

The Conservation Partnership



ALAMEDA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Annual Report Fiscal Year 2008-2009

... Making Conservation Happen in Alameda County

New Opportunity to Build on 2006 Arroyo de la Laguna Project



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was provided \$1.3 million to provide financial and technical assistance in the Alameda Creek Watershed in the FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act. Congressman Jerry McNerney supported the funding in order 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, which demonstrated a variety of advanced, habitat-friendly streambank stabilization practices.

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 plants have been establishing at the project site, providing bank protection and habitat.

For more information go to <http://www.acrcd.org/PartnershipProjects/CreeksandWatersheds/ArroyodelaLaguna.aspx>

Vegetation 2 years after construction

Wildlife Workshops—This year we offered workshops on the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and Alameda whipsnake, and on the importance of livestock water to wildlife. These workshops provide the latest science to the biologists and landowners who decide how habitat is managed, and include field experience as well as classroom discussions. For the fifth consecutive year, our frog workshop was taught by Dr. Norman Scott and Dr. Galen Rathbun, and the salamander workshop was presented by Dr. Pete Trenham. Herpetologist Karen Swaim gave our first whipsnake workshop. Dan Taylor of Bat Conservation International led a workshop on how wildlife depend on livestock watering holes. Participants got a hands-on demonstration of how to build wildlife escape ramps for troughs, and learned that these ramps can increase cattle weight gain while protecting local critters. A big thanks to our presenters and to Los Vaqueros Watershed, East Bay Parks, and the Koopmann family for hosting the field visits! Stay posted—we’ve got more exciting workshops to come.



From left to right: Participants make a wildlife escape ramp; Dr. Trenham; surveying a pond

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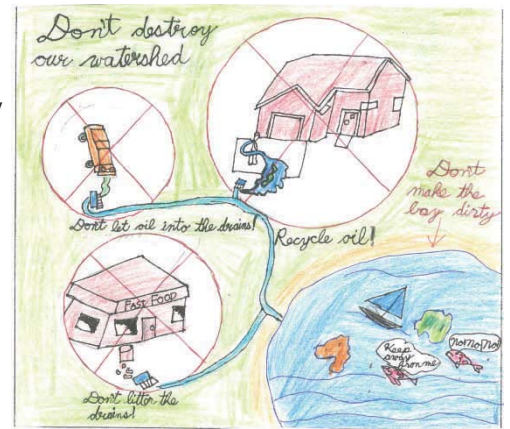
Youth Education

Watershed Adventures Program

The Watershed Adventures program (WA) celebrated its 15th year during the 2008-09 school year. WA is a classroom program that visits 170 fourth grade classes annually in west Alameda County. Students learn about their school's watershed and how they can take steps to protect it from pollution. Over the years, WA has reached nearly 75,000 students and teachers!



Program highlights this year included posting the program's signature video "Adventures in the Watershed, Starring Mr. Ball" on the Partnership's website, and having CSU East Bay students film the Watershed Explorers presentation for use in training new presenters. The program's T-Shirt Art Contest continues to be popular with students- see the adjacent picture of the winning entry from a City of Fremont student. The Partnership appreciates the ongoing financial support of the program by the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program. The 2009-2010 program is now underway.



Winning entry for the Watershed Adventures T-Shirt Art contest for Fremont, by Saksham Badyal of Forest Park Elementary School.

Palomares School Watershed Science Expo

Partnership staff worked two creek stations at the 2009 Palomares Elementary School Watershed/Science Expo on May 8th. Students from Palomares School as well as other schools from Castro Valley and San Lorenzo attended the Expo. The Partnership's creekside stations introduced the 3rd grade students to Palomares Creek's aquatic invertebrates, gave students the opportunity to pull out invasive plants, and taught watershed protection through use of the watershed model. The Expo was coordinated by Sherry Johnson, a former teacher at Palomares Elementary and an RCD employee, with assistance from school district officials, parent volunteers and Palomares PTA.

