

## Mission Accomplished: All Illegally Moored Boats Have Been Removed from Windy Cove

A long standing goal of the Estuary Program and many of its partners was accomplished in January of this year. The last of the illegally moored boats was removed from Windy Cove near the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History.

The Estuary Program would like to thank Dean Hileman with the Department of Fish and Game and the City of Morro Bay Harbor Department for making this project a success.

For those who are not familiar with this project, funding comes from the California Department of Corrections as part of a legal settlement over sewage spills from the Men's Colony Treatment Plant

into Chorro Creek. The Windy Cove area is now completely free of moored vessels for the first time in decades, however it is important to note that a few of the boats from that area are

continuing to be a problem in the City controlled portion of the Bay. The Estuary Program continues to work with all agencies involved to resolve those remaining problems.



*More than 25 boats were illegally moored at Windy Cove when this project began in the fall of 2005. This scenic photo was taken from the observation deck of the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History.*

The process has increased awareness of the ongoing problem of abandoned vessels throughout all portions of Morro Bay, as well as Port San Luis.

## National Estuary Program Celebrates 20th Anniversary

As the Morro Bay National Estuary Program reaches its tenth year of implementation, people across the nation are celebrating another anniversary: the 20th anniversary of the National Estuary Program as a whole.

Over those twenty years the 28 programs within the NEP have together protected and restored over 1 million acres of estuarine habitat, including more than 92,000 acres of wetlands, one of the most impacted coastal habitat types.

It all got started in 1987 when amendments were made to the Clean Water Act in response to increasing beach closures, fish kills, contaminated shellfish beds, and a general deterioration of coastal environments.

The National Estuary Program was created to identify nationally significant estuaries in need of restoration and protection. Congress charged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with heading up the effort.

Suzanne Schwartz, EPA's Oceans and Coastal Protection Division Director, notes that "EPA is excited to be celebrating the 20th anniversary of its coastal partnership program, the National Estuary Program. It is a leading model for watershed-based management nationwide. It has served as an effective catalyst for producing environmental results at the local level, helping community stakeholders identify, develop, and carry out solutions to local environmental problems."

# Executive Committee Welcomes New Members

The Estuary Program is a collaborative organization that depends on the efforts of many partners— non-profits, businesses, volunteers, and agencies—to accomplish our shared goals of protecting and restoring the estuary and the watershed.

At the heart of this cooperative program is our Executive Committee and its thirteen member seats. This spring brought three open seats on this important committee: Environmental Interests, At-Large Government and a new Science and Technical position.

After letters of invitation were distributed under direction of a nomination sub-committee, the Estuary Program is very pleased to announce that Morgan Rafferty, Director of the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo (ECOSLO) and Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer of the State Coastal Conservancy have joined the group, filling the Environmental Interests and At-Large Government seats respectively.

The new Science and Technical seat will be filled by Dean Wendt, Associate Professor of Biology at

Cal Poly and Director of San Luis Obispo Science and Ecosystem Alliance (SLOSEA). Tom Edell will be filling the Estuary Program Implementation Committee Chair position for the next two years. Newly participating elected officials include San Luis Obispo County Supervisor Bruce Gibson, City of Morro Bay Council member Melody DeMerrit and Los Osos CSD President Chuck Cesena.

The Executive Committee provides general policy direction for the Estuary Program, monitors activities, assesses progress, and approves grant requests. The Executive Committee is advised by the Implementation Committee, which includes representatives of dozens of agencies and community organizations. The quarterly meetings of the Implementation Committee and Executive Committee are open to the public and are posted on our website.

The Estuary Program would like to thank all of the people who recently served on the Executive Committee including Marla Morrissey, Linda Chipping, Ruth Ann Angus, Janice Peters, Henriette Groot, and Lisa Schicker.

Chuck Cesena  
Los Osos CSD President

Melody DeMerrit  
Morro Bay City Council

Tom Edell  
Implementation Committee Chair

Bruce Gibson  
SLO County Board of Supervisors

Cheryl McGovern, Chair  
US EPA

Joel Neel  
Bay Foundation President

Morgan Rafferty  
ECOSLO Director

Dominic Roques  
Central Coast RWQCB

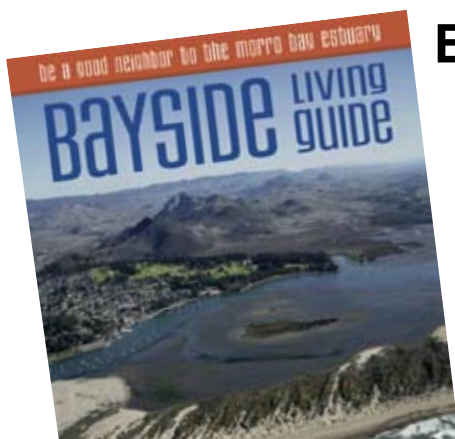
Sam Schuchat  
State Coastal Conservancy

Steve Soderstrom  
Local Rancher

Dean Sullivan  
Los Osos Chamber of Commerce

Mark Tognazzini  
Local Fisherman

Dean Wendt  
Associate Professor of Biology  
Director, San Luis Obispo Science  
and Ecosystem Alliance



## Bayside Living Guide Makes Big Splash

A new resource guide for bayside residents is making a big splash in the community. The colorful guide provides detailed information about how local residents can do their part to keep the estuary healthy.

