

Community Group Matures in Marsh Creek Watershed

The Friends of Marsh Creek Watershed group has taken firm root in East Contra Costa County. This year the group has come into its own, and has been recognized as an organization that works collaboratively for the best interests of the watershed and the community.

The group was founded four years ago by the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) and the Natural Heritage Institute (NHI) with funding from two successive CALFED grants, administered by the State Coastal Conservancy and the Department of Water Resources respectively. Interested Brentwood and Oakley residents were introduced to the Marsh Creek Watershed through educational presentations, hikes, creek walks, creek cleanups and by taking part in the Contra Costa County watershed bioassessment programs. Over time the group welcomed a stream of new people to monthly meetings, selected issues and projects on which to focus, hired a part-time coordinator, and began to participate in city planning meetings when there was an opportunity to support creek restoration or watershed protection.

Over the past year, the energy and enthusiasm in the group remained high and new people continued to participate as the group developed. As members of the group took on leadership roles, they continue to look to the CCRCD and NHI for resources and education, but members now assume responsibility themselves for carrying out their goals and establishing the groups viability into the future. Its been wonderful to see the project bear fruit and the group continue to grow and mature.

This past year the Friends of Marsh Creek Watershed group has:

- Been chosen to participate on the Public Advisory Committee for implementation of the East Contra Costa Habitat Conservation Plan.
- Been invited by the Army Corps of Engineers to participate in stakeholder meetings to plan the cleanup of the Mt. Diablo Mercury Mine.
- Developed their own action plan with prioritized goals for watershed protection and restoration.
- Involved over 150 residents in the creation of a Native Plant Demonstration Area along Marsh Creek.
- Led 22 creek walks for 120 local residents to monitor the spawning salmon population in Marsh Creek.

The investment of CCRCD resources to launch this group and provide guidance for initial development has paid off in the blossoming of an energetic and enthusiastic, community-based organization committed to caring for their local watershed.

- Worked with the Cities of Oakley and Brentwood to support project plans and grant applications that will result in creek restoration.
- Established an organizational structure that will allow them to apply for 501-C-3 non-profit status.
- Conducted a successful search to find a fiscal sponsor for the group until non-profit status is obtained.
- Developed an independent website (www.fomcw.org) and an e-mail list of over 200 residents interested in watershed protection.
- Conducted outreach and education at numerous community events.



Friends of Marsh Creek Watershed involves scout troops in restoring native plants along Marsh Creek. (L to R) Brandon Wortman, Matt and Kevin Madsen, and Dave Wortman from Cub Scout Pack 155 help create a Native Plant Demonstration Area in Brentwood.