



The Napa County RCD and USDA-NRCS

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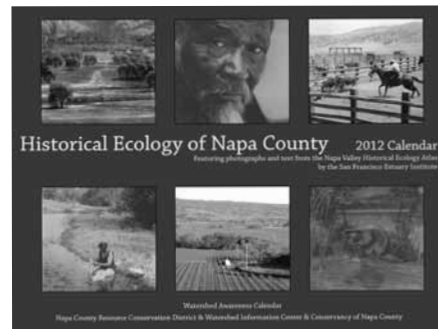
General questions email staff@naparcd.org

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Newsletter Editors: Mary Alice Graff & Kathleen Edson

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Watershed News & Events

Coming in mid-November.....



The Historical Ecology of Napa County
2012 Watershed Awareness Calendar!

Coming to terms with the sediment TMDL

A workshop to navigate vineyard owners and operators through requirements and policies that result from the sediment TMDL.

Coming in February.
Look for more information on the RCD's website soon!

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Applications due by December 16, 2011






FALL

2011

NAPA COUNTY CONSERVATION NEWS

A Quarterly Publication by the Napa County Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Huichica Creek Vineyard: "A Tale of Two Vintages"

Dave Steiner, Senior Soil Conservationist

It will surprise few that the chill of the last few years' recession has seeped into nearly every corner of the American society and economy. As both local government agencies and the fine wine business have felt the pinch, Huichica Creek Vineyard, the Napa RCD's sustainable agriculture demonstration, has found itself in uncomfortably tight straits. While in recent years, "sustainability" has become increasingly amorphous,



Pinot noir grapes from the Huichica Creek Vineyard.

in some cases a meaningless buzz-word, it is clear that the concept must include sometimes harsh fiscal realities. Reduced and discounted wine sales, backlogged inventories and swelling "receivables" quickly found their way to the grape market, where prices that seemed fat

and secure in 2008 had leaned out considerably by 2010.

Nowhere in the continuum of fine wines, and the grapes from which they're made, were these painful phenomena more acutely felt than with Pinot Noir, which had been over-planted and frequently over-priced in the euphoric surge of demand for Pinot left in the wake of the movie "Sideways."

In the waning summer of 2010 the RCD was faced with the challenge of finding a way to turn our Pinot Noir, comprising 6 of our total of 14 acres of vines, into cash to sustain the project. But there are no challenges, only opportunities, right? (Riiiiight!) Our existing sales contract was intact, on paper, but as we were sitting on tens of thousands of dollars of unpaid receivables from the 2009 crop, we were somewhat reluctant to send good money (or grapes) after bad.

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Talkin' Trash!

Stephanie Turnipseed, Education Coordinator

September 17th, 2011 was the 27th Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day, the statewide effort coordinated by the California Coastal Commission to clean trash and debris from California's coast, bays, creeks, rivers, and lakes. Over 63,000 volunteers across the state of California combed 800 beach and inland locations and gathered over 848,637 pounds (424 tons) of trash statewide!

Here in Napa County, 581 volunteers removed 7,850 pounds (3.9 tons) of trash and 3,076 pounds (1.5 tons) of recyclables from the Napa River, Lake Berryessa, American Canyon, and Napa, Salvador, Redwood and Pickle Creek sites.



Cleanup volunteers at Lake Berryessa.

In addition to the hundreds of volunteers that participated in this year's cleanup, several organizations, businesses and government agencies donated time, money, and supplies to the cleanup. The event was made possible through funding from the Napa County Stormwater Management Program. NCSWMP is a program coordinated and administered by the Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and includes the following member agencies: City of American Canyon, City of Calistoga, City of Napa, City of St. Helena, Town of

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Napa River Fish Barrier Plan

Jonathan Koehler, Senior Biologist and Paul Blank, Hydrologist

RCD recently completed the Napa River Fish Barrier Plan, a project that began in 2009 and was funded by a grant from California State Coastal Conservancy. The project included detailed assessment and prioritization of 21 fish-passage barriers in the Napa River watershed and recommendations for improvement.

Fish-passage barriers on the Napa River and its tributaries include road crossings (culverts, fords, concrete bridge aprons) as well as dams, weirs, and other water diversion structures. These barriers hinder the upstream migration of steelhead and salmon, blocking or limiting access to miles of potential spawning habitat. The barriers also impede the movement of rearing juveniles to find cooler, cleaner pools for feeding or to escape predation.