Hands-On-Conservation—Hands-on-Conservation Workdays and Events:

- Arroyo las Positas and Altamont Creek Clean-ups with Livermore's Christensen Middle School Go-Green Club Students
- William Cann Park, Union City; Planting Work Days and Bird Walk with Logan High School students
- William Cann Park, Union City; Eagle Scout Tree Planting and Pathway Development Project
- Earth Day Creek Clean-ups along Alameda Creek in Fremont and Arroyo Las Positas in Springtown



- Alameda Creek Clean-up and Bird Walk at Niles Staging Area in Fremont in conjunction with Alameda Creek Watershed Council
- Earth Day Event at Moreau High School in Hayward
- Workdays and farm tours at which community volunteers assisted in the installation of a streamside hedgerow that will



Top: ACRCO biologist Leslie Koenig lead a birdwalk for Logan High Schools students at William Cann Park in Union City as part of a Hands-On Conservation workday. Lower photo: ACRCO resource conservationist Amy Evans works with other Hands-On-Conservation volunteers planting native plants in the Sunol AgPark Streamside Hedgerow.

Alameda County Resource Conservation District

Board of Directors

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Janet Caprile, Farm Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension

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Chris Ising, Rancher and Pistachio Grower, Livermore

Danny Sachau, Rancher and Winegrower, Livermore

Mark Swisher, Watershed Resources Specialist, Los Vaqueros Watershed

Hugh Walker, Rancher, Livermore

Special Outreach Projects Out in the Open 2009

Calendar—The Partnership along with Livermore Valley Winegrowers Association, The Alameda County Farm Bureau Association and Alameda County CattleWomen created a 2009 calendar featuring farmers and ranchers “bearing it all” to raise funds for the Ag Community. “Beefcake comes to Beef Country” was the headline. Most of the proceeds went to the Livermore High School Ag Dept.



Ag Tours— The Partnership hosted several different tours this year. Two of the tours were organized for the County Planners Office and included tours of wineries and an olive farm on one day, and two ranches on another day. Both days the focus was on helping farmers and ranchers



discuss various agricultural issues with the planners. The Partnership also hosted a tour at Koopmann Ranch for City and County Officials to give them an opportunity to hear from the farming & ranching community and see agriculture first hand.

Meetings & BBQ—The Alameda County Conservation Partnership hosted a Local Work Group meeting and free BBQ dinner last August for the fiscal year 2009 NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Two meetings were held that day - one for local agency representatives, and another for local farmers and



ranchers. A joint BBQ, hosted by the RCD and prepared by local ranchers, was provided between the meetings. This year’s meeting was well attended by both agency representatives and the agricultural community.

NRCS local advisory groups were established to make recommendations on local natural resource priorities and guidelines for NRCS conservation programs. The Local Work Group meetings provide a forum for local farmers and ranchers, public agency representatives and other partners to communicate their views on the most critical natural resource issues and priorities for the county. Local NRCS staff then use the input provided to help prioritize EQIP funding allocations to meet local natural resource needs. This event is planned for Fall 2009.

Special Recognition

**Terry Huff and Lisa Hokholt
Celebrate 30 Years with NRCS!**

NRCS State Conservationist Ed Burton recently visited the Alameda County Field Office to present awards to District Conservationist Terry Huff and State Outreach Specialist Lisa Hokholt for 30 years of



employment with the NRCS. He also presented appreciation awards to both NRCS and RCD staff for their outstanding efforts and contributions during a federal audit this year.

Above: Lisa Hokholt receives award from State Conservationist Ed Burton
Left: Terry Huff at a field visit.

