

STEWARDS OF THE LAND

NEWSLETTER OF GOLD RIDGE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SPRING 2013

The Gold Ridge RCD has inspired and partnered with the community to protect the natural resources and agricultural future of our District since 1941.

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

2012 RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED SYMPOSIUM

IN THIS ISSUE



- PAGE 1...2012 RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED SYMPOSIUM
- PAGE 2...MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT
- PAGE 3...WATER CONSERVATION
- PAGE 4...SALMON RECOVERY UPDATE
- PAGE 5...WORKSHOPS & MEETINGS
- PAGE 6...ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
- PAGE 7...WHAT'S NEW?

Last November the Gold Ridge RCD partnered with the Sotoyome and Mendocino County RCDs to host the 2012 Russian River Watershed Symposium. Held in Cloverdale, the Symposium brought together over 300 landowners, scientists, local agencies and students to discuss the diverse environmental challenges and successes in the Russian River watershed. Breakout sessions were well received and topics included urban stream restoration, fisheries recovery, agriculture in the watershed, watershed approaches to climate adaptation, water supply, and integrating economic vitality, and watershed and community health. Our keynote speakers included CA Assemblymember Jared Huffman; Chuck Bonham, Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife; Mark Nechodom, Director of the California Department of Conservation; 4th District Sonoma County Supervisor Mike McGuire; and 1st District Mendocino County Supervisor Carre Brown. The Symposium received terrific feedback, and we look forward to hosting another symposium in the coming years.

We would again like to offer many thanks to our generous sponsors who were so instrumental in making this symposium possible. Thanks to CA Department of Conservation, Sonoma County Water Agency, ESA, Shur Farms, O'Connor Environmental, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District, GHD, Sonoma County Winegrape Commission, Town of Windsor, City of Santa Rosa, Alexander Valley Winegrowers, Savings Bank of Mendocino, Friedman's Home Improvement, Mendocino County Farm Bureau, Fetzer Vineyards, Denny and Kate Murphy and Sonoma Land Trust.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



I've been on the Gold Ridge RCD board for nearly twelve years now, and this year I am serving as the newly elected Board President. Don Petersen, who led the charge for the past 12 years as the Board President, has just entered his 30th year as an RCD Board Member and will now be serving as our Treasurer. Being in this new role as President made me feel compelled to share some thoughts I have for the RCD in the upcoming year.

The Gold Ridge RCD has a long history of working with farmers and ranchers, and in fact, my father served on the RCD board from 1980 to 2001. In the last decade the RCD has completed many projects aimed at improving salmon habitat. We value these projects, and they have provided multiple benefits to landowners in addition to their benefits for fish. In the coming year I'd like to see the RCD expand on this good work by focusing on projects that benefit the natural resources on the land in a broader sense. For example, projects that help keep soil in place, provide a secure water supply and assist landowners in understanding and meeting regulatory requirements. I think this will mean that we continue to work with the same agencies, but also look to non-traditional partners and funding opportunities to meet the varied needs of our community.

I would also like to introduce two new additions to the Board. Jill Butler was approved to become a Board Member in January. Jill is a longtime resident of Sebastopol and a forester for CalFIRE. Torrey Olsen was approved as an Associate Director in November. Torrey and his wife Lucy own and manage Gabriel Farm outside of Graton. We are pleased to have a full Board of Directors and a dedicated group of Associate Directors.

As a farmer and landowner in this district, I want you to know that the RCD is here to support you. If any of you have concerns or ideas for projects, please call on us or visit to see if we can help.

Sincerely,
 Joe Dutton, Board President
 Board Member 2001-present

GOLD RIDGE WELCOMES NEW PROJECT MANAGER

William Hart joined the Gold Ridge RCD in September of 2012. Prior to joining the RCD, he worked in various capacities for the Marin Agricultural Land Trust, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Marin RCD, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the Friends of the Urban Forest. He also served in the U.S. Peace Corps in Guatemala. William earned a Bachelor's degree in Soil Science from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and a Master's degree from the Hutchins Institute for Public Policy Studies & Community Studies at Sonoma State University. William enjoys spending time with his family, walking with his dog, and making art with the Thursday Night Drawing Group. The Gold Ridge RCD is happy to have him on board.



WATER CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Through the Russian River Coho Water Resources Partnership, the Gold Ridge RCD is working with Dutch Bill, Green Valley and Purrington Creek landowners to increase water security and reduce impacts to the creeks during times of low flow.

