

The Partnership Newsletter



ALAMEDA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Issue 4

May/June 2008

The Conservation Partnership Celebrates Earth Day at Sunol Glen Elementary School

by Amy Evans, Resource Conservationist



Students plant native sunflowers in mini pulp pots at Sunol Glen Elementary School

The Sunol Glen School Student Activities Committee, comprised of sixth through eighth graders, organized and staffed for Earth Day a number of educational booths on land and water protection, energy conservation and recycling that first through eighth grade students visited during the afternoon of April 22. Each booth also featured a craft-making activity.

Conservation Partnership staff members Amy Evans and Megan Fitzharris worked with the Committee to plan a booth that offered wildflower seed ball making and native sunflower planting. The seed ball making was messy but fun. Students formed 1" balls from a gooey mixture of compost, clay soil and wildflower seed. The seed balls will be dried and stored until next fall when they will

be tossed into the pollinator habitat area at the organic farm near the school. The idea of the seed balls is to spread seed that is embedded in a protective medium that will keep birds from eating it before it can germinate.

The students also planted native sunflowers in mini pulp pots to take home and for the schoolyard as part of the native bee observation research project called the Great Sunflower Project being conducted through San Francisco State University (www.greatsunflower.org). This fun and educational day was part of the Conservation Partnership's Hands-On-Conservation program that seeks to give students opportunities to engage in on-the-ground stewardship activities. Look for more information about the "seed ball toss" event at the Sunol AgPark (organic farm) in the fall.



LHS Ag Mechanics Build Owl Boxes

By Leslie Koenig, Biologist

The Conservation Partnership is working with the Livermore High School Ag Mechanics class to build barn owl nest boxes through our Hands-On-Conservation education program. The students developed the design for the boxes and a unique mechanism to assist with cleaning the boxes.

Barn owl nest boxes are an effective tool to control rodent populations and are used as an alternative to rodenticides on rangeland and vineyards. The boxes built by the students will be sold as a fundraiser to support the Ag Mechanics program.

If you are interested in purchasing a barn owl box for your property please contact Leslie Koenig at leslie.koenig@acrcd.org or 925-371-0154 ext 115.

For more information on our Hands-On-Conservation program, please visit our website at www.acrcd.org and click on the Youth Education link.

Last week, Congress overwhelmingly voted to override the President's veto of the 2008 Farm Bill. While a clerical error resulted in the omission of the trade portion of the bill, 14 of the 15 titles of the bill were passed into law including the Conservation Title. Congressional leadership is reviewing options with parliamentarians for how to resolve the issue regarding the omission of the Trade Title and a final decision regarding next steps is expected to be known when Congress returns following the Memorial Day recess.

Farm Bill Veto Overridden

(Source NACD—National Association of Conservation Districts www.nacd.org)

90TH ANNUAL LIVERMORE RODEO JUNE 14TH & 15TH 2008



6/11 Rodeo
Mixer/Team Penning

6/12 Rodeo
Family Night

6/14-6/15 90th Annual Rodeo

Saturday, June 14th
"Tough Enough to Wear Pink"



The 2008 Jr. Rodeo is June 21st. Entry forms are due June 6th. Go to the Jr. Rodeo website for an application at www.livermorejrrodeo.com. Contestants from the age of 1 - 18 will compete in everything from Stick Horse Racing to Bull Riding. PeeWee sign ups for ages 1 - 5 are the morning of the rodeo. Winners in all events receive buckles - Family Fun For Everyone!" Admission and parking are free.



Young Pistachios on the Ising Pistachio Farm

The Conservation Partnership Leads Ag Tour

Peggy Kiefer led the League of Women Voters on a tour of local farms and ranches. The tour included stops at Chris Ising's Pistachio Farm, The Sweet Ranch and The Olivina olive groves. This gave the tour participants an opportunity to discuss agricultural needs and issues with local farmers and ranchers. Their study about local agriculture will also take them to a local winery and equine facility and will help with their participation in local agriculture policy.



