



Protecting Our Health and Environment

ReNews

YOUR NEWS AND INFORMATION SOURCE ABOUT • RECYCLING • POLLUTION PREVENTION • LESS TOXIC PRODUCTS

Fall 2004

The 20th Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day Saturday, September 18 9 AM to Noon



California Coastal Cleanup Day is a volunteer event focused on the marine environment. Each year, more than 40,000 volunteers turn out to over 400 cleanup sites statewide. Since the program started in 1985, over 552,000 Californians have removed almost 8.5 million pounds of debris from our state's shorelines and coast.

Coastal Cleanup Day is a great way for families, students, service groups, and neighbors to join together, take care of the environment, show community support, learn about the impacts of litter, and have fun!

For more information, contact 800-COAST-4U, e-mail coast4u@coastal.ca.gov or go to <http://www.coastal.ca.gov>.

For more information about events

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We All Live In A Watershed

What is a watershed you may ask, some sort of new-fangled shack? Here's one definition: A watershed is a region that drains into a particular water body, that includes both water and land components.¹ There are thirty-four in San Mateo County; you live in one of them, near a creek or a storm drain that flows to a larger stream, which eventually flows to the bay or Pacific Ocean. It is important that we protect them because healthy watersheds benefit the plant, animal and human community.

Some benefits of local creeks include:

- **Rare and endangered species occur within or along creek banks.** San Mateo County creeks are home to the endangered California red legged frog and the threatened steelhead trout.
- **Riparian areas are productive wildlife areas.** A riparian area is the vegetated area adjacent to and including the creek.² Riparian areas provide habitat and food for many bird, insect, fish, amphibian, and terrestrial species.
- **Improve water quality.** A healthy creek with dense vegetation prevents sediments and nutrients in surface runoff from entering creeks, improving water quality throughout the watershed.
- **Help control flooding.** Healthy riparian areas absorb floodwaters, and then slowly release the water over a period of time. Trees and plants along the banks help to reduce soil erosion into the creek during a flood.
- **Places to experience and enjoy wilderness.**

Few of California's urban creeks have



survived in an unspoiled, natural state. Problems include a loss of vegetation, erosion of banks, loss of natural channels, trash, non-native plants, diminished wildlife populations, and water pollution.

A few things that you can do to correct these problems are to: eliminate or reduce use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, plant native plants and remove non-native plants, properly dispose of oil, garbage, chemicals, drive less to reduce auto related water pollution, and join local groups who are building community and improving San Mateo County's environment by restoring and cleaning up local creeks. Think about getting active in a local creek group!

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Like Mom Used to Say, “You Are What You Eat”

Eating locally produced food in season is one of the most positive effects you can have on the environment. The average vegetable in this country travels 1300 miles to your dinner table, burning thousands of gallons of fossil fuels and polluting the environment on its way. Although it is nice to eat berries in December, we are lucky to live in one of the most bountiful areas in the world for food production and have a wide variety of fruits and vegetables at our fingertips year round. There are many ways to support local agriculture and protect the environment while you are doing it.

One of the great benefits of purchasing locally grown and/or organic foods is the knowledge that you are directly supporting a clean environment. Conventionally grown crops contribute to pollution in our watersheds because of the reliance on the use of pesticides and fertilizers. These chemicals runoff fields into water or are transferred to groundwater by leaching through the soil. These chemicals then travel through the water cycle and can pollute local or distant watersheds. Even if it is not organic, local food is often safer for our watersheds because it is generally produced with fewer chemicals (pesticides, insecticides, fungicides, fertilizers, and preservatives) in comparison to large industrial farms. Local farms are usually smaller and tend to take a less chemically intensive approach to agriculture.

Another great reason to consider local and organic food is your health. Studies have shown that fresher food holds more nutrients; so buying locally has nutritional benefits. In contrast, industrial farms bombard food with nitrogen fertilizer stimulating quick growth and increasing crop yields by causing fruits and veggies to take up more water, displacing nutritional value.

If you are interested in supporting local and/or organic agriculture there are two great ways to buy direct from local farmers in your area. First, your local Farmer's Markets provide an opportunity to buy fresh fruits and vegetables directly from the farmers who grow them. Other benefits of farmers markets include: getting the best quality of freshly



The Abinader brothers find their favorite organic produce every Saturday at the Redwood City Farmers Market.

picked vine and tree ripened produce available, knowing where your food comes from and how it is grown, developing a direct farmer-community relationship and cutting out the middleman. Besides, farmers markets are just plain fun! Find a farmers market in your area online at <http://www.cafarmersmarkets.com/search>.

