



Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition

Volume 2, Issue 2, Spring 2004

NEWSLETTER

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This newsletter was partially funded by: Santa Barbara County's Coastal Resource Enhancement Fund (CREF), Department of Fish and Game (Support Program-General Funds), NOAA Fisheries and the California Coastal Salmon Recovery Program (CCSRP).

The Regional Water Quality Control Board is looking out for the Carpinteria Creek Watershed....

By Julia Dryer, Corrine Huckaby, and Julie Quinn

The Clean Water Act (CWA), enacted in 1970, provides guidelines for protecting and improving water quality. This federal legislation calls for local governments to take an active role in the planning and management of their water resources. Entities like the City of Carpinteria, the County's Project Clean Water, and other local agencies have played a key role in addressing local water quality issues. State agencies like the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) is responsible for enforcing CWA requirements and providing water quality guidelines. One such task is the assessment of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL).

What is a TMDL?

The TMDL sets the maximum amount of pollutant loading that a water body can assimilate without impacting benefi-

cial uses. In other words, how much pollutant loading the system (Carpinteria Creek) can handle before negative impacts occur. Knowing this "maximum load" capacity provides important information for management guidelines.

The Regional Board classifies pollution as coming from non-point and point sources. Non-point source pollution is the portion of the pollution load that cannot be traced to a single source. Urban and rural runoff are considered nonpoint source pollution. When a pollution source is coming from an easily distinguishable source such as the end of a pipe, it is considered a point source, as it is much easier to trace and reduce. When dealing with nonpoint source pollution, it becomes harder to improve the water quality issue at hand.

Pathogens in Carpinteria Creek

After five years of sampling by the RWQCB, it was determined that Carpinteria Creek was "impaired" by pathogens. Pathogen is a general term for disease-causing organisms that can come from a multitude of sources. Since a portion of the pathogens (measured by using the fecal indicator bacteria, fecal coliform) are coming from non-point sources, it is necessary to educate the community about ways to reduce the amount of pathogens reaching Carpinteria Creek.

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The Friendly Bushtit

By Bob Hansen

Bushtits frequent any creek habitat, although you are just as likely to find them in your own backyard.

A flock of twenty or thirty of these little birds conspicuously forage in bushes and small trees, moving as a group along a stream or passing through your neighborhood, occasionally more than once in a day.

They move fast, but their profile can be identified in a split second. Except for hummingbirds, the bushtit is arguably the smallest bird in America. Other species measure about 4 inches from bill to tail but a bushtit has the longest tail among tiny birds. Thus they have a proportionately small torso and head, and possess



Bushtit photo by Morgan Ball

the tiniest bill of all birds. The long slender tail and almost invisible bill present an inimitable silhouette, even at a glance.

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BUSHTIT

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Bushtit behavior is distinctive. More than most other birds, a bushtit repeatedly hangs upside down in order to reach tiny seeds or insects. Silhouette plus large flocks plus acrobatic foraging make identification relatively easy.

Bushtit flocks are seldom seen during the spring breeding season. You will see a male and female (they look alike) foraging for nesting materials and food. Single bushtits can be easily missed because they are tiny gray creatures, with no more color than a brownish head and no marks on the gray or brown.

However, even without seeing them, you may learn to identify them by their high-pitched “tzee tzee tzee!” emanating from nearby bushes and trees. And they are accessible: (1) they are friendly and tolerant to humans, and (2) they live and move no higher than about fifteen feet above the ground.

Even their nests are spectacularly identifiable: a vertical pendant woven pocket that is three lengths as long as their body, with an entrance hole near the bottom. You might happen to find such an architecturally clever home hanging not much

higher than human eye-level. With luck and patience, given the leafy seclusion that the bushtit requires, you may be able to follow a spring parent bushtit. He or she may lead you directly to the nest, or to the leafy camouflage that hides it. A number of these nests have been found on Carpinteria Creek between 8th Street/Calle Ocho footbridge and 6th Street.

Bushtits are seen only in western and southwestern states, from British Columbia to far south of the Mexican border.