We are assisting landowners in developing off-channel storage facilities and alternative water sources. These projects may range from constructing off-stream ponds or water tanks to digging deep wells, building rainwater catchment systems and implementing irrigation efficiency measures. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is the primary funder of the program, and the Partnership has funding for the planning, design and construction of water projects on private property. We believe this program can greatly benefit both residential and agricultural landowners, as well as salmon, by providing a more secure water supply and reducing water diversion during times of low stream flow.



Construction of underground water storage tank on a ranch in Bodega. The tanks store ~250k gallons of water for summer use.

Different methods can be applied depending on the location, as well as the timing and nature of water use. Priority will be given to water users who draw water directly from the creek, as well as those who pump from shallow wells. The Partnership employs several approaches:

- Constructing ponds that are filled directly by rainfall and dispersed overland flow
- Installing water storage tanks that are filled from the creek during winter high flow periods
- Installing rainwater catchment systems to fill ponds or storage tanks
- Increasing irrigation efficiency to reduce water demand

The RCD has also received funding to construct a second round of residential and small agricultural rainwater catchment systems in and around the town of Bodega. We will soon start on system design for several candidate sites, but would like to hear from additional landowners who are interested in participating. The systems will be designed to collect rainwater during the winter and store it for outdoor, non-potable uses during the summer. If you are interested in participating in either of the programs, or would like more information, contact John Green at 823-5244, or john@goldridgercd.org.



SALMON RECOVERY UPDATE

NRCS ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR FISH HABITAT RESTORATION



On January 18th, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service met with partners in Camp Meeker to announce additional funding to support ongoing efforts to restore salmonid populations and enhance their habitats. A total of \$2 million will be allocated among five Northern California watersheds: the Russian, Gualala-Salmon, Lower Eel, South Fork Eel, and Big-Navarro-Garcia. The funding will be available to landowners through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program – a federal cost-share program, through the Farm Bill, to help landowners implement on-farm conservation practices. The Gold Ridge RCD is excited to continue working with

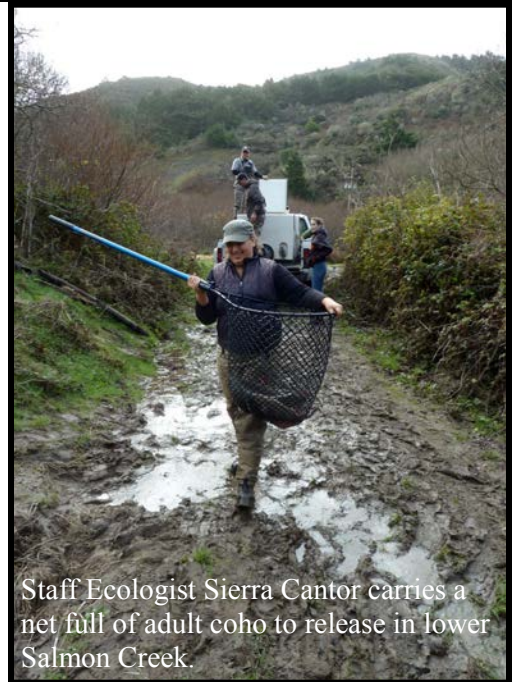
partners and agricultural producers to support the recovery of salmonids in the Russian River watershed. The deadline for EQIP-eligible landowners to sign up to participate in the program is April 19, 2013. Landowners will have another chance to sign up in 2014.

2012-13 WINTER HIGHLIGHTS

As part of the continuing effort to reestablish coho salmon in the Salmon Creek watershed, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Russian River Coho Captive Broodstock Program released 238 adult coho into lower Salmon Creek this past December. These coho were fully mature and ready to spawn, and were tagged by the Broodstock Program so that the carcasses of spawned fish could be identified during watershed-wide spawning surveys. Starting in December, Gold Ridge RCD staff members Sierra Cantor, Krista Lindley, William Hart and Jeremye

Schroen carried out surveys in selected stream reaches throughout the Salmon Creek watershed, observing six live coho and finding 12 complete coho carcasses (11 of which carried Broodstock tags) and seven partial carcasses. They recorded evidence of salmonid spawning in the mainstem of Salmon Creek, and in the Fay,

Tannery, Finley and Nolan Creek tributaries, identifying a minimum of 48 redds attributable to either coho or steelhead, including three redds still occupied by adult coho. The survey results are very encouraging, as they show that coho are able to access and successfully spawn in streams throughout the watershed.



Staff Ecologist Sierra Cantor carries a net full of adult coho to release in lower Salmon Creek.



Staff Krista Lindley releases adult coho in Salmon Creek

RANGELAND & ROAD EROSION WORKSHOPS

On December 11, twenty participants braved the fog and cold to learn how to identify and treat erosion on rangelands.