Lisa Hokholt, NRCS State Outreach Coordinator, was the Conservation Partnership's "Celebrity" in the Rowell Ranch Rodeo Team Penning Event. Lisa's team took fourth place in the competition. Peggy Kiefer, Alameda County Outreach Coordinator will represent the Conservation Partnership in the Livermore Rodeo Team Penning Event. Hopefully she will do equally well.

The Conservation Partnership Invites You to Browse Our New Website at www.acrcd.org

Native Bees Workshop Held in Dublin by Leslie Koenig, Biologist

The Conservation Partnership sponsored a free workshop on the importance and diversity of native bees and how to increase habitat for these important pollinators. Mace Vaughan, Conservation Director for the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, gave an amazing presentation on our native bees.

Over the past year the European honey bee has made headlines as beekeepers and growers have struggled with the effects of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). While only a few stories have touched upon our 4,000 species of native bees, scientific research is putting a new spotlight on the valuable role these pollinators can play in agricultural landscapes—if their habitat needs are met. Mace discussed the many ways to attract native bees to your yard, including the use of constructed nests such as bee blocks and stem tubes. More information on native bees and how to build bee nests can be found online at http://www.xerces.org/Pollinator_Insect_Conservation/xerces_publications.htm.



The Conservation Partnership also provided free wild, native sunflower seeds to promote the Great Sunflower Project, a massive project through San Francisco State University to recruit citizen scientists across the country to collect data on pollinating bees. More information can be found online at <http://www.greatsunflower.org/>. For information on other workshops held through the Conservation Partnership, please visit our website at www.acrcd.org and click on the workshops menu.



Adam Engelhardt of Olivina explains the differences in olive oils to the League of Women Voters.



IN ONE DAY A
HONEY BEE CAN
FLY 12 MILES
AND POLLINATE
UP TO 10,000
FLOWERS

NRCS Develops Energy Tools



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has developed four energy tools designed to increase energy awareness in agriculture and to help farmers and ranchers identify where they can reduce their energy costs. The results generated by these tools are estimates based on NRCS models and are illustrative of magnitude of savings. Please go to the NRCS website at the following link for more information.

<http://energytools.sc.egov.usda.gov/>
(Source USDA NRCS)

Partnership for Land Conservation and Stewardship Facilitates Land Protection *by Karen Sweet*

The Alameda County Partnership for Land Conservation and Stewardship (PLCS) portfolio of seventeen projects is now published. The portfolio represents 14,000+ acres being offered for permanent protection and potential restoration. The projects vary in size, resources complexity, endangered and threatened species, and distance to protected lands and planned development. They are scattered throughout East County. Each provides a unique opportunity to meet the diverse mitigation requirements of development in the region.

PLCS is conducting detailed habitat studies for interested landowner clients. It is actively seeking funding for a conservation easement on a rangeland project. One landowner has negotiated an easement sale and has applied to a land trust to hold the easement. A public agency is reviewing another rangeland property. Families are assessing their personal priorities. Two landowners are working together to develop a strategy.

PLCS is working with Tri-Valley Conservancy and the Altamont Landfill Open Space Committee to develop easement applications and approval guidelines that will encourage easement proposals that meet the Committee's priorities for the protection of open space and wildlife habitat.

Another informational session is planned for private landowners in June. It will specifically focus on easement content. PLCS contact: Karen Sweet at (925) 371-0154, ext. 111. Workshop contact: Peggy Kiefer, (925) 371-0154, ext. 122 or peggy.kiefer@acr.cd.org. and see also the Conservation Partnership website at www.acrcd.org for updates and information..