Bob Hansen is a local advocate for creeks, artist, and excellent

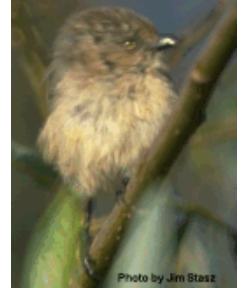


Photo by Jim Stasz, USGS.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board ... (continued from page 1)

One important factor in TMDL issues is the fact that any land uses can affect water quality. One particular group is not solely responsible for the pollution reaching the creek. Inputs from urban, agricultural, and industrial sources all contribute to the pollution load reaching the creek. In order to manage and control these loads, the RWQCB issues permits. Anyone discharging to “navigable waters” must file for a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit (NPDES permit), which specifies how the discharge should be treated or managed to best meet water quality standards. In the Carpinteria Valley, both the County and the City of Carpinteria hold NPDES permits. These permits apply only to the urbanized areas.

A New Development for Agriculture

Traditionally, agriculture has not been required to obtain a permit for discharges. This has been one of the hot issues throughout the state, especially in the Central Valley. Current court cases have resulted in decisions that require more stringent regulation of agricultural operations in the Central Valley. This new requirement is an attempt to help eliminate one portion of the non-point source load that contributes to the overall pollution reaching receiving waterbodies.

For more detailed information on the requirements of Central Valley growers please see:

<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb5/> and click on the link “[Read about Irrigated Lands Conditional Waivers](#)”.

Check out other issues and requirements in your region at <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/>.

The new requirements for agriculture will hopefully lead to lower overall pollution inputs for the creeks and other water bodies. By providing best management practices, suggested discharge treatment options, and other useful management tools; the requirements can outline ways to improve water quality and land management.

How can I help improve water quality?

Community environmental stewardship promotes a healthy watershed. Preventing trash and other wastes from entering the creek results in improved water quality that the entire community can enjoy. For example, simple things like picking up after your pet, maintaining septic systems, and planting native vegetation along the creek are all steps towards better water quality. Planting natives in your watershed will help prevent erosion, decrease run off, provide habitat for native fauna, and prevent the loss of land. Disposing properly of pet and livestock wastes, which can contain large amounts of bacteria, can help reduce the potential for it to reach the creek along with other runoff. Check to make sure your septic system is functioning properly; if not, it can be discharging raw sewage into the creek. These are just a few of the things you can do to make the Carpinteria Creek watershed a better place! Visit the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition website at www.carpinteriacreek.org to learn more!

Thanks to Corrine Huckaby and Julia Dryer from the RWQCB for their information and input for this article.

Natives in Your Backyard by Karen Flagg and Julie Quinn

Do you want to learn more about making your backyard and surrounding watershed community a native plant haven? Not sure what native plants are, and why they are ecologically and aesthetically pleasing? Then read on!

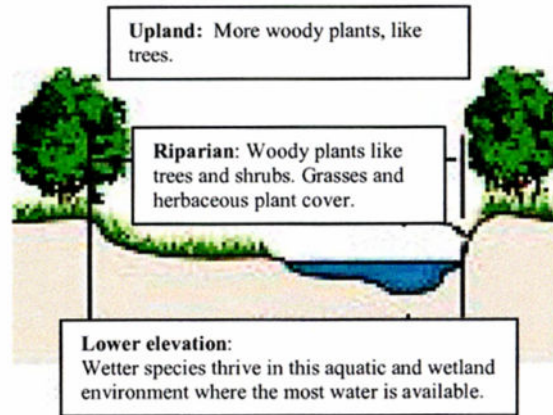
Native plants are important for watershed and creek health. Have you ever seen the invasive bamboo-like *Arundo donax*, Cape Ivy a.k.a. German Ivy (*Delairea odorata*), or Periwinkle (*Vinca major*) along the creek banks? If you have; you know that they tend to inundate areas, out-competing all other plant species. This single species landscape domination is ecologically and visually undesirable. Bringing back a natural variety of native plant species will provide food and habitat, promoting a more diverse and beautiful ecosystem. Re-establishing a native plant community can also prevent erosion and bank destabilization along the creek.

How to get started

The key to starting a native plant re-vegetation project is planning. Establishing elevation zones will lead to the most successful outcome. Elevation zones are areas distinguished from one another by their distance and relation to the lowest lying water. For example; near the creek bed, wetland plants like certain *Juncus* species should be planted. In the next elevation level, Gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*) and California Blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) could be planted. Farthest up from the creek in the riparian flood plain area, species like Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*) are appropriate plants. Establishing these elevation zones, which can be in small increments (i.e. 2 feet!), will ensure that the plants are situated in areas with the proper water requirements for successful growth.



Scarlet Monkeyflower (*Mimulus cardinalis*) Photo by Lee Dittmann 1987 ©



Stream Corridor Restoration: Principles, Processes, and Practices, 10/98, by the Federal Interagency Stream Restoration Working Group (FISRWG).

