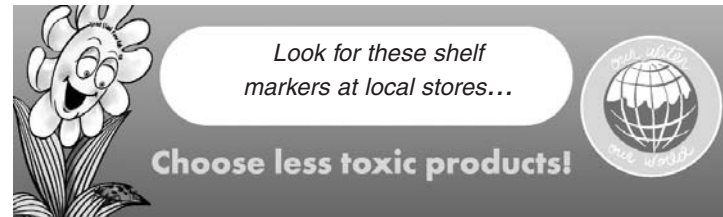


GARDENING WITH THE HEALTH OF THE ESTUARY IN-MIND JUST GOT EASIER

It's spring and your garden is calling out for attention. If you find yourself heading to the nursery or hardware store looking for a quick fix to problems like mildew, bugs or weeds - take a look at the less-toxic products that are available. Most everything we put in our gardens eventually interacts with the aquatic environment, so it is worth an extra minute to find an effective and environmentally-friendly product.

Commonly used pesticides, including diazinon and chlorpyrifos, are being detected in streams at levels that are toxic to wildlife at the base of the food chain. It is not surprising when you learn that each year California residents purchase more than one million pounds of pesticides. Water quality problems are occurring as a result of storm run-off and improper use and disposal of a variety of toxic garden chemicals.

Some local nurseries and stores are lending you a helping hand by labeling the most environmentally friendly products with friendly labels on the shelf. You



can also find free take-home information sheets that offer advice about the many approaches to reducing unwanted pests including ants, slugs, weeds, aphids and mildews. The following are participating businesses:

- Miner's Ace Hardware in Morro Bay, Los Osos, and Atascadero
- Farm Supply in San Luis Obispo, Arroyo Grande and Paso Robles
- Orchard Supply in Pismo Beach and Paso Robles
- Pacific Home Do-It in San Luis Obispo
- Cambria Nursery and Florist
- Nipomo Old Town Nursery

The MBNEP would like to thank all of the participating stores for their commitment to our local environment. For more information visit www.ourwaterourworld.org.



Marina Square
601 Embarcadero, Suite 11
Morro Bay, CA 93442
805.772.3834
www.mbnep.org



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A NATIONAL ESTUARY?

The Morro Bay Estuary was recognized by Congress as an 'estuary of national significance' in 1995, making it one of 28 members in the federal National Estuary Program (NEP). Our status as a National Estuary has been invaluable in our efforts to protect and restore the Estuary, but the title can also be a source of confusion. Many people assume that being a National Estuary must confer some special protections for the natural resources of the estuary. Unlike a National Park, or a National Marine Sanctuary, the NEP is entirely non-regulatory. In other words, there are no special laws or protections for National Estuaries beyond existing federal and state environmental laws.

A quick look at the significant progress that we have made in the Morro Bay watershed suggests that there are advantages to being a cooperative and collaborative group rather than a regulatory one. Environmental laws and their enforcement are critically important, but many of the environmental problems facing our estuary cannot be solved solely by enforcement and legal action. Some problems aren't covered by the law, and even when they are, damage is often done before regulations are enforced. The protection of our estuary depends on the proactive and cooperative efforts of local businesses, local governments, farmers and ranchers, everyday residents, fishermen, and other

FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR ESTUARY PROJECTS THROUGH THE MBNEP GRANT PROGRAM

If you or an organization that you are a part of would like to implement a project that will improve the health of the estuary, the MBNEP encourages you to explore applying for MBNEP grant program funds. Individuals, non-profit organizations, civic organizations, schools and universities, governments, businesses, neighborhood associations, trade organizations, and environmental groups are all eligible for funding.

The MBNEP has created two grant programs to help fund a variety of estuary-related projects and has awarded over \$1 million for local projects in the past five years.

Mini-grants offer funding in the amount of \$5,000 or less and can fund conservation and community

stakeholders that care deeply about the environment, but are often reluctant to work with regulatory agencies. Precisely because of our non-regulatory status, the MBNEP has been able to bring these local stakeholders together to assess, prioritize, and begin to solve the priority problems facing the estuary and watershed.

