



TURNING THE TIDE

FOR MORRO BAY STATE AND NATIONAL ESTUARY

GROWING NATURE'S GARDEN - A GUIDE FOR LANDSCAPING WITH DUNE NATIVES

Habitat loss and destruction is one of the leading threats to the estuary and the surrounding habitats. While many local organizations are working to acquire and restore significant parcels of habitat, there is something we can do as individual residents: use native plants in our yards to create viable habitat.

With the help of a mini-grant from the MBNEP, the Partners for the Conservation of the Los Osos Coastal Dunes has produced a wonderful booklet titled "Growing Nature's Garden." This colorful piece informs gardeners of the many benefits of selecting native plants for landscape. The booklet opens with an explanation of wildscaping: "A new idea in the California garden is wildscaping, or gardening in a way that combines beauty and the needs of native wildlife."

Landscaping with native plants provides a host of benefits. Not only do most California natives require less water and fertilizer than some

traditional landscape plants, you can obtain year-round color with summer and fall blooming species. Using native plants that are found in local bayside ecosystems goes one step further by creating valuable habitat for a variety of butterflies and other rare species.

Anyone with sandy soil should consider planting dune natives in their gardens and this fall will be the perfect time to introduce new plants into your yard. Planting during the rainy season has a great advantage. Sensitive new plants get plenty of rainwater, with no effort on your part. "Growing Nature's Garden" is the perfect introduction to this rewarding type of landscaping. Look for a copy of this booklet at nurseries in Los Osos and Morro Bay.



SNOWY PLOVER NESTING SEASON



You may have noticed that stakes and rope are back in place along several local beaches. This symbolic fencing signals Western Snowy Plover nesting season. Snowy Plovers are small

shorebirds, just 6 inches tall, that nest in the sand between the high tide line (or rack line) and the dunes.

Respect the Snowy Plover's habitat needs by enjoying other areas of the beach. You can learn more about these birds along with information about volunteer opportunities at www.snowyplover.org.

CONSERVATION CORPS IS HERE TO STAY

The Los Padres Center of the California Conservation Corps. was slated to close July 1st due to the state budget crisis. An outpouring of support from local residents, cities, counties, environmental groups, and agencies that rely on the Los Padres CCC culminated in the decision to keep the center open. The efforts of Assemblyman Abel Maldonado and State Senator Bruce McPherson were also instrumental in reversing the planned closure.

Interim Program Director Dan Berman commented, "The Los Padres CCC have been an invaluable partner in the MBNEP, and we are grateful to everyone that helped to keep this center open."

COLLABORATIVE GRANTS ARE GOOD NEWS FOR WATERSHED RESTORATION

Thanks to partnerships with Cal Poly and Camp San Luis, the MBNEP has recently been awarded two significant grants for creek restoration projects in the Morro Bay watershed.

A portion of Walters Creek has gotten a complete facelift thanks to collaborative funding from California Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, MBNEP, and the landowner (Cal Poly). Walters Creek was once used as a control site for a best management practices (BMP) study, left for 10-years without improvements to riparian habitat or creek banks with erosion problems. Now this tributary to Chorro Creek is getting over \$150,000 worth of improvements. The project consists of installing riparian fencing, an off-stream cattle watering system, grade control structures, terracing of streambanks, revegetation with 4,000 plants and willow cuttings, and a temporary drip irrigation system. The benefits include two water tanks, three water troughs, 20,000 feet of water piping, 6,000 feet of riparian fencing and

revegetation of 3,000 feet of Walters Creek. This erosion control and habitat improvement project is ongoing, with approximately 60% currently completed and the remaining 40% to be completed in the fall of 2004.

Just announced this summer is the award of another California Fish and Game grant for erosion control work on Camp San Luis Obispo property. This project will help control road stormwater runoff that has resulted in the development of large gullies in adjacent land. These erosion hotspots have been depositing sediment directly into Dairy Creek. The project will consist of road upgrading, road drainage improvements, and revegetation of gullies and other disturbed areas. This \$100,000 project was funded by California Fish and Game and the MBNEP.

"The project reports look a little bit like alphabet soup, but the partnerships and restoration efforts are very effective," states Bill Hoffmann, Watershed