In some cases, the in-stream structures are defunct relics of the past and just need to be removed. At other sites, road culverts may be undersized or should be replaced for flood or erosion control purposes as well as fish passage. Some sites just need minor upgrades to allow fish to swim past them.

The project identified 11 high-priority sites that if repaired could improve access to approximately 33 miles of high-quality steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. RCD is now pursuing funding opportunities to address these barriers.

The Napa River Fish Barrier Plan is available at <http://www.naparcd.org>. For more information on Napa River fish passage issues, contact Jonathan Koehler or Paul Blank.



Calistoga foot path on the Napa River.



Do you want to receive your Napa RCD newsletter via e-mail? If you are interested in receiving an e-mail newsletter instead of a printed copy, e-mail steph@naparcd.org.



Talkin' Trash! (continued from page 1)

Yountville, and Napa County.

Napa Recycling and Waste Services, Upper Valley Disposal and Recycling, and Recology hauled away trash and recyclables collected at the sites. The cleanup supplies were donated by the California Coastal Commission. Trader Joe's and Whole Foods both donated delicious snacks and coffee for the hard-working cleanup volunteers.

Many groups came out to lend a hand this year including the environmental clubs from New Tech and Vintage High Schools, Napa Valley CanDo, several church groups and local Boy Scout troops. One of the Boy Scout troops was Troop 66 out of Davis, formerly led by NRCS employee Carolyn Jones' recently deceased father, Scoutmaster John W. Jones. He would have been very proud of them and all of the other participants!

To see the names of the individuals who generously volunteered their time as site captains for each of the twelve local cleanup locations as well as the individual cleanup site results, visit www.naparcd.org.

Thanks to everyone who volunteered this year! Mark your calendars now for Creek to Bay Cleanup Day 2012, which will be held on Saturday, September 15!

New Streamflow Monitoring Stations on Napa River Tributaries

RCD has been awarded a grant from the California Department of Fish and Game Fisheries Restoration Grant Program to establish streamflow monitoring stations on three Napa River tributaries: Dry, Milliken, and Ritchey Creeks. The goal of the project is to provide information that will maintain instream flows to protect steelhead and salmon populations downstream of water diversions by helping to ensure that sufficient bypass flows are maintained to enhance natural stream and estuarine function in the Napa River watershed. RCD has begun coordinating the work and plans to install the monitoring stations in the fall. For more information regarding streamflow monitoring at the RCD, please contact Paul Blank at 252-4188 x112 or paul@naparcd.org.

Swearing In and Hiring On - New Faces at the RCD

Kathleen Edson, District Administrator

The RCD is excited about two new additions, one to the board and one joining staff. Randy Heinzen was recently sworn in as Board Director after serving as an Associate Director for three years. Randy has farmed here in Napa Valley since 2003 and is currently the Vineyard Manager for Beckstoffer Vineyards. He has been involved in a number of RCD programs including Napa Sustainable Winegrowing Group, Carneros Creek Stewardship, Napa Green Land – Fish Friendly Farming, etc. He also serves on committees of the Napa County Farm Bureau and Napa Valley Grapegrowers.



RCD Board Director Randy Heinzen.

Bill Birmingham has been hired to fill the new position of Conservation Project Manager. Bill has a bachelor's of Science degree in Natural Resources Planning and Interpretation with minors in Botany and Soils Science from Humboldt State University. Before becoming a staff member with the Napa RCD, Bill had worked for Pacific Watershed Associates, a watershed consulting firm, for 10 years as a project manager, working with various landowners and agencies throughout central and northern California to identify and treat various anthropogenic sediment sources and hillslope instability issues. Bill had also spent seven years as a wildland firefighter with the USFS, NPS, and BLM, working to both suppress wildfires and implement/monitor management ignited prescribed fires throughout the western United States. Bill's primary responsibilities with the Napa RCD will be to manage and oversee restoration projects, including but not limited to: fish barrier removal projects, rural road improvement projects, and stream restoration projects.



RCD Conservation Project Manager Bill Birmingham in the field.



Napa County Resource Conservation District
a local non-regulatory agency whose mission is to promote responsible watershed management through voluntary community stewardship and technical assistance.

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
a federal agency that provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. The NRCS assists the RCD in carrying out their conservation programs.

Equal Opportunity Providers and Employers

To reach any of the staff below call 252-4188 and dial their extension.