As part of the NEP, the MBNEP receives annual financial support from the Environmental Protection Agency that supports a small staff and funds some of our grant programs and public education efforts. This financial support provided the staff effort needed to work with the community to create a Conservation Plan for our estuary, and staff now oversees the implementation of that plan. Thanks to the many partners in our community, millions of dollars have been secured for watershed restoration projects, over 2800 acres of valuable habitat has been permanently protected, and more than one million dollars has been awarded in grants for local estuary and watershed projects.

As the MBNEP continues its work to restore and protect the Morro Bay estuary and watershed, the support and involvement of the entire community will remain an essential component of the program, and indeed, the reason for its success.

education projects. A few examples include class and youth group activities, native plant projects in local parks, and neighborhood water pollution education efforts. Conservation and restoration projects that require funding levels greater than \$5,000 can apply to the Implementation Grant program (education projects are not eligible for funding amounts greater than \$5,000). Potential grant projects include efforts to reduce stormwater pollution, control erosion, protect or restore sensitive habitats, enhance steelhead trout habitat and improve land management.

To learn more about eligible projects, review our Annual Report or CCMP Executive Summary, both are available on our website at www.mbnep.org. MBNEP staff are also available to discuss project ideas.

MBNEP PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: LOS PADRES CENTER OF THE CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS

The California Conservation Corps (CCC) is a department within the State of California resources agency that brings together youth and the environment to the benefit of both. The mission of the CCC is to engage young men and women in meaningful work, public service and educational opportunities that assist them in becoming more responsible citizens, while protecting and enhancing California's environment, human resources and communities. The Corps hires young people, ages 18 to 25, and employs them to work on resource-related projects. The CCC's work/learn approach increases employment opportunities for corpsmembers by developing their skills, furthering their education and instilling a solid work ethic. Partially patterned after the Civilian Conservation Corps, the modern CCC teaches a wide variety of job-readiness skills aimed at preparing corpsmembers for a lifetime of employment.

Locally, the Los Padres CCC camp was established in 1978 and is located at the National Guard's Camp San Luis Obispo facility. The residential program currently is home to 80 corpsmembers who work each day and attend classes in the evenings. In addition to local resource projects, the CCC responds statewide to natural disasters and emergencies including wildfires, floods, earthquakes and oil spills. On the weekends, corpsmembers can often be found volunteering their time and energy to local events and activities.

The CCC has been working in the Morro Bay watershed for over 20 years. Notable projects include:

- Elfin Forest boardwalk construction and restoration
- Chorro Flats construction assistance, restoration and fish habitat construction

NEW WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT THE ESTUARY AND THE WORK OF THE MBNEP

Check out these new ways to learn about the Morro Bay estuary and the work of the MBNEP:

- If you like to get your news online, the MBNEP encourages you to visit **our new website**. The brand new design showcases the beauty of the estuary and offers more complete information about the MBNEP.

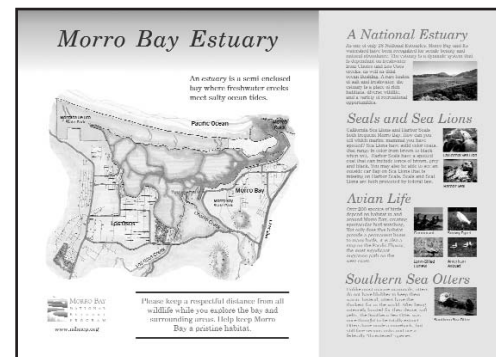
- Each year MBNEP staff summarize the past year's accomplishments in an **Annual Report**. The 2003-4 Fiscal Year Report is now available and full of information about successful restoration, outreach and monitoring efforts. Request a copy by calling our office at 805.772.3834, download a copy from our website, or pick up a free copy at the Estuary Nature Center.

- GPS survey of Morro Bay eelgrass beds
- Sweet Springs Nature Preserve bridge and boardwalk construction, restoration
- Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve riparian and perimeter fencing
- Walters Creek riparian habitat restoration
- Camp San Luis erosion control project
- SLO Co. Dept. of Agriculture exotic species removal
- Rancho El Chorro Environmental School trail construction and restoration

This is by no means a complete list. The ability of the CCC to successfully implement this wide variety of projects is completely due to the diverse experience and competence of its staff. With over 100 years of combined experience, the Crew Supervisors are the vital link between the energetic labor of its corpsmembers and the completion of project goals. With their years of experience, knowledge of resources and ability to teach young people, the staff truly enables the CCC to be the "labor force" for most of the groups dealing with natural resources within the Morro Bay Watershed. These Crew Supervisors include Victor Rocha, James Taylor, Mark Bailey, Kiva Vigil, Daniel Uribe, Richard Miller and formerly, Bobby Jo Close.