You can find the FREE guides at the Estuary Program office on the

Embarcadero and around town at the Morro Bay and Los Osos Libraries, as well as at Morro Bay Public Works and the Los Osos Community Service District office.

You can also have a Guide mailed to your local address by calling the Estuary Program at 805.772.3834.

## Fences Can Make Good Neighbors in Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are vegetated zones adjacent to streams and other water bodies. Cattle are attracted to riparian zones for many of the same reasons as wildlife. There is available water, shade, and a variety of quality forage.

Unfortunately, overuse of these areas by cattle can have detrimental effects on the overall health of riparian areas and ultimately on the estuary. Impacts of livestock grazing on riparian areas may accelerate erosion and sedimentation into streams. The vegetated canopy offering food and shelter for fish and wildlife may be reduced. Additionally, manure and urine deposited in or near surface water can transport nutrients and pathogens downstream. Cattle have been well documented as a

significant source of bacteria in Chorro Creek and the Morro Bay Estuary. Limiting livestock access to riparian areas with fencing is a proven approach to reducing these impacts.

In an effort to improve water quality in Chorro Creek and the Estuary, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program is coordinating installation of riparian fencing throughout the Chorro Creek watershed. Funding for the project comes from the California Department of Corrections as part of a legal settlement over sewage spills into Chorro Creek from the Men's Colony Treatment Plant.

With the help of the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District and numerous public and

private landowners, the Riparian Fencing Program is well underway. To date, 12,388 feet of riparian fencing has been installed with an additional 34,477 feet contracted for installation in late 2007.



Ranchers and landowners in the Morro Bay Watershed who are interested in participating in the Riparian Fencing Program can call Jon Hall with the Estuary Program at 805.772.3834.

## Coconut Fiber Logs Help Fight Veldt Grass and Erosion

Veldt grass is a modest looking bunch grass with a showy hint of red...but this color must surely come from the blood, sweat and tears that go into trying to control this extremely aggressive exotic plant that has literally taken over many local open space areas leaving little to no valuable habitat and food for native wildlife.

After working hard to control a veldt grass infestation along an eastern slope of the Elfin Forest that flanks South Bay Boulevard, Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP) volunteers realized they needed some help. They turned to the most valuable work force in the Morro Bay Watershed: the California Conservation Corps (CCC).

After just a few years of weed control, native species began to sprout along the slope including deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*), live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), and Morro manzanita (*Arctostaphylos morroensis*).

However, due to the unstable nature of this sandy hillside, it was also observed that the weeding work crews were disturbing the slope and causing erosion. In the latter half of 2006, representatives from the Estuary Program, the CCC and SWAP met to discuss this problem.

The solution that was chosen was the installation of natural coconut fiber bio-logs (also known as Coir

logs). The CCC installed a total of 40 logs to stabilize about half an acre. Work crews first dug horizontal trenches to position the logs along the slope. The logs were staked on both the uphill and downhill sides with wooden stakes. Then they were tied down with natural fiber cord to stabilize the installation further. If all goes well, these logs will stabilize the hillside well enough to allow for more effective weed removal and native plant recovery.

This partnership project took advantage of the Estuary Program funded CCC Morro Bay Watershed Crew. If you have restoration work labor needs call Jon Hall, Restoration Coordinator, at 805.772.3834.

# Make a Difference: Help Monitor the Health of Morro Bay



The Estuary Program's Volunteer Monitoring Program is gearing up for a busy spring and is seeking volunteers for a number of efforts both in the bay and the creeks. Volunteers are provided with complete training, so no previous experience is needed.

**Water quality monitors** venture out to a local creek site once a month, year-round, for approximately an hour to gather data using various meters and test kits. **Bacteria** monitoring volunteers work year-round, for a few hours each month, to collect samples from either the creeks or bay and conduct laboratory analysis using EPA-certified methods. **Macroinvertebrate** monitoring involves extensive fieldwork

collecting insect samples that help assess habitat quality of creeks. Macroinvertebrate monitoring requires approximately four hours per site and will take place in early April.

The VMP's **spring shorebird** monitoring event will take place on Saturday, April 28. Experienced birders will disperse throughout Morro Bay, the strand and the sand spit to help track shorebird populations.

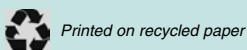
To learn more about the VMP's efforts, visit their page on the Estuary Program website at [www.mbnep.org/volunteer](http://www.mbnep.org/volunteer). If you are interested in participating in any of these monitoring efforts, contact VMP staff at 805.772.3834.



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The Morro Bay National Estuary Program is a local non-profit working to protect, preserve and restore the Morro Bay estuary and its watershed. The MBNEP is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"Turning the Tide" is a free quarterly newsletter. To subscribe, call the MBNEP office or visit our website.



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