Planting native vegetation in this elevation savvy fashion will also promote the re-establishment of a multistoried riparian canopy. The riparian canopy is the umbrella like coverage of plants and trees surrounding a healthy creek. Benefits from re-establishing such a canopy include creating diversity in the habitat, as well as shading; which cools the creek water making it habitable for species like the endangered steelhead trout.

A Word of Caution

The appropriate use of individual species makes all the difference when planting native vegetation. Our creeks need to be able to move large quantities of water during rain events; too much vegetation will clog the creek and prevent water from flowing. Some species like Cottonwoods (*populus*) and Sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*) can get very big, so plan accordingly when planting these species. Native species like Willow (*Salix integra*) can become invasive, blocking water flow in the creek; even though they are used for bank stabilization in other instances! The best way to prevent problems with native re-planting is education and consultation with a professional.

Take a Hike

Not sure what a native plant community looks like? Take a hike! A stroll up the Tunnel Trail or Tucker's Grove path will show great examples of native plants in their natural environment. By planting some of the species native to the Carpinteria Creek area, you too can help in developing a healthy watershed.



California Rose (*Rosa californica*), USGS

◀The diagram gives some general suggestions for species and locations of natives in the Carpinteria Creek area.

Lower	Brown-headed rush (<i>Juncus phaeocephalus</i>) Scarlet Monkeyflower (<i>Mimulus cardinalis</i>)
Middle	Sticky Monkeyflower (<i>Mimulus longiflorus</i>) California Blackberry (<i>Rubus ursinus</i>) Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry (<i>Ribes speciosum</i>) California Rose (<i>Rosa californica</i>)
Upper	California Sycamore (<i>Platanus racemosa</i>), Coffeeberry (<i>Rhamnus californica</i>) various sages- Humming-bird's Sage (<i>Salvia spathacea</i>), Black Sage (<i>S. mellifera</i>)

Where can I get natives to plant?

Various nurseries carry native plants and some landscape contractors are familiar with the installation and care of native plants. Moon Mountain Wildflowers, Coastal Natives, Growing Solutions, Enviroscaping, Kitson Nursery, David Frantz, and the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens are just a few providers in the area.

Community Efforts Equal Watershed Results

A holistic approach to native replanting will have the most successful outcome. If non-natives are not eliminated in the upper watershed reaches, they will invariably make their way to the lower reaches. Native landscaping leads to benefits the entire community and ecosystem can enjoy!



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Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition c/o
Community Environmental Council
930 Mira Monte Drive
Santa Barbara CA

Phone: 805.963.0583
Fax: 805.962.9080
E-mail: Julie@cecmail.org

Publishing Information:

This newsletter is a quarterly publication of the
Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition. For
information, please contact Julie Quinn at (805)
963-0583 x116 or Julie@cecmail.org

The Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition was created in 2001, when a partnership of local landowners, community groups, resource agencies, and individuals joined together to restore and protect the resources of the creek. Inspired by a shared sense of responsibility for our community, we're working together to create conditions that will allow a healthy steelhead trout population to return to the creek.

www.carpinteriacreek.org

Watershed Plan Update

by Tom Lockhart, Cachuma Resource Conservation District

The Carpinteria Creek Watershed Plan is a project headed by the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition (CCWC) that will assist in improving the environmental conditions of Carpinteria Creek. The watershed plan will identify concerns related to the stability of streambanks, riparian vegetation, sediment and nutrient additions to the creek, as well as fish habitat, and also identify solutions.

The watershed plan will outline current conditions and set goals for future projects over the next five months. Community involvement is a key part of the plan. Goals and objectives for the plan have been developed through community meetings. Get involved! Tom Lockhart from the CRCD can be reached at (805) 928-9269 x110 for questions, comments, or suggestions regarding the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Plan.



Lower Carpinteria Creek in Spring (Jeff Brinkman).



Trout under a Sycamore leaf (Jeff Brinkman).



Highway Bridge Over the Creek (Carpinteria Valley Historical Museum).

Calendar of Events:

- **Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition Meeting** at Carpinteria City Hall, April 22, call 963-0583
- **Earth Day** at the County Courthouse Sunken Gardens in Santa Barbara, April 18, call 963-0583
- Weeders needed at the **Carpinteria Salt Marsh Nature Park** and **Carpinteria Bluffs** call Andrea Adams-Morden 684-8077