

# STEWARDS OF THE LAND

NEWSLETTER OF GOLD RIDGE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

FALL 2005

Protecting our natural resources benefits our economy and environment,  
contributing to our quality of life, now and in the future.

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

## Sediment Reduction in Dutch Bill Creek a Priority for Funding Agencies



The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) are supporting sediment reduction efforts in the Dutch Bill Creek Watershed by awarding the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD) grant money to upgrade rural roads. A \$499,000 grant awarded by DFG and a \$135,000 grant awarded by SCC will help treat major erosion problems on private roads.

The Dutch Bill Creek Watershed is located in the lower portion of the Russian River and contains the towns of Occidental, Camp Meeker, and Monte Rio. Dutch Bill Creek is a very important coho salmon and steelhead trout tributary to the Russian River. It was one of two tributaries where DFG found rearing juvenile coho salmon in the summer of 2002. Consequently, DFG kept 75 of the juvenile coho as part of the Russian River Captive Broodstock

Program. Recognizing the importance of Dutch Bill Creek, the Gold Ridge RCD has worked very hard to implement instream habitat improvement projects. Since sedimentation is a major limiting factor, the RCD applied for and received grant money from DFG to assess sediment sources from roads in the watershed. On behalf of the RCD, Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) completed a road survey and sediment source assessment on 20 miles of private roads in the watershed. This recently funded project will treat 139 sites that were identified as Medium/low to High priorities in the watershed.

This implementation grant is Phase II in a project that started with the road assessment done by PWA 2001. The actual road construction is set to begin September 2005 and will conclude October 2006. This work will be carried out under PWA's direct supervision.

A major reduction in sediment delivery to the creek is expected due to these projects. Ultimately this will decrease the amount of sediment to the Russian River Watershed, which is considered by the State Water Resources Control Board and the Environmental Protection Agency as impaired.

For more information please contact Lisa Hulette, Natural Resource Coordinator, at (707) 823-4662 or [goldrdge@sonic.net](mailto:goldrdge@sonic.net)

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><u>What is a Road Assessment?</u></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><u>EQIP and NRCS Conservation Security Program</u></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><u>Estero Americano Erosion Control Project</u></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><u>Calendar of Events</u></b>	<b>5</b>

## What is a Road Assessment and How can it Help Me?

A road assessment is a systematic evaluation of current and potential road related erosion problems. The end result is a report that outlines where road problems exist, what recommended treatment is and the approximate cost of treating the problem areas. The assessment is conducted by trained professionals who are typically geologists, soil conservationists, engineers or licensed foresters.

Treatment recommendations are site specific and are made to meet the intended land use and needs of the landowner. Common treatment recommendations include but are not limited to installation of larger culverts, replacing dysfunctional culverts, placing rock at culvert outlets and inlets, changing road drainage design, installing ditch relief culverts or waterbars, grade stabilization structures in ditches and road surfacing with rock.

Everyone who drives or maintains a dirt road knows how difficult and expensive it can be to keep the road in good driving condition. Good planning is essential in reducing the impact of a road on the environment and to reduce maintenance costs.

The recommendations outlined in a road assessment are meant to serve as a guide in planning road upgrades and treating erosion problems that can impact water quality and create a maintenance nightmare. Technical input from professionals can help ensure that road treatments are done correctly and in the most cost effective manner.

In addition, there are often public funds available to landowners and road associations that want to implement the treatments outline in the assessment.

The Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD) recently received grant funding from the California Department of Fish and Game to conduct a road assessment in the Salmon Creek Watershed. If you are a landowner in Salmon Creek with road related erosion, contact the RCD Office to see if your property is eligible for inclusion in the upcoming assessment.

Call 823-4662 or [goldrge@sonic.net](mailto:goldrge@sonic.net) to schedule a preliminary site visit.



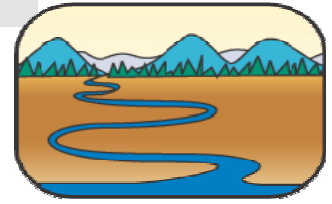
A culvert not installed at the existing stream gradient can degrade the channel.



Undersized culverts can become plugged with sediment and debris.

*"When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."*

Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," *A Sand County Almanac*



## Conservation Security Program available to Tomales and Bodega Bays Watersheds

Agricultural producers in the Tomales Bay and Bodega Bay watersheds will have the opportunity to enroll in a new USDA financial program during fall 2005. The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation farm program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). CSP provides reward and cost-share payments in addition to technical assistance to producers for having implemented soil and water quality practices on working farmland.