The workshop addressed some common causes of erosion, and participants toured a gully that was recently treated using bioengineering techniques. A demonstration at the end of the workshop allowed participants to get up close and personal with tools and techniques that can be used on their own properties.

Our next workshop dovetailed with the first, and focused specifically on erosion that can occur on ranch roads. Much like our rangeland erosion workshop, the content included an introduction to the causes of road erosion and demonstrations of some ways landowners can use hand tools to treat minor erosion on their own roads. Many thanks to our landowners who generously hosted these workshops.



Workshop participants look at a gully that was treated using bioengineering techniques.

Stay tuned for these upcoming workshops & public meetings

Summer 2013

Rainwater catchment & storage demonstration

Water & Wood: Enhancing Dutch Bill Creek

Using a no-till drill for conservation tillage

Using small equipment to address erosion

*Fall 2013
Made in Salmon Creek: a Celebration of Local Agricultural Stewardship*



Staff member John Green describes techniques for treating road erosion.

TIME FOR TEAM



The Spring 2013 TEAM (Teaching Environmental & Agricultural Memories) program is currently underway. TEAM is an environmental and agricultural education program funded by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District and supported by Stephanie Lennox of Envirichment. We are delighted to be including teachers and students from five new schools in the TEAM program this year. The first field trip of the season was such a success that the entire group of fifth grade students pleaded with their teacher to cancel all of their future field trips, and instead return to Gilardi Ranch. These students enjoyed watching an adult steelhead swim upstream, made friends with the resident cattle, and tried their luck surviving a salmon life cycle obstacle course game. We look forward to the

remainder of the TEAM field trip season and to exploring the land with local students. For more information about the TEAM program contact Krista, at Krista@goldridgercd.org.

2012 AT THE SALMON CREEK WATERSHED COUNCIL By Noel Bouck and Diane Masura

Since 1996, the dozen or so members of the Salmon Creek Watershed Council have provided a lively incubator for ideas, events and grants that have expanded local knowledge about this 34.5-acre watershed and culminated in the repopulation of the much improved creeks with coho from the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program.

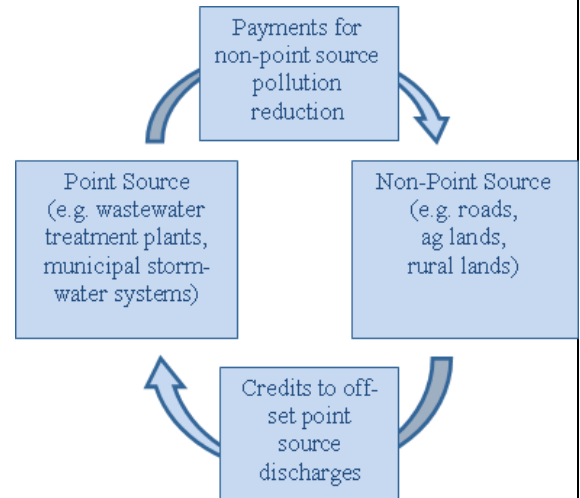
During strategic planning sessions in 2012, the Council revised its mission: “To build a vibrant sense of place while learning to live gently on the land.” It also updated plans for future activities in four areas of interest: maintaining the vitality of the Council itself, providing education about the watershed, building relationships with community agencies, and collecting and maintaining data on watershed health. This has been implemented through tabling at nine local events, as well as a hands-on K-3 event at Salmon Creek School (photo). Strategic planning implementation is also reflected in new projects aimed at developing a watershed timeline for public display and producing a welcome packet for new residents. In January of 2012, the RCD appointed Krista Lindley as Watershed Coordinator for Salmon Creek and Estero Americano watersheds. She has assisted various council members in monitoring water quality, applying for and winning a grant to support monitoring equipment, and producing “Made in Salmon Creek,” a local festival showcasing food produced in the watershed.



WHAT'S NEW?