Current Partnership Staff

Karen Sweet

ACRCD Executive Officer

Terry Huff

NRCS District Conservationist

Morpheus Anima

NRCS Soil Conservationist

Katie Bergmann

NRCS Engineer

Jackie Charbonneau

NRCS Ecologist

Amy Evans

Interim ACRCD Executive Officer, Resource Conservationist

Marilyn Harvey

ACRCD Accountant

Ling He

NRCS Range Conservationist

Lisa Hokholt

NRCS State Outreach Coordinator

Peggy Kiefer

ACRCD Outreach and Workshop Coordinator

Leslie Koenig

ACRCD Biologist

Pete Van Hoorn

ACRCD Range Conservationist

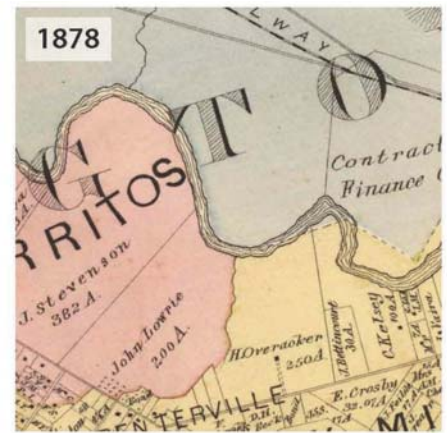
Maria Wendler

ACRCD Project Assistant

ACHE—Alameda Creek Historical Ecology Study -

Over the next two years, a team of researchers at the San Francisco Estuary Institute will collect and synthesize thousands of historical documents relating to the past landscape of the Alameda Creek Watershed. This process will reveal what the watershed looked like and how it functioned before extensive development. This information will help local stakeholders to better understand the causes of present-day challenges and to develop strategies for watershed enhancement. Examples of topics addressed in the project include: *What kinds of wetlands occurred where (and why)? How did riparian vegetation, seasonal flow, and fish habitat vary among different stream reaches? How have creek depth, width, morphology, and connectivity changed over time? What habitats characterized adjacent floodplains: for example, oak savanna, wildflower meadows, or seasonal wetlands?*

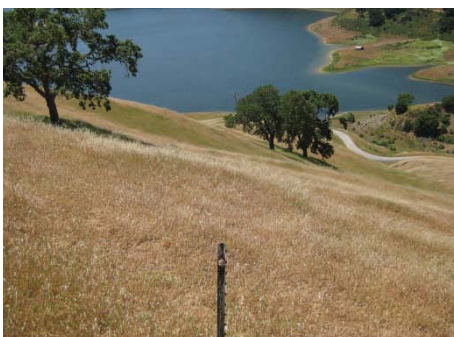
The project is designed to support several current planning efforts, including the Alameda Watershed Habitat Conservation Plan, Alameda County flood control planning, the Alameda Creek Watershed Council, the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, and to advance public engagement in the watershed. The project is funded by Alameda County and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. This spring, Partnership staff assisted in developing a watershed-wide aerial image using the oldest available historical aerial photos, matched to a digital model of the terrain and linked to current aerial photos, to allow comparison between historical and modern conditions. Final products from the Alameda Creek Historical Ecology Study are anticipated in December 2010. For more information or to get involved, contact Leslie Koenig at leslie.koenig@ca.nacdn.net or 925-371-0154 ext. 115. SF Estuary Institute: <http://www.sfei.org/>.



Lower Alameda Creek at Quarry Lakes viewed through time in a 1878 map (Thompson & West), 1939 aerial photos (USDA), and 2005 aerial photos. (USDA NAIP)

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy

(EACCS)—This project is a joint effort between local agencies, including ACRC and selected regulatory entities. “The intent of EACCS is to develop a habitat and species mitigation plan for Alameda County that will direct the implementation of mitigation easement dollars over the next 20 years” explained Terry Huff, NRCS District Conservationist. The Conservation Partnership is lending its expertise to EACCS through outreach and technical support. <http://www.eastalco-conservation.org/>.



Rangeland Monitoring in the Alameda Creek Watershed

This spring we conducted a plant survey on the annual grasslands surrounding Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs, as part of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's rangeland monitoring program. It was a great chance for our team of botanists and clipboard-wielding assistants to escape the office and see the beautiful Sunol hills. A big thanks to ecologists Ceci Dale-Cesmat, Justin Davilla, Larry Ford, Devii Rao, and Amy Wolitzer for helping us to conduct the survey.