RCD Staff

Paul Blank, x 112 <i>Hydrologist</i>	Jonathan Koehler x 109 <i>Senior Biologist</i>
Kathleen Edson, x 108 <i>District Administrator</i>	Anna Mattinson, x 100 <i>Bookkeeper</i>
Steph Turnipseed, x 111 <i>Education Coordinator</i>	Leigh Sharp, x 110 <i>District Manager</i>
Frances Knapczyk, x 116 <i>Education Coordinator</i>	Dave Steiner, x 107 <i>Senior Soil Conservationist</i>

Bill Birmingham, x 106
Conservation Project Manager

USDA-NRCS Staff

Rita Steiner, x 101 <i>District Conservationist</i>	Kelly Gin, x 104 <i>Soil Conservationist</i>
Chip Bouril, x 102 <i>Soil Conservationist</i>	Carolyn Jones, x 103 <i>Agricultural Engineer</i>

RCD Board of Directors Associate Directors

Clinton Pridmore, <i>President</i>	Myrna Abramowicz
Mitchell Klug, <i>Vice President</i>	Zach Berkowitz
Al Buckland	Joan Bennett
Randy Heinzen	Margaret Woodbury
Rainer Hoenicke	Dennis Bowker
Beth Painter	Bennie Troxel
Charles Slutzkin	Gretchen McCann
	Catherine Linden

The Napa County RCD Board of Directors meets on the second Thursday of each month from 8:00 to 10:00 am at the RCD office

Huichica Creek Vineyard: “A Tale of Two Vintages”

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The spot market for Pinot Noir grapes was virtually non-existent, though we could have moved them—for a fraction of their value. Instead we opted to have our grapes “custom crushed”, or turned into wine (at least a semi-perishable commodity) that we would then sell on the bulk market. This option was not necessarily bold or desperate—grape growers occasionally take this gamble with extra fruit, especially in a down market—it but represented a step into *terra incognita* for the RCD.

So by the end of 2010 we were the proud, if not completely comfortable, owners of 33 barrels of very fine Carneros Pinot Noir. This is where the fun began. A group of ambitious consumers, including a number of RCD staff, Directors, and friends, bought 12 barrels from RCD, paid the taxes and removed it from the winery’s bond. Owing to the hospitality of Paul and Vicky Bartelt, who had space to store the barrels, we were able to pool our resources to take care of the wine and bottle it at their facility. The bottling turned out to be a lot of work and a lot of fun for the group. The wine is wonderful, and the buyers of each barrel will have enough to entertain many dinner parties during the estimated 4-5 years the wine will need to reach its peak of maturity. The District also benefited from donations of 5 cases of wine that we can use to promote the vineyard project, market the grapes, and show appreciation to supporters of our programs. (We sold the remaining 21 barrels to a “negotiant” winery buyer, in the spring of 2011.)



As much fun as we had with the 2010, the Board felt that the extra work involved for RCD staff was an untenable expense and distraction. We knew we had to do something different in 2011. Proving that an “ill wind blows somebody good”, 2011’s cool, wet spring generated the second short crop in a row. Aided somewhat by marginally improving market demand, the reduced supply drained off the bulk and bottled wine inventories significantly. Thanks to a tip from Associate Director Cathy Linden, we made contact with sparkling wine producer Domaine Carneros, who had come up short of Pinot at the end of their crush. (Grapes for sparkling wine are harvested at a much lower sugar or Brix level than still wine requires—19-20%, compared to 25-26%.) As Huichica is in one of the coolest sites in the Carneros region, ours was the only Pinot in captivity that wasn’t too ripe for sparkling wine, at the time. Virtually in a heartbeat—two days elapsed between first contact and harvest—the 2011 Huichica Creek Pinot was gone, and we didn’t have to worry about it. The nasty fall weather since then, during which we would have been sweating and losing fruit to fungal damage, waiting for the elusive objective and subjective ripeness parameters that would satisfy the winery, has proven the wisdom (or luck!) of our decision. Tune in next year...



We Took the Roads Less Traveled...And Reduced Their Impact on Our Watershed!

Frances Knapczyk, Education Coordinator

Roads are more than a way to get from one place to another, they are also physical features of the watershed that alter the flow of water across the landscape. Accordingly, the development of road systems can result in increased erosion and sediment delivery to stream systems and in turn, degraded aquatic habitat. In the Napa River watershed, the State Water Board estimates that up to half of all sediment delivered to the River comes from road-related erosion.

