



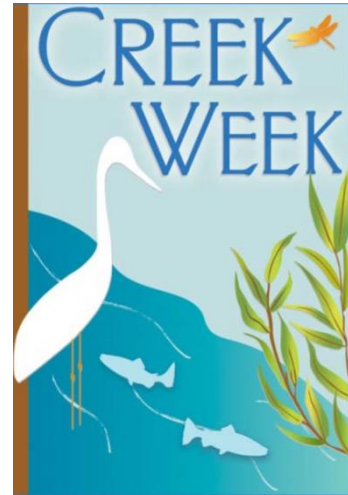
Russian River Watershed Association

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707)833-2553 • www.rrwatershed.org

RRWA Environmental Column – September 2014 September in the Russian River Watershed

Throughout the United States the week starting on the third Monday of September is recognized as National Pollution Prevention Week. Pollution prevention is reducing or eliminating waste at the source by modifying production processes, promoting the use of non-toxic or less-toxic substances, implementing conservation techniques, and re-using materials rather than putting them into the waste stream.

Throughout California, including the Russian River watershed, cities, counties and other stewardship organizations are recognizing the fourth week of September as Creek Week. This will be the Russian River Watershed's fifth annual Creek Week with events happening **September 20-28, 2014.**



Creek Week is a week-long celebration of our local creeks. This will be a time of fun, adventure, and taking care of the lands and waterways in our communities, with educational activities for everyone at local creeks and nature areas, as well as hands-on creek cleanups. The activities planned during this week-long celebration will draw communities together and bring us closer to the natural environments that support us.

There are over 150 creeks within the Russian River watershed that create a rich and diverse system which provide water supply, wildlife habitat, flood capacity, recreation, and aesthetic values to all who live in and visit them. Pollution, trash and debris damages the aesthetic and biological qualities of local waterways, impacting ongoing efforts to restore and enhance habitat for fish and wildlife. Over time the trash makes its way to the Pacific Ocean, where up to 80% of debris originates from land-based sources.

Russian River Watershed Creek Week 2014

You can learn about our local creeks and participate in creek related activities at the events listed below:

Saturday the 20th - Coastal Cleanup Day: Coastwalk sponsors the Sonoma County cleanup on over 15 beaches and 8 inland sites. Register today to pick your site by visiting <http://coastwalk.org/volunteer/coastal-cleanup-day/>

Saturday the 20th – Orr Creek Cleanup: Friends of Gibson Creek will be celebrating Coastal Cleanup Day from 9am-1 pm by removing trash from Orr Creek in Ukiah. Registration is at 9 am. Meet on the Orr Street bridge and bring a pair of work gloves. Wear sturdy closed-toe shoes. Lunch is provided. Youth will need their parent/guardian's signature to participate. Call 707-463-2721 for more information.



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Saturday the 20th – Foss Creek and Community Cleanup: Volunteer for the Foss Creek and Community cleanup event in Healdsburg. Sign-up and treats begin at 8:30 am behind Bear Republic Brewery at 345 Healdsburg Avenue. Prizes and free BBQ lunch will be provided for volunteers. Visit <http://www.cityofhealdsburg.org/> for more information.

Sunday the 21st - Taylor Mountain Hike: Enjoy a panoramic view of our creeks system on a guided hike at the new Taylor Mountain Regional Park. Learn more at www.srcity.org/creekweek.

Saturday, the 27th - Russian River Watershed Cleanup: This is a full morning cleanup campaign along 55 miles of the Russian River from Cloverdale to Duncan's Mill. Get involved by participating or contributing to this enormous effort. For more information, visit <http://www.russianrivercleanup.org>

All week in Santa Rosa: During Creek Week, unwind with the family on an evening walk with a local creek specialist along some of the 100 miles of Santa Rosa's creeks.

- Help kick off the week by participating in a special cleanup event at Doyle Park on September 20th.
- For hands-on exploration and activity, bring the kids and their boots down to Prince Memorial Greenway for Family Fun Day, 10am-2pm on September 27th. Learn about and explore the habitats of fish, turtles and insects living in Santa Rosa Creek. The educational activities don't end there; more activities and information for all ages will be available from 10am-2pm at Olive Park.
- Take a tour of the huge underground culvert that runs under Downtown Santa Rosa. Join LandPaths on the Santa Rosa Creek to explore and discover the exciting world of aquatic insects. Walk along the Prince Memorial Greenway and nearby downtown areas to see sculptures and murals and learn about the fish living in Santa Rosa Creek.

For the most up to date information on activities happening during Creek Week, check www.srcity.org/creekweek.

Plastic Bags and the Russian River Watershed

Plastic bags have become a source of pollution and are a commonly found during creek and coastal cleanups. Plastic bags make their way from local creeks and storm drains to the Russian River which flows to the Pacific Ocean. Plastic bags from our watershed are harmful to marine animals and birds which confuse plastic fragments for a source of food resulting in injury and death. Many California cities and counties have adopted or are currently in the process of adopting plastic bag ban ordinances.

Since December 10, 2012 in Fort Bragg, and since January 7, 2013 Ukiah and unincorporated Mendocino County have banned supermarkets and large drug stores from providing plastic carryout bags at the checkout stand and require a 10 cent paper bag charge. As of 2014, the ban extends to other retail stores.



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On February 19, 2014 the City and County members of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency (SCWMA) passed an ordinance establishing a waste reduction program for carryout bags and a related administrative penalties ordinance. These ordinances are intended to reduce litter, keep plastic bags out of local waterways, and encourage the use of reusable bags. Just in Sonoma County, it is estimated that 232 million plastic bags and 46 million paper bags are used each year. The Santa Rosa City Council adopted a bag ordinance in February 2014, similar to the County-wide SCWMA bag ordinance (plastic bag ban in all retail stores, minimum ten cent paper bag charge) that is effective September 1, 2014.

If you haven't made the switch to reusable shopping bags, now's your last chance. Beginning September 1st you'll be charged 10 cents per paper bag at grocery and retail stores throughout Sonoma County.

Some tips to help you to get in the habit of bringing your reusable bags include putting your bags where you will see them. Find reusable bags that you enjoy using. Carry them next to you in the passenger seat or hang them from a knob instead of in the trunk or backseat of your car. Check to make sure that you have your bags in your cart or basket before you go into a store. If you forget a bag, you can find reusable bags for sale in most stores. If you're only shopping for a few things, you can also avoid the charge by going bag-less. If you acquired plastic bags, be sure to reuse or recycle them. State law requires all supermarkets and large retailers with pharmacies to take back and recycle plastic grocery bags. You can drop-off clean plastic bags in store lobbies or at customer service centers.

Though Creek Week and Pollution Prevention Week will take place in September, everyone is encouraged to practice creek stewardship and pollution prevention year-round. Do your part locally by volunteering for cleanup events, reducing pollution, and by spreading the message to friends and family.

This article was authored by Lisa Steinman of Sonoma County Waste Management Agency on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (www.rrwatershed.org) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement.