

Keep Carpinteria Creek Clean.

You may or may not be aware of an innovative group that has been working together for the last several years to improve the health of Carpinteria Creek. The group is a partnership of local landowners, community groups, local, state and federal agencies, and individuals, collectively known as the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition. Everyone who lives, works and plays in the area of land that drains to Carpinteria Creek, also known as Carpinteria Creek *watershed*, has a potential impact to the creek. Everyday activities, such as the simple act of washing your car, can be a threat to the ecosystem. A collective community effort is necessary to reverse these potentially harmful impacts.

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board), an agency of the State of California, has the regulatory responsibility and authority to protect water quality for drinking, recreation and wildlife habitat along with other uses. Regional Board staff work with local watershed working groups to gain an understanding of each watershed's various water quality issues and to fashion solutions for resolving these issues through technical advice and grant funding. Grant funding for creek restoration projects and other water quality improvement projects is more readily available in watersheds that have a proactive group such as Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition.

In addition to providing technical advice and grant funding, the Regional Board staff utilizes various programs to ensure cleaner water. One such program is the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program. A TMDL is a watershed assessment report that identifies sources of pollution to a waterbody and describes how those levels of pollutant loading to a waterbody will be reduced to meet water quality standards. Carpinteria Creek has been identified as an impaired waterbody for pathogens, or bacteria. Potential bacteria sources include agriculture, land disposal, septic tank and leach field discharges. Because Carpinteria Creek has been identified as an impaired waterbody, a TMDL assessment needs to be completed addressing the elevated levels of bacteria. The TMDL assessment for the Carpinteria Creek is currently scheduled to begin around 2006. By working on the identified problems now, Regional Board staff hopes that the watershed working group efforts will help solve water quality problems before the TMDL process begins. Regional Board staff encourage working groups to develop watershed management plans that will address TMDL pollutants of concern as well as aggressively address pollutant sources on the stakeholder's (e.g., the public, businesses, government, local agencies, citizens) own terms. Landowners know their land best, and as such can often implement the best solutions.

The Regional Board would like to see more stakeholders get involved in the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition and other watershed efforts. If you would like to learn more about how to participate in the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition or start a group for your own watershed, please call Regional Board staff member Corinne Huckaby at (805) 549-3504.