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**Home & Garden**

**Wednesday, May 16, 2007**

**Water is life, and the Cotati Creek Critters are ensuring high water quality**

By Jenny Blaker

As the New Year approaches, it's time to think about New Year resolutions. Why not decide to join a Cotati Creek Critters restoration workday? There are so many good reasons to join up!

Cotati Creek Critters get together on the second Saturday and the last Sunday of the month to plant native trees and shrubs along the Laguna de Santa Rosa channel that runs through Cotati, from Ladybug Park, along the back of Putnam Park, to E. Cotati Avenue and beyond. The work they do directly impacts water quality, creates wildlife habitat, helps prevent soil erosion and maintain flood control, beautifies the neighborhood, builds a sense of community, and even helps combat greenhouse gases.

Water is essential for life. About 70 percent of the human body is made up of water. We tend to take water for granted except in times of drought or flood, but water is a finite resource, part of a vast recycling system, from rivers and lakes and the ocean to clouds to rain and back.

All water on the planet is all the water there ever has been or ever will be. Most of it is locked up in glaciers, at the poles, or in the oceans. At any given time, only a tiny fraction of the world's water is fresh water available for our use. The water in the creeks of Cotati and Rohnert Park flows into the 14-mile Laguna de Santa Rosa to enter the Russian River north of Forestville, or it seeps into the underground supply. In the Cotati/Rohnert Park area our water supply comes either from the Russian River or from groundwater.

So, as residents of the Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed - that is, the 250 square mile land area that drains to the Laguna waterway - we should all be concerned about what goes into the creeks. There is a saying, "We all live downstream," which implies that we are all at the receiving end of each other's pollution.

While that's as true here in Cotati and Rohnert Park as anywhere else, we also live literally upstream, and have a responsibility for what lies downstream of us. As well as planting trees, the Cotati Creek Critters lead trash cleanups, and try to raise awareness that everything we do in this area has an impact downstream.

The roots of the trees, and also the sedges and rushes that we plant, will help to stabilize creek banks and prevent soil erosion, reducing sedimentation downstream. Sediment, the result of soil erosion, is considered a serious pollutant in the waterways.

Salmon and steelhead need clean water in which to spawn. There are no salmon in the main Laguna channel at its southernmost extremity in Cotati, but there are further downstream in the Laguna and in other local creeks. In addition sediment reduces flood control capacity. The Laguna acts as a flood water reservoir during winter rains, but as the Laguna becomes choked with sediment, this function is compromised, so it is in all our interests to prevent soil running off into the creeks.

Trees grown on the banks of the creek will eventually create a shady canopy, helping to keep the water cool. This is important for aquatic life including fish downstream in the main Laguna channel. This canopy will eventually help to maintain flood control, too, by shading out the vegetation which is currently growing in many of the creek beds, impeding the flow of water.

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Index	Last	Trade	Change
NASDAQ	2547.42	22.13	▲
SP 500	1514.14	12.95	▲
Russ 2000	820.20	6.02	▲
AMEX	2259.73	9.34	▲
NYSE	9825.43	60.70	▲
30 YR BOND	48.74	-0.10	▼

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With your help the Laguna de Santa Rosa will be preserved for future generations of wildlife and humans.

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