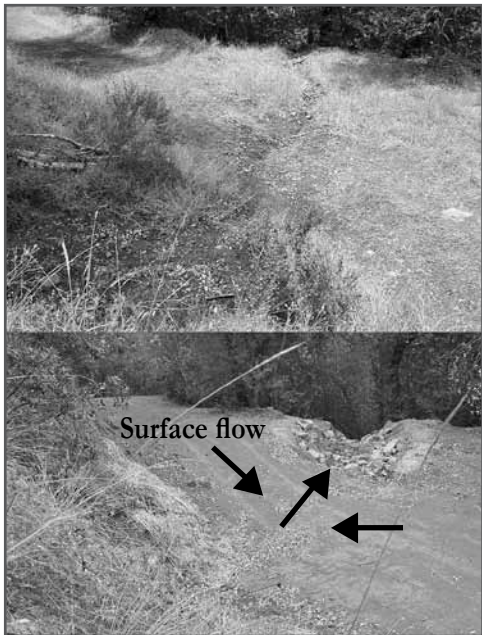
This summer the RCD collaborated with Pacific Watershed Associates, Charles Hope Construction, and David Garden to reduce the amount of road-related sediment delivery to

Heath Creek, a tributary of Sulphur Creek near St. Helena. Over 6,000 cubic yards of sediment (enough to bury almost four acres one foot deep) was prevented from entering Heath Creek by treating 7 miles of roads through various storm-proofing techniques. Heath Creek is an important subwatershed of the Napa River watershed because it supports steelhead and provides year round flows to the Napa river system. This water quality improvement project was funded by the California Department of Fish and Game, US Environmental Protection Agency, and the Napa County Measure A Fund.

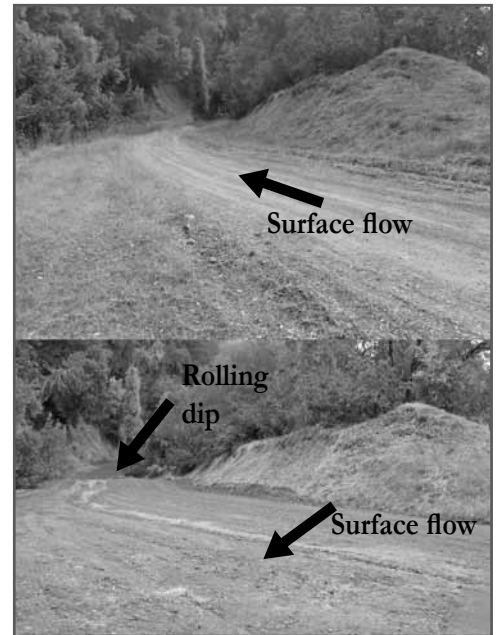
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We Took the Roads Less Traveled....And Reduced Their Impact on Our Watershed!

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Before and after pair at left: While small ephemeral streams crossing roads may not inhibit your ability to access an area, they can often be significant sources of sediment to the stream system. To prevent this stream from eroding through the road surface, the outboard road fill was armored with rock. The road surface was dipped and outsloped to direct the stream flow into the armor, and prevent the flows from diverting down the road surface.



Before and after pair above: Long stretches of road can concentrate stormwater, and therefore, increase its ability to create rills and gullies and transport fine sediments to streams. We outsloped roadbeds and installed rolling dips to disperse road runoff as frequently as possible. Dispersing road runoff not only improves water quality, it reduces annual maintenance costs associated with fixing rills and gullies. Roads that are used year round should be surfaced with rock to reduce erosion and improve drivability.



Before and after pair at left: Culverts serve an important purpose: they allow creeks to flow beneath roads while allowing access to the property. However, if culverts are installed improperly or are too small to convey stream flows, they can plug and become susceptible to washing out the stream crossing. This not only delivers sediments directly to the stream system but it also prevents access. In the photos above, we replaced an undersized culvert that was installed too shallow relative to the stream channel grade with a culvert that was sized for a 100 year storm. The culvert was

also installed in-line and at-grade with the natural stream channel. A trash rack was installed above the culvert inlet to prevent it from plugging.



Don't forget to become a friend of the Napa RCD on Facebook! Keep up with our latest news and activities and find ways to get involved in your watershed!