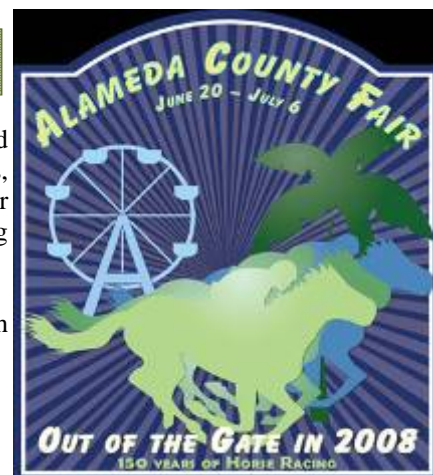


Alameda County Fair Opens June 20th

The Annual Junior Livestock Auction will be held on Sunday July 6th, at 8:30am. 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) youth will offer over 400 quality animals (rabbit, hogs, beef, lamb and goat) for auction to the highest bidder in a real, old-fashioned auction. Your support and bidding will assist these young people to successfully complete their year-long projects! (Source: <http://www.alamedacountyfair.com/2008fair/Agriculture/>)

And don't forget to visit the Agriculture and Floriculture Exhibits. The fair runs June 20th through July 6.

For more fair information go to <http://www.alamedacountyfair.com>



Local Amphibians and Ranchers Make the News

by Pete Van Hoorn



With one-third of the world's amphibian species at risk of extinction, conservation groups have declared 2008 "The Year of the Frog". The latest issue of the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Bulletin is devoted to efforts across the country to save these animals. Our favorite article highlights a local program to protect two amphibians found on cattle ranches.

The California red-legged frog and California tiger salamander, both federally listed as threatened, increasingly depend on ranchers' stock ponds as breeding sites. Repairing and maintaining old stock ponds has become a crucial part of helping these two amphibian species to survive and recover. We teamed up with the Fish & Wildlife Service and the Environmental Defense Fund to create a program that would help local ranchers make needed repairs and preserve their ponds as habitat. Our "Wildlife-friendly Pond Restoration Program" helps with the costs and permits involved, and makes sure that these ponds are restored and maintained in a way that will help the frog and salamander. The program demonstrates how ranchers and rare species can benefit each other, how public agencies can help, and the tools needed to do so.



California red-legged frog photo taken at Los Vaqueros Watershed by Leslie Koenig, Conservation Partnership Biologist

See the article (pages 30 and 31) at

http://www.fws.gov/endangered/bulletin/2008/bulletin_spring2008.pdf

Thanks to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the California Coastal Conservancy, for their support of this unique program. Most importantly, we thank the involved ranchers who are managing their lands for these threatened amphibians and other wildlife. For more information, please contact Jackie Charbonneau at (925) 371-0154, extension 114.

Announcing a workshop on
California Tiger Salamanders
for Ranchers and Local Residents
Tuesday, June 17, 2008
8 AM – 12:30 PM
Martinelli Center
3585 Greenville Road
Livermore



The workshop will be given by Pete Trenham, Ph.D. This is a great opportunity to learn about California Tiger Salamanders from an expert, in a non-regulatory setting. Please see the following link to our website for more information.

<http://www.acrcd.org/Workshops/tabid/61/Default.aspx>



The Conservation Partnership is keeping a close eye on two red-tail hawk chicks and their parents. The hawks are still in their nest on a utility tower behind the Martinelli Center, on Sandia Lab property.

Photo courtesy of Joanne Sartor, Biologist, Sandia National Laboratory

California Rangeland Coalition Update

Economics Report – The Rangeland Coalition in conjunction with Defenders of Wildlife Conservation Economics Department is working on an economic analysis of the restoration and conservation of native grasslands on working ranches in California. The project will determine the cost and benefits to private landowners of implementing restoration management practices and it will include a valuation of the ecosystem benefits provided by native grasslands.

Rangeland Research – A manual, now included on the Rangeland Coalition website summarizes information concerning the use of livestock to manage noxious weeds. Go to http://www.carangeland.org/Rangeland_Research.html for more information.