollution in his local watershed.

The Resource Conservation District's (RCD) **Watershed Adventures** classroom presentation for fourth graders at Hesperian Elementary School in San Lorenzo was filmed in February by students from the California State University East Bay (CSUEB) Mass Communications Department. The film will be used by the RCD to facilitate the training of new program presenters.

The CSUEB students used two cameras in the classroom to capture Watershed Adventures presenter Megan Fitzharris' lesson while also recording the grade students' enthusiastic reactions. They also filmed the follow-up interviews that they conducted after the presentation with the fourth graders, Ms. Goode (classroom teacher), and Megan.

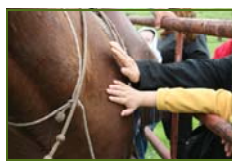
The CSUEB students are editing the footage to provide a professional quality DVD. It will be made available to the RCD and posted on the California State University East Bay Pioneer Web TV site as a sample of the college students' work.

The partnership with the college provided the RCD with a valuable tool to use in training new presenters, while also fulfilling a project requirement of the students to report on an activity within their community. Many thanks to the students and teachers involved in the project:

Melody Guerrero, TV Studio Coordinator, Mass Communications Dept. CSUEB, and students Mariana O'Leary (project lead, camera), Jyhanne San Agustin (camera, assistant editor), Faraah Ahmadi (interviewer), and Darby Johnston (editor, Director of Pioneer News.)

Another big thanks goes to RCD staff member Cynthia Butler, who coordinated the project.

## Local Events



### Vaquero Day

The Contra Costa Water District and Alameda County CattleWomen hosted a celebration of the rich agricultural heritage of Los Vaqueros called Vaquero Day. Vaquero Day

was held at Los Vaqueros Watershed on March 21, 2009.

For more information on this event or Los Vaquero Watershed, contact Allison at 925-240-2360 or [abatteate@ccwater.com](mailto:abatteate@ccwater.com).



### Rowell Ranch Rodeo

Annual Celebrity  
Team Penning & BBQ

Rowell Ranch Rodeo Park

May 13, 2009

PRCA Rodeo

Rowell Ranch Rodeo Park

May 16—17 2009

For Tickets and information go to  
<http://www.rowellranchrodeo.com>

## Local Officials Attend Ranch Tour

The Conservation Partnership invited city and county officials to a tour of Koopmann Ranch during Ag Week in March, to show the many efforts to conserve rangeland and agriculture in Alameda County.

Tim Koopmann was a very gracious host and tour guide, explaining to attendees the projects he has completed on his ranch including a pond restored for wildlife and solar water pumps for better grazing management. Phil Wente, Wente Family Estates, discussed the opportunities to continue agriculture in the county, which might include dry farming such as hay and crops such as walnuts, and the issues with water. And Jed Freitas from Freitas Rangeland Improvements was there to discuss the projects he has completed on Koopmann Ranch and with the City of Pleasanton.

"This is all hard work and requires a network of people and agencies to make it happen," commented Ellyn Axelrod, from the City of Livermore. "Intellectually, I understand and embrace sustainable open space/ag concepts... I always jump at the chance to do something that speaks to me. However this "show and tell" sealed the deal. I got it. The cycle of life, all life, no matter how small is integral to our survival. It's up to us to ensure that."

## Farmers in Drought Areas Advised to Leave Unplanted Fields in a “Roughed Up” State

*Story Courtesy of USDA NRCS*

Farmers in drought-stricken areas of California opting not to plant crops this year are being advised to leave their fields in “roughed up” condition to prevent soil loss due to wind erosion.

Abandoned, bare fields are subject to severe wind erosion according to Rita Bickel, an agronomist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Davis, Calif.

“Fields continually subjected to erosion may result in land that is incapable of returning to cropping or vegetative systems at a later date,” she says.

Bickel says not only could vast amounts of precious top

soil be lost, but air quality will be impacted as well, with blowing soil impairing vision on roads and highways. She advises farmers to take steps now to create surface roughing such as building furrows or ridges. These will absorb and deflect part of the wind energy and trap drifting soil particles.

“Vegetation, or vegetative residue, is the best protection for prevention of erosion from wind or rain when fields are left fallow,” she says. “After the last crop is harvested, it is best to save as much of the remaining crop residue, stubble, or ridges as possible. Even weeds can be sprayed in place and left as cover. Soil will be somewhat protected if there is at least 30 percent cover on the surface.”

Tillage with an implement, such as a lister, running perpendicular to wind direction, will form ridges and clods that will provide some protection for soil. This is most successful with soil that has some texture; sandy soils won’t hold the shape of clods and furrows as well as soils that contain at least some clay.

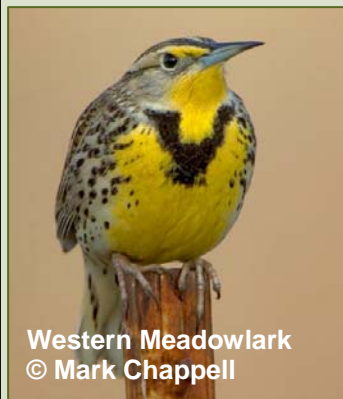
Additional steps farmers can take to prevent soil loss include compacting unpaved farm roads, avoiding plowing noxious weeds until adequate moisture is present to allow stable clods to form, establishing permanent vegetation on cropland being converted to other uses, and stabilizing equipment lots, corrals, and ditch banks not protected by windbreaks or cover vegetation.

“When leaving land fallow,” Bickel concludes, “the key to protecting soil resources is to provide as much cover and roughness as possible.”

For more information, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/drought](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/drought). Assistance also can be obtained from your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office, listed in the government section of the phone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## 2009 Great Backyard Bird Count


Leslie Koenig



Western Meadowlark  
© Mark Chappell

Members of the RCD and NRCS staff participated in the office’s second annual 2009 Annual Great Backyard Bird Count. The summary for the day was 14 species and 65 birds! Not bad for a rainy, overcast day! Western meadowlarks were our highest species count.

For information on how to participate next year go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/> or <http://www.ebird.org>.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Protect Soil • Protect Air


# Fallowing for Drought? Don't Till!

The soil you can save is your own.

Find more USDA  
drought tips online at

[www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/features/cadrought.html](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/features/cadrought.html)

Helping People Help the Land

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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
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*Address Service Requested*

## **Mission Statement**

*“The Conservation Partnership provides leadership in the County and region about natural resources conservation and agricultural enhancement through education and outreach, resource services and technical assistance, partnerships and funding.”*

## **See Inside for Conservation & Agricultural Activities**

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- **RCD Board Announces New Officers**
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If you wish to receive our newsletter via e-mail only please e-mail Peggy Kiefer at [peggy.kiefer@acrccd.org](mailto:peggy.kiefer@acrccd.org)

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*Recycle by sharing with others!*

Fiddleneck (*Amsinckia* sp.)  
Photo by Ling He, NRCS