CSP has a three tiered payment system based on existing conservation practices and implementing new conservation practices. The three tiers allow the producers to choose which conservation level they choose to focus on. The three tiers are capped at annual payments of \$20,000, \$35,000 and \$45,000. The producer earns the payments in four ways:

Enhanced payments for implementing exceptional conservation efforts by going above the basic level of participation.

Small stewardship payments for existing farm practices in soil and water quality.

Small maintenance payments for environmentally beneficial practices already in place

50% cost-share payments for a limited number of new practices

Under Tier 1, a farmer signs a 5-year plan that includes soil and water quality practices for the part of the farm being enrolled in the program. Tier 2 requires a 5-10 year plan for soil and water quality practices on the entire farm. Tier 3, also a 5-10 year plan, pays farmers the most and rewards stewardship, addressing all resources of concern for the entire farm. The application process is not competitive, but producers must complete the Self Assessment workbook, document stewardship work, complete the CSP application and meet with NRCS to evaluate the entire application. The self-assessment guide is available online at [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/pdf\\_files/CSP\\_SelfAssess\\_Workbook\\_F.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/pdf_files/CSP_SelfAssess_Workbook_F.pdf).

For more information, visit the program website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/> or call the Petaluma NRCS after Labor Day at (707) 794-1242 ext. 3.

### *Environmental Quality Incentives Program – EQIP*

Over dozens of projects throughout western Sonoma County are being administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

A division of the USDA, NRCS helps landowners under their EQIP, with funding and technical assistance for conservation projects. The money is provided from the 2002 US Farm Bill, which ushered in many new funds for agricultural projects.

For first-time farmers, NRCS will cover 75% of the cost for conservation projects. For more established ranches, NRCS provides a 50% cost share.

For more information about the program, contact NRCS at (707) 794-1242 ext. 3



Photo Courtesy of USDA NRCS



**Gold Ridge RCD is looking for “Local History Buffs” from West County Coastal Communities (Bloomfield, Valley Ford, Bodega, Bodega Bay, Occidental, Free-stone) who would like to help document the unique continuities and changes in our local landscape, both cultural and natural.**

This autumn, the RCD would like to organize one or two informal work groups to share family histories, old photographs, maps, research, bibliographies etc. to help us create historical narratives for the two beautiful estuary watersheds in our District, the Estero Americano Watershed and Salmon Creek Watershed.

Please contact Patricia Hickey at the Gold Ridge RCD office:  
phone: 823-4662 or email [goldrcd@sonic.net](mailto:goldrcd@sonic.net)



**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Gold Ridge RCD**  
2020 Barlow Lane  
Sebastopol, CA 95472  
Phone: 707-823-4662  
Fax: 707-823-4608  
Email: [goldrdge@sonic.net](mailto:goldrdge@sonic.net)



**NRCS Sonoma-Marin Office**  
1301 Redwood Way, Ste 170  
Petaluma, CA 94954  
Phone: 707-794-1242 ext.3

**NRCS Russian River Office**  
405 South Orchard Ave  
Ukiah, CA 95482  
Phone: 707-468-9223 ext.2

**Estero Americano Watershed  
Birding Enthusiasts**

The Estero Americano is located in the heart of the Pacific Flyway, and has been characterized as one of California’s most unique wetland complexes. The mudflats, open water, and extensive marsh area of the estuary provide seasonally important foraging habitat for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds, and resident long-legged wading birds. The *Southern Pacific Shorebird Conservation Plan* identified the Estero Americano as an important State wetland for shorebirds—one of only two such areas in Sonoma County.

A study conducted in late 1980s identified 71 species of water-associated birds and 66 species of terrestrial birds. Population numbers for some species were considered surprisingly high given the estuary’s size, with seasonal peaks of almost 4,000 Western Sandpipers, over 800 Least Sandpipers, 3,300 Dunlin, 250 Willets and 500 Buffleheads, for example (P. Connors, 1989).

As part of its *Watershed Enhancement Planning Process*, the Gold Ridge RCD would like to bring together Estero Americano bird watchers to create species lists, identify critical habitat areas, share experiences, and discuss conservation and protection strategies.