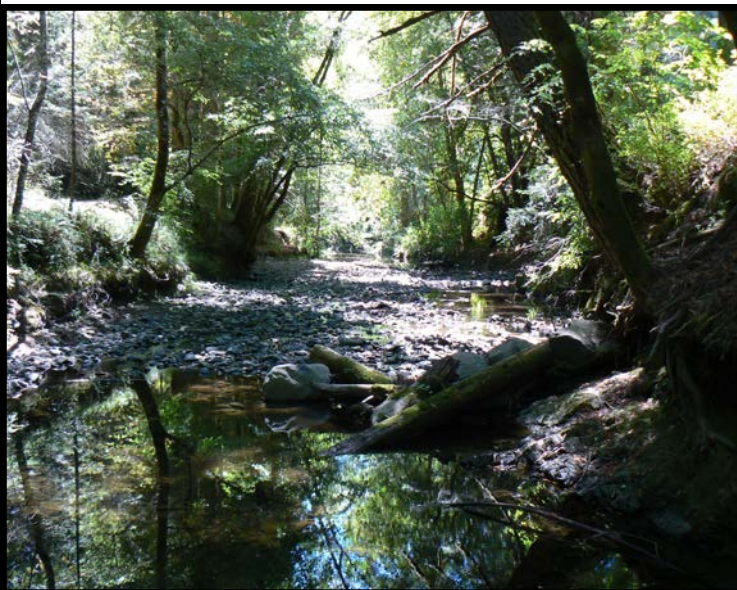
WATER QUALITY CREDIT TRADING IN THE LAGUNA DE SANTA ROSA

Gold Ridge RCD, in collaboration with Sotoyome RCD, consultants, partners and local agricultural landowners/managers, is working on a project to develop a water quality credit trading market in the Laguna de Santa Rosa Watershed. Water quality credit trading is an innovative approach to achieve water quality goals and regulatory requirements by the purchase of pollution reduction "credits" from other sources. This market will initially secure nutrient reduction credits through the implementation of beneficial management practices on agricultural lands to improve water quality and meet the City of Santa Rosa's offset needs for their waste water treatment plant. The market will also be designed to meet anticipated future demand for credits from other buyers, and will serve as a template transferable to other watersheds in California.



DUTCH BILL CREEK COHO HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

This summer, the Gold Ridge RCD will be collaborating with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, FishAmerica Foundation, Dragonfly Stream Enhancement, Streamline Engineering, the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), and Westminster Woods Camp and Conference Center to construct 27 large wood structures along a 1.3-mile stretch of Dutch Bill Creek to improve salmon habitat. The structures, composed of anchored boulders, rootwads, and logs, will provide cover and high flow refugia for juvenile coho, as well as creating deep, cool pools. Structures will also retain spawning gravel, enhance macroinvertebrate populations that serve as food sources for coho, and increase overall habitat complexity. The overall design of the project is intended to encourage the formation of a single-thread low-flow channel throughout the stream reach to maintain pool connectivity during the summer months, allowing for juveniles to move from pool to pool to find cover and food sources.



Dutch Bill Creek is an important tributary of the lower Russian River, providing some of the best coho habitat in the watershed, and serving as a hub of coho recovery efforts. Surveys for wild juvenile coho have been conducted in the stream by UCCE yearly since 2005, with juveniles collected there for the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program every year beginning in 2006. After five years of finding no wild coho in the stream, fisheries biologists surveying the creek were excited to find 559 wild juveniles in 2011, and 1,960 in 2012. These encouraging results emphasize the continued importance of restoring this valuable creek.

GOLD RIDGE RCD



SPRING 2013

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

Presorted
Standard
US Postage
Paid
Santa Rosa, CA
Permit No. 64

CONTACT INFORMATION

Gold Ridge RCD

P: 707-823-5244

F: 707-823-5243

www.goldridgercd.org

Mailing and Physical Address:

2776 Sullivan Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Email:

Brittany@goldridgercd.org

NRCS Sonoma-Marin Office

1301 Redwood Way, Ste. 170

Petaluma, CA 94954

Phone: 707-794-1242 ext.3

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS:

Third Thursday of each month at
6:00 pm

2776 Sullivan Rd.,
Sebastopol, CA 95472

MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Board of Directors

Don Petersen
Joe Dutton
Ann Cassidy
Richard Hughes
Jill Butler

Associate Directors

Bob Burke
Al Gerhardt
Torrey Olson

THE GRRCD STAFF

Brittany Heck
Executive Director

Joe Pozzi
District Manager

Noelle Johnson
Conservation Planner

John Green
Lead Scientist

Sierra Cantor
Ecologist

Michele Rocha
Office Manager

Jeremy Schroen
Field Technician

Krista Lindley
Watershed Coordinator

William Hart
Project Manager

THE NRCS STAFF

Charlette Epifanio
District Conservationist

Kristan Flynn
*Range Management
Specialist*

Jennifer Walcer
Soil Conservationist

Brooke Cole
Field Office Engineer

Andrew Loganbill
Soil Conservation Tech

Ben Garland
Soil Conservationist

Heather Cuevas
Farm Bill Assistant

Susan Hoey Less
Engineer Technician



Newsletter support is provided by the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), California State Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, State Water Resources Control Board and by the Sonoma County Water Agency.