The second way to buy direct from local farmers is through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. Farms that participate in this program sell yearly shares to customers and in turn provide them with a box of fresh produce every week. Boxes of food are delivered to your door or to a local drop off you can pick them up. Produce in the box varies by farm and season and can include fruits, vegetables, flowers, and sometimes honey. A CSA provides the same benefits as farmers markets with the added bonus of giving farmers a guaranteed source of income on which to base their yearly production. A few farms participating in this program are listed at <http://www.localharvest.org> click on Farms/CSA in the “What are you looking for?” box. Another list can be found at <http://www.acterra.org/earthday/csa.html>.

The 20th Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day September 18

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in San Mateo County contact Susan Danielson at 650-560-9533, cleanupinfo@saveourshores.org, or go to <http://www.saveourshores.org> or go to the following locations on September 18.



Belmont: 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Carlmont Shopping Center Behind Lunardis, 595-7427

Burlingame: 9 a.m.-noon, Mills Creek, 692-7281*

East Palo Alto: 9 a.m.-noon, Woodland Rd. at Manhattan Ave., 962-9876, ext. 305

Foster City: Laurel Creek, 286-3381*

Half Moon Bay: Pilarcitos Creek, 560-9533*

Pescadero: 9 a.m.-noon, Gazos Creek, 560-9533*

Redwood City: 9 a.m.-noon, Peninsula Yacht Club, Redwood Creek, 369-4410

Redwood City: 9a.m.-noon, AAA parking lot at 20 El Camino Real, 594-1164

Redwood City: 9 a.m.-2p.m., Bair Island Canoe & Cleanup, \$ for canoe, 510-452-9261, ext. 109

San Gregorio: 10 a.m., parking lot for San Gregorio Beach, 726-2499

San Carlos: Pulgas Creek, 802-4263 *

*Call for location or time.



Oil Doesn't Wear Out, It Just Gets Dirty!



If you change the oil in your car yourself, it's easy, free, and convenient to recycle your oil and oil filters. There are over seventy auto parts stores and service stations in San Mateo County that accept used oil and filters from the public free of charge. It's important to never throw oil and oil filters into the trash because they end up in landfills where oil can leak from filters and containers and pollute the surrounding land and water with toxic heavy metals.

Recycling prevents pollution and conserves two valuable resources: oil and steel. Oil doesn't wear out, it just gets dirty from heavy metals, dust, and grime from your engine. When you take used oil to a collection center it is trans-

ported to a re-refinery and processed to remove contaminants yielding clean base oil. Then the oil is blended to produce high quality re-refined oil that meets all American Petroleum Institute (API) standards. It's as good as new! The steel in used oil filters is melted down and made into rebar. Kragen and Pep Boys Auto Parts stores are just a few of the centers that take used oil **and** filters.

To find a collection center near you look for the Used Oil Collection Center Sign, log on to www.1800cleanup.org, or call 1-800-CLEANUP, enter your area code, and the system will tell you the address of the closest oil recycling location.

Fish On Prozac?

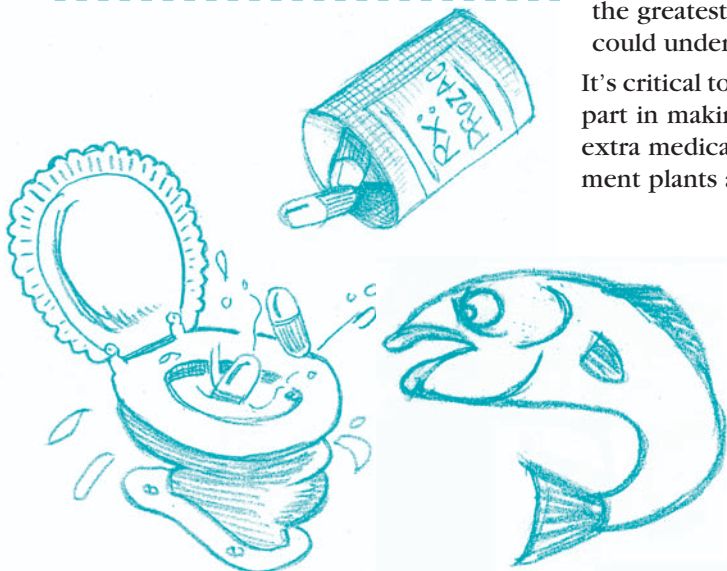
Pollution from pharmaceutical waste is showing up in surface waters across the country posing serious problems for humans and wildlife alike. A US Geological survey released in 2002 found that 80 percent of 139 streams tested positive for pharmaceuticals, hormones, or other organic wastewater contaminants.

Even in minute quantities, drug waste can cause big problems. Endocrine disruptors are one class of drug waste that have a dramatic negative impact on critical developmental stages of the human fetus and newborn. These chemicals mimic natural hormones by triggering an identical response or blocking natural hormones. Problems documented in wildlife populations include antidepressants inducing spawning in shellfish, calcium blockers from blood pressure medicines dramatically inhibiting sperm activity in the Atlantic croaker, and synthetic estrogens and cholesterol medications producing feminization of male fish.