The CCC receives only 50% of their funding from the State. The balance of their budget comes from the work they perform. Without the continuing support and work from the area's agencies and groups, the CCC would cease to exist in SLO County. The interdependency of the CCC with the natural resource managers of the area has created a strong and effective team that works to protect the land and water resources of the Morro Bay Watershed.

- Next time you are in Morro Bay State Park, stop by the marina to see a **new interpretive sign**. This colorful piece introduces visitors to the estuary and encourages responsible wildlife viewing while boating and hiking.



A new full-color interpretive sign in the Morro Bay State Park Marina offers visitors an introduction to Morro Bay estuary.

THE MBNEP TAKES ON URBAN RUN-OFF WITH ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

Having clean water is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean water provides recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, drinking water and adds beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water and all of us have a role in keeping creeks, bays and oceans clean.

In recent years, major sources of water pollution like industrial wastes have been greatly reduced. Now, more than 60 percent of water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil, fertilizers from farms and gardens, and other dispersed sources. All these small drops add up to a big problem during rainstorms when chemicals are washed from the land into creeks.

Every landscape forms creeks and rivers to drain rain from land to ocean - this is called a watershed. When it rains, everything from pesticides, fertilizers, animal droppings, trash, food wastes, automotive by-products and other toxic substances that are part of the urban environment are washed into creeks, bays and the ocean. Storm water runoff that flows over streets, parking lots, construction sites and industrial facilities can carry these pollutants through the storm water drainage system directly into local bayous, channels and ditches.

VOLUNTEERING IS A GREAT WAY TO ENJOY THE ESTUARY THIS SPRING

Volunteering your time for estuary-related projects is one of the best ways to help ensure Morro Bay and its surrounding habitats will be around for the future enjoyment of people and wildlife alike. Now that winter has past, it is also a great way to get outdoors and enjoy the beauty of the bay. Here are a few ways to contribute to community efforts:

MBNEP Kids' Beach Cleanup Friday May 13th, 2005

Kid-friendly volunteers are needed to help the MBNEP host Central Valley students on a beach exploration field trip. A few hours of your time can create a lasting memory for these inland youth! Volunteers will be partnered with another adult and co-lead a group of ten children. Call Cheryl Lesinski at 805.772.3834.

Elfin Forest Work Parties 1st Saturday of every month

Join the local Small Wilderness Area Preserve (SWAP) chapter in clearing invasive plants from the Elfin Forest in Los Osos. This park offers beautiful views of the estuary. Bring along gloves and tools if you can or borrow SWAP's equipment. Call 805.528.0392 or visit their website (www.elfinforest.org) for more information.

While the MBNEP and our partners are busy with large scale estuary creek restoration and erosion control projects, one way individuals can help the estuary is to reduce their contribution to water pollution. This winter, the MBNEP ran a series of ads in local papers to increase awareness of how everyone's actions can reduce or contribute to water pollution in the Morro Bay Estuary and other waterways. If you would like to learn more about reducing urban run-off, visit our website at www.mbnep.org.



This winter, the MBNEP ran ads in local papers promoting easy ways to reduce urban run-off and water pollution.

Sweet Springs Preserve Work Parties 2nd Saturday of every month

Join other volunteers in caring for this special preserve. Work includes clearing debris and non-native plants and caring for newly planted oak trees. Bring some work gloves and perhaps your binoculars for birding after the work is done. Call John Perkins at 805.528.0540 or visit www.morrocoastaudubon.org for more information.

Morro Bay Volunteer Monitoring Program Various opportunities

The Volunteer Monitoring Program volunteers' work is an essential part of tracking the health of Morro Bay and its watershed creeks. Participate in stream profiling and see parts of the watershed that most people don't have access to while monitoring channel and bank erosion. Join other volunteers in netting and observing phytoplankton under the microscope to help the state track toxic algal blooms. Or take a stroll along the beautiful sandspit in Montana de Oro while picking up and recording types of debris for a national study. For more information about how to get started volunteering, contact Ann Kitajima at 805.772.3834 or visit www.mbnep.org/volunteer/.