Farm Bill Conservation Programs

Conservation Programs available under the federal Farm Bill provide technical and financial assistance for California's farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices. In 2009 Alameda County NRCS partnered with farmers and ranchers on nearly \$825,000 in conservation cost-share contracts.



Farm Bill Projects Installed in Alameda County in 2009

- *Vegetative plantings (cover crop, erosion control, tree/shrub, habitat plantings): 84 acres
- *Cross-fencing on rangeland: 9,125 ft, or about 1.7 miles
- *Livestock water pipelines: 18,350 ft, or about 3.5 miles
- *Water developments on rangeland (springs, solar pumps, wells, tanks & troughs): 23, benefiting about 10,850 acres of rangeland with improved livestock distribution
- *Wildlife-friendly pond restorations: 5
- *Wildlife habitat management - active management to benefit wildlife species: 402 acres

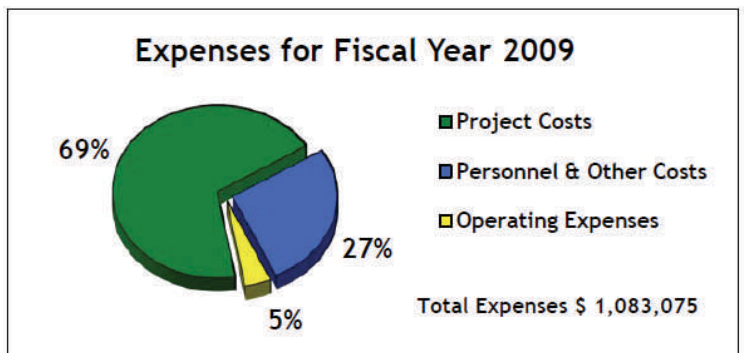
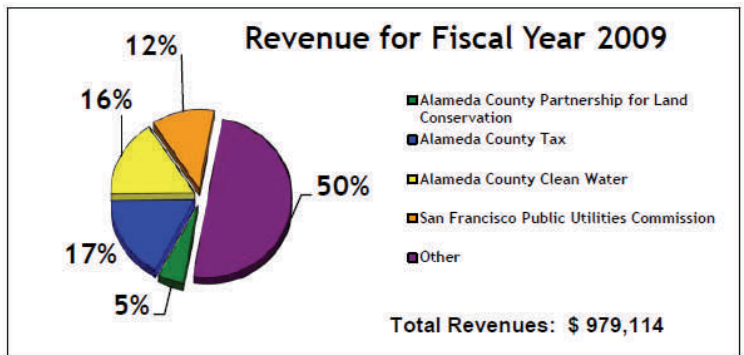
Thank You Alameda County Farmers & Ranchers for Your Cost-Share Contributions!

Natural Resources Education Scholarship Fund

— The Alameda County Resource Conservation District Board of Directors and the Conservation Partnership Team have established the Natural Resources Education Scholarship Fund to recognize Jocelyn Combs for her contribution to the Alameda County Conservation Partnership from 2000 to 2008. Jocelyn's support of environmental education and her commitment to the preservation, protection, and enhancement of the natural resources of Alameda County has inspired this scholarship fund.

If you are interested in supporting the Conservation Partnership please contact our Outreach and Workshop coordinator, Peggy Kiefer, at 925-371-0154 ext. 122 or peggy.kiefer@acrcd.org.

2009 Financial Report (Unaudited)



This information can be found on our website at : www.acrcd.org. You can also find archived annual reports and newsletters, future newsletters, workshop and youth education information.



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Annual

**THE ALAMEDA COUNTY CONSERVATION PARTNER-
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MAKING CONSERVATION HAPPEN**

report

Fiscal Year 2008-2009

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Please check our website for frequent updates
www.acrcd.org

The Alameda County Resource Conservation District (ACRCD) provides leadership in the County and region about natural resources conservation and agricultural enhancement through partnerships, education, outreach, technical assistance, and funding. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.