



Volunteers at the First Saturday Cleanup along the Prince Memorial Greenway.

## Creek Stewardship Program Accomplishments for 2017

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### About the Creek Stewardship Program

The Creek Stewardship Program (CSP) is a 17 year partnership of the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) and the City of Santa Rosa (City) that helps the public learn about the benefits of creeks and encourages their assistance to protect water quality and wildlife habitat, improve the creek trail system, and enhance public safety along more than 100 miles of creeks within the City's Urban Growth Boundary.

### 2017 Program Accomplishments

- Hosted 347 community creek presentations and activities, 281 to school and youth groups.
- Engaged 10,423 residents, including 8,779 youth, in educational and stewardship activities.
- Provided 9,520 hours of creek education and supported 7,078 community service hours by volunteers.

### Creek Cleanups

Creeks and the creek trail system were cleaned, maintained, and enhanced by Supervised Adult Crews (SAC) from the County Probation Department, the Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps (SCYEC), City and SCWA staff, and community volunteers. During 2017:

- In 70 workdays, SAC picked up 710 yards<sup>3</sup> of trash and maintained trails and vegetation.
- In 54 workdays, SCYEC cleaned up 106 yards<sup>3</sup> of trash, removed 93 yards<sup>3</sup> of vegetation encroaching upon creek trails, and enhanced 76 access points to the trail system.
- Storm Water and Creeks staff responded to 51 MySantaRosa citizen reports regarding trash in creeks and removed 77 yards<sup>3</sup> of trash during 57 field outings.
- Community volunteers gathered 130 yards<sup>3</sup> of trash during 111 cleanups of creeks and school campuses.

In total, 1,023 yards<sup>3</sup> of trash was removed from waterways. A majority of the trash is attributable to the 129 active and 292 abandoned homeless camps that were cleaned with assistance from Police and Catholic Charities.

### Partners and Activities

The Program expanded its network of community partners who participate in creek education, restoration and monitoring activities, and volunteer creek cleanups. This year, the Program supported 98 partnerships with 51 community and business groups and 47 school and youth groups. A core of dedicated Creek Stewards care for and report issues on their specific reaches of creek.



Envirichment, our environmental education consultant, coordinated most of the 281 presentations and activities offered to school and youth groups. Notably, Envirichment led the High School Bioassessment Program for Elsie Allen and Piner High Schools. 38 of the 111 volunteer cleanups were held on school campuses while the other 73 cleanups were on 17 different creeks. Cleanups occurred along the Prince Memorial Greenway at least twice per month. The Lower Colgan Creek Restoration served as the site for 2/3 of the CSP's 51 volunteer monitoring and restoration activities.

## Public Outreach

Educational outreach materials on storm water pollution prevention and creeks were distributed at events, made available at libraries and more than two dozen City facilities, and mailed out upon request. 5,000 copies of the new *Creek Trails of Santa Rosa Map and Guide* were distributed to residents. Public engagement with creeks was promoted by awarding Creek Steward volunteers with shirts, sending activity notifications to over 1,250 contacts through the City's GovDelivery email system, displaying colorful 'Ours to Protect' signs at 92% of creek crossings, and posting creek trailheads with both directional and educational signage covering appropriate trail use, watersheds, native plants, river otters, crawdad, and trash pollution.

## Creek Trails and Pollution Reduction

Along the creek trail system, the CSP managed vegetation with SAC and SCYEC crews to clear encroaching growth and reduce fire fuel loads. To mitigate for litter and pet waste, 80 trash bins and 33 pet waste bag dispensers have been installed. Creek Stewards refilled dispensers with 96,000 bags. Pollution prevention signage was posted to address problems of dumping, dog waste and dogs off leash, homeless camps, sharing the trail, littering, and vandalism of creek trees.

The CSP continued to install security fencing at chronic homeless camp areas under bridges and at storm drain outfalls to reduce the environmental impacts of trash and other wastes entering waterways. A report on the Special Trash Assessment was submitted to the Russian River Watershed Association as part of the regional effort to quantify and identify trash items and sources within the Russian River watershed. This information will help guide Santa Rosa's efforts to meet State requirements to reduce trash in waterways.

The Water and Police Departments developed an ESRI Collector App for Waterway Homeless Camps to track and communicate the progress in identifying, noticing, providing services, and cleaning up camps and other trash sites.

## Acknowledgements and Future Actions

In conclusion, the CSP sincerely appreciates the Sonoma County Water Agency and City of Santa Rosa for their dedication to care for creeks, our 98 community and youth partners, and every exceptional Creek Steward and volunteer, all of whom contribute to the cleanliness and health of our creeks, which are truly 'Ours to Protect'. Future Creek Stewardship Program actions to promote community engagement in learning about and caring for creeks include:

- Sustaining the CSP partnership of SCWA and the City.
- Translating the *Creek Trails of Santa Rosa Map and Guide* into Spanish.
- Increasing the number and usage of pet waste dispenser along creeks that are maintained by volunteers.
- Continuing the use of security fencing to reduce the use of creeks as campgrounds.
- Expanding the CSP outreach on the City's website and through social media to encourage more community involvement in the care of our creeks.