If you are interested in participating in this community habitat planning process, please contact Patricia Hickey at the Gold Ridge RCD office:  
phone: 823-4662 or email [goldrcd@sonic.net](mailto:goldrcd@sonic.net)

**VERY EXCITING NEWS!!!**  
**Recently Funded Projects**  
**Benefiting Landowners and the Environment**

**Dutch Bill Market St. Fish Passage Project:** This project will put forward a sound design that will eliminate the 5th highest priority fish passage barrier in Sonoma County by restoring fish passage on Dutch Bill Creek in the community of Camp Meeker. The project will include a thorough hydraulic analysis, including channel typing and surveying. This project will be funded by the California Department of Fish and Game.

**Dutch Bill Creek Coho Habitat Enhancement:** This project will improve rearing and spawning habitat for coho salmon and steelhead trout in Dutch Bill Creek. This will be accomplished through a series of bank stabilization projects and the installation of in stream habitat improvement structures. Residents and landowners will also be informed and educated on this project and its importance in the watershed. This project is also funded by the California Department of Fish and Game.

**Contact [goldrdge@sonic.net](mailto:goldrdge@sonic.net) or [goldrccd@sonic.net](mailto:goldrccd@sonic.net) for more information**

***Erosion Control in the Estero Americano***

With grant money from the California State Coastal Conservancy and the State Water Resources Control Board, the RCD has been able to assist ranchers in the Estero Americano with the implementation of erosion control projects. Projects include gully repair, the installation of ranch fencing, streambank revegetation, road upgrades, and the development of off channel watering for livestock.



Ranch Fencing Installed—2005



Upland Pasture Gully—2004



Gully Repaired—Banks revegetated and rocked 2005

***Fall 2005 Calendar of Events***

**Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District Board Meetings:**

The third Thursday of every month, 7pm—9pm. Gold Ridge RCD Office, 2020 Barlow Lane, Sebastopol, CA 95472. For more information call: 823-4662

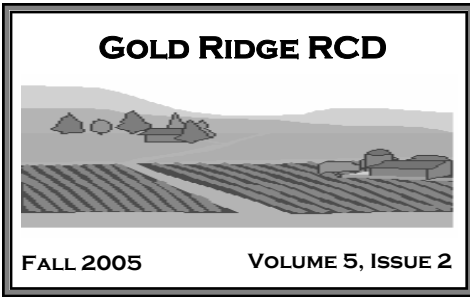
**Sonoma County Farm Bureau Meetings:** The second Thursday of every month, 7pm—9pm. Sonoma County Farm Bureau Office, 970 Piner Rd, Santa Rosa. For more information call: (707) 544-5575

**Salmon Creek Steering Committee Meeting:** To be held September 21, 2005, 10am—12pm. Gold Ridge RCD Office  
For more information 823-4662

**Salmon Creek Watershed Group:** Third Wednesday of every month 7pm at Pastorage, Freestone

**Dutch Bill Creek Watershed Group:** Fourth Tuesday of every month 7 pm at Anderson Hall, Camp meeker

**Stay tuned for more information about upcoming events and how to participate in the Estero Americano Watershed Management Plan**



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

2020 Barlow Lane  
Sebastopol, CA 95472

**RCD Mission and Vision:**

The mission of the Gold Ridge RCD is to assist landowners in addressing concerns by maintaining a presence in natural resource conservation work in all watersheds within the District. The GRRCD can provide a conduit for landowners through whom local, state, and federal monies can be obtained to support and implement restoration programs and practices. The Vision of our District is to ensure the continuation of strong, productive, and viable agricultural endeavors in Western Sonoma County by improving soil and water quality in order to provide an economically and ecologically viable and health agricultural community.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS:**

Third Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm

At the GRRCD Office  
2020 BARLOW LN  
SEBASTOPOL

MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

**THE GRRCD STAFF**

**Joe Pozzi**  
*District Manager*  
**Lisa Hulette**  
*Natural Resource Coordinator*  
**Patricia Hickey**  
*Resource Conservationist*  
**Judy Osiecki**  
*Bookkeeping*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**John Black**  
**Bud Chenoweth**  
**Joe Dutton**  
**Barry Fisher**  
**Don Peterson**

**Associate Directors**

**Michael Murphy**  
**Diane Nissen**  
**Leandra Swent**

**THE NRCS STAFF**

**Charlette Epifanio**  
*District Conservationist*  
  
**Carol Mandel**  
*(Ukiah office)*  
*Soil Conservationist*  
  
**Chester Gin**  
*Soil Conservation Tech*  
  
**Jessica Sternfels**  
*Soil Conservationist*  
  
**Chris Delaney**  
*Agricultural Engineer*  
  
**Brent Schumacher**  
*Agricultural Engineer*  
  
**Kristan Flynn**  
*Range Management Specialist*

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