

STEWARDS OF THE LAND

NEWSLETTER OF GOLD RIDGE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SUMMER 2007

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

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

Watershed Planning in Salmon Creek a Priority for Resource Agencies



The Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD) recently received funding from the State Water Resources Control Board to develop a watershed management plan for the Salmon Creek Watershed. The objective of this plan is to promote voluntary management and restoration in Salmon Creek. This will be accomplished by having a landowner driven plan that will include data for physical, hydrologic, and biological features of the watershed while also providing a wide range of practical management strategies to maintain or improve the health of the watershed. The RCD would like your input and participation on writing a plan that will define the vision and goals of the Salmon Creek Watershed. Community involvement is of utmost importance to the success of this project.

For more information, please contact Lisa Hulette, Gold Ridge RCD Executive Director at (707) 874-2907 or goldrdge@sonic.net

Salmon Creek Watershed Management Plan Project Goals

- * Develop a plan for landowners to guide our mutual efforts to improve water quality in Salmon Creek;
- * Show public agencies that improved water quality through voluntary efforts is possible;
- * Track current water quality monitoring *and* the success of restoration projects through time, and
- * Write a plan using input from landowner workgroups.

Yea, foolish mortals, Noah's flood is not yet subsided; two thirds of the fair world it yet covers— Herman Melville

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Gold Ridge RCD Awarded \$1.7 Million in Grant Funding

The Gold Ridge RCD was recently awarded a Rangeland Water Quality Grant and a Sediment Reduction grant. Both grants aim to improve water quality in the Estero Americano watershed.

The specific goals of the Rangeland Grant are: 1) to assist dairy and livestock operators in the Estero Americano Watershed reach full compliance with current and future water quality standards, 2) to reduce nutrient pollution and sediment from entering the estuary and its tributaries, and 3) to enhance forage productivity and the economic viability of agriculture in the watershed.

The project will assist dairy and livestock operators in the Estero Americano Watershed to develop conservation ranch plans and will fund infrastructure improvements to enhance pasture management and to enhance water quality protection. During the planning process, operators will work with a conservation planner to identify best management practices and needed infrastructure improvements such as off-channel water development, cross-fencing, animal walkways, streambank stabilization and riparian pasture development that will result in improved water quality conditions in the watershed. The project will also fund a watershed water quality monitoring program.

The Sediment Grant also addresses Estero Americano water quality concerns. The goal of the Sediment Grant is to reduce sediment loadings from upland sources in the watershed. The project will reduce sediment loadings to the estuary and its tributaries through restoration and/or mitigation of actively eroding drainage gullies located along the estuary or one of its major tributaries. Priority gully restoration/mitigation sites will be selected based on the likelihood of sediment delivery to the estuary. A careful assessment of soils, slope, vegetation, and hydrologic connectivity above and below selected sites will be used to determine potential sediment delivery. Priority sites will be limited to erosion problems that are management induced, and have the highest mitigation potential. A ranch road erosion assessment will also be conducted to estimate sediment loadings from these sources and to identify needed road improvements in the watershed.

If you live in the Estero Americano watershed and are interested in participating in either of our new grants, please contact us at 707-874-2907.



All program participants will be encouraged to apply for NRCS, EQIP funding in order to provide cost-share for projects funded under this program. Livestock operators with EQIP contracts will receive conservation planning assistance through the NRCS, Petaluma Field Office. Please call (707) 794-1242 x 3 for more information.

WEED MANAGEMENT AREA AND GOLD RIDGE RCD FOCUS ON GORSE REMOVAL

What is a weed management area? Weed Management Areas (WMAs) are local organizations that bring together landowners and land managers to coordinate invasive weed control efforts. WMAs are unique because they attempt to address agricultural and wildland weeds under one local umbrella of organization. WMAs have printed weed I.D./control brochures, organized weed education events, written and obtained grants, coordinated demonstration plots, and instituted joint eradication, mapping, outreach, and other effective weed management projects.

Marin-Sonoma Weed Management Area: Our local Marin-Sonoma Weed Management area is based out of the Marin County Ag Commissioner's office in Novato. Members keep an eye out for early signs of invading species and keep each other informed about new weed related research.

What is Gorse and Why is it a Problem?

Gorse is a weed of concern in Marin and Sonoma Counties. It is a spiny evergreen shrub with bright yellow pea-like flowers. In California, it typically grows 3-6 feet tall and is common on infertile soils and disturbed areas, especially in old fields and over-grazed pastures. It also has the ability to penetrate undisturbed sites in open areas. Gorse looks similar to Scotch broom, but the spines are a sure give away. Gorse grows outward from the center, forming very dense stands and obstructs wildlife movement. Plant oils and concentrated dead material at the center of the plant make gorse highly flammable. Its seeds are known to be viable for up to 30 years (some have suggested that gorse seed is viable up to 100 years) and the vegetation can re-sprout if damaged.

For more information contact: Laurel Thomassin at the Marin County Ag Commissioner's office at 415-499-6700.

Gorse (*Ulex europeaus*) is becoming a common part of the landscape in western Sonoma County. As described in the previous paragraph, gorse is a threat to our beautiful coastal landscape. Gorse forms flammable, thorny, impenetrable stands, sometimes covering many acres. It is threat to our biodiversity and local agricultural livelihood.