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Another potentially dangerous effect of pharmaceutical water pollution is the development of antibiotic resistance in bacteria. River studies have shown that samples containing the highest levels of antibiotics also contained bacteria with the greatest resistance to the antibiotics. Increasing levels of resistant bacteria could undermine the effectiveness of these antibiotics in medical treatment.

It's critical to keep pharmaceutical waste out of surface water and you can play a part in making it happen. A lot of this pollution comes from people who flush extra medication down the toilet or dump it down the drain. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to filter out these wastes and they end up in local streams, lakes, and oceans. It is not safe to dispose of medications via the sink, toilet, or trash. The safest way to dispose of leftover pharmaceutical is through your local Household Hazardous Waste Program, which will take it for free. In San Mateo County make an appointment by calling (650) 363-4718 or online at <http://www.smhealth.org/bhw/appt>.



Thermometer Exchange September 20–24

Exchange your mercury thermometer for a digital model at any of the following locations during Pollution Prevention Week, September 20–24. Please transport your mercury thermometer inside its original plastic case or sealed in two resealable plastic bags.

Atherton: Permit Center,
93 Station Lane, 752-0526

Belmont: City Hall, 1070 Sixth
Ave., 595-7427

Brisbane: City Hall, 50 Park Pl.,
(415) 508-2130

Burlingame: City Hall, 501
Primrose, 342-3727

Colma: 1188 El Camino Real,
757-8888

Daly City: 153 Lake Merced Blvd.,
991-8208

East Palo Alto: 2200 University
Ave., 853-3165

Half Moon Bay: City Hall,
501 Main St., 712-6660

Hillsborough: Town Hall,
1600 Floribunda Ave., Finance
Counter, 375-7444

Menlo Park: City Administration
Bldg., 701 Laurel, 330-6763

Millbrae: City Hall, Public Works
Office, 621 Magnolia Ave.,
259-2339

Pacifica: 151 Milagra Dr. at
Oceana, 738-3768

Redwood City: Public Works
Dept., 1400 Broadway,
780-7464

Redwood City: Environmental
Health, 455 County Center,
4th Floor, 599-1514

San Bruno: City Hall, Public
Works Counter, 567 El Camino
Real, 616-7065

San Mateo: City Hall Permit
Counter, 330 W. 20th Ave.,
522-7342

So. San Francisco: Municipal
Services Bldg., 33 Arroyo at El
Camino Real, 877-8634



We All Live In A Watershed

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Friends of Cordilleras Creek

Unifies neighbors through creek clean ups, creek plantings, and creek walks to prevent flooding and improve the creek's riparian habitat. Contact Barbara Patterson at 650-594-1164.

San Francisquito Watershed Council

Streamside habitat restoration is held on the first and third Saturday of the month (September through May), from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Volunteers plant native plants, remove invasive weeds, or pick up trash from the creek. Check the event calendar at <http://www.acterra.org/calendar/>, for dates and locations. You can also adopt a stretch of creek through their citizen streamkeeper program or you can help raise native plants used in restoration at their nursery. Contact Katie Pilat at 650-962-9876, ext. 305 or KatieP@Acterra.org or <http://www.acterra.org/watershed/>.

San Pedro Creek Watershed Coalition

Organizes work parties to remove non-native invasive species and replant/restore native vegetation. Holds bioengineering workshops for community members and civic employees. Organizes creek clean-ups and has worked with city and county park officials in San Pedro Valley County Park to replace an existing culvert (steelhead barrier) with a freestanding

bridge to allow passage for migrating steelhead. Contact their Project Coordinator at: pedro@bax.com or write SPCWC, P.O. Box 850, Pacifica, CA 94044.

San Gregorio Environmental Resource Center

Works to preserve and protect habitat for endangered species. Volunteers needed to help restore habitat, and do stream monitoring. Contact Sgerc@SanMateo.org or call 650-726-2499. <http://www.sgerc.org/>

Save the Bay

Save The Bay's community-based restoration program works with schools and volunteers to restore creek and wetland habitat at five sites around the Bay. Volunteer at one of their wetland restoration projects, and help to protect Bay habitat. Fall restoration activities include native seed collection, non-native plant removal, shoreline cleanup, and plant propagation in their Native Plant Nurseries. <http://www.saveSFbay.org>

There are many other creeks in San Mateo County. Start a group in your local creek or participate in the annual coastal cleanup!

Call 650-599-1325 or e-mail spratt@co.sanmateo.ca.us if you are interested in the publication: *Streamside Planting Guide for San Mateo County*.

1. Watersheds: A Practical Handbook for Healthier Water, Clive Dobson and Gregor Gilpin Beck, Firefly Books, Buffalo, NY 1999.
2. Alameda County Conservation Partnership, <http://www.baysavers.org>.