There is not a lot of information non the most effective way to remove gorse. This winter the Gold Ridge RCD developed a small project to test some methods of removal to see how effective and cost efficient it can be in our area. Gold Ridge RCD partnered with Doug Gore of Dragonfly Stream Enhancement and the Bodega Volunteer Fire Department, using a method of first excavating, and then burning gorse on a ranch property in the Estero Americano Watershed . As of this month, the removal looks successful. No sprouts or seedlings were detected at any of the sites. We are expecting, however, that after a few rains the seeds in the soil will germinate and we will need to continue the excavating/burning process.



Gorse eradication, with the help of the Bodega Volunteer Fire Department and local landowners, in the Estero Americano Watershed .



Sediment Reduction in the Green Valley Creek Watershed

Excess sediment in waterways from erosion and road runoff is a limiting factor for spawning and rearing steelhead trout and coho salmon. To address this problem, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is funding sediment reduction efforts in watersheds that contain habitat for these salmonid species. The DFG has recently awarded the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD) \$69,000 in grant funding to assess rural roads in the Green Valley Creek Watershed. Green Valley Creek is one of only five remaining streams in the Russian River Watershed where wild populations of coho salmon are known to exist. Sediment from roads can result in reduced growth and spawning success, increased mortality, and the elimination of important winter refuge.

On behalf of the RCD, Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) will conduct a road and sediment source survey this fall. Rural roads that are determined by PWA to produce large amounts of sediment will be considered high priority sites for future upgrade and mitigation work. Once these sites have been identified, the RCD will pursue additional funding to complete this work, which may include culvert replacement, outslopping of roads, and ditch relief culverts. The RCD and PWA will be holding two informational public meetings prior to the start of the roads survey.

The Sonoma County Water Agency has provided additional funding for these educational workshops as part of its efforts in supporting coho salmon recovery in the Green Valley Creek Watershed. The first meeting will be held August 8, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:00pm. The second will be held in October 2007 just before PWA begins surveying. Post cards will be sent to landowners and watershed residents closer to the date of the workshop. To sign up to have your road surveyed or for more information please contact Brittany Heck at (707)874-2907 or rcdasst@sonic.net



Undersized culvert has plugged and is now flooding the road and parking lot.



PRE- Treatment



Undersized culvert was removed. The proper culvert was then installed and set at grade. The flared outlets will prevent the culvert from plugging.



POST - Treatment

CONTACT INFORMATION

Gold Ridge RCD

PO Box 1064
Phone: 707-874-2907
Fax: 707-874-9607
Email: goldrdge@sonic.net



RCD Website:
www.goldridgercd.org

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.3

Gold Ridge RCD Hires New Range Manager

Devii Rao (right) recently graduated from UC Berkeley with a M.S. in Range Management. She received her B.A. in Environmental Studies with a minor in Economics from UC Santa Cruz.



Devii has spent the last 10 years working on a variety of projects ranging from grassland ecology to habitat restoration. She is excited to be employed at Gold Ridge RCD where she can work toward her dual goals of maintaining biodiversity and enhancing the viability of local agriculture. Devii will be working with Lisa Bush, California Certified Rangeland Manager (left), on projects for the RCD .

CHECK OUT THE NEW GOLD RIDGE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT WEBSITE AT WWW.GOLDRIDGERCD.ORG.

THERE ARE CURRENT GOLD RIDGE RCD PROGRAM INFORMATION, UPCOMING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES, AND WATERSHED DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE.

WE VALUE YOUR INPUT AND COMMENTS.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

RCD Board of Directors Meetings

The third Thursday of every month, 7pm – 9pm at the RCD Office.

Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District Will Be Closed!

From June 27th to July 6th the RCD will be closed because we are relocating our office to 14775 Third Street in Occidental.



Green Valley Roads Public Workshop

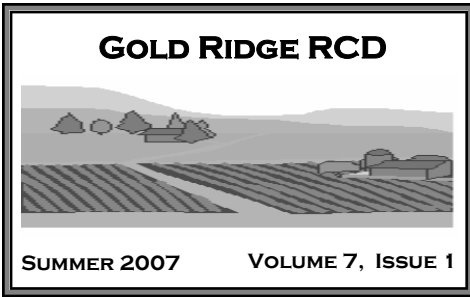
Gold Ridge RCD and Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) will be hosting a public meeting on **August 8th**. We hope all interested residents will attend to learn why a roads assessment is important, how the road survey will occur, who is eligible, and what will happen after the survey is completed. We will post a flyer on our website with more information www.goldridgercd.org.

Forest Stewardship Workshops

Planned for September 29 in the Mark West Creek Watershed, and October 13th in the Occidental area. Workshop topics will include:

- Erosion control (why repairing roads and stream crossings is important to healthy watersheds and fisheries)
- ABCs of fire safety and fuels management
- Managing Sudden Oak Death

Contact the Brittany Heck, Project Coordinator at the Gold Ridge RCD at (707) 874-2907 or rcdasst@sonic.net for more information.



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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 healthy 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
Executive Director
Patricia Hickey
Resource Conservationist
Brittany Heck
Project Coordinator
Devii Rao
Range Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Black
Bud Chenoweth
Joe Dutton
Barry Fisher
Don Peterson

Associate Directors
Diane Nissen

THE NRCS STAFF

Charlette Epifanio
District Conservationist

Eric Kennedy
Soil Conservationist (Russian River)

Chester Gin
Soil Conservation Tech

Jessica Sternfels
Soil Conservationist

Liz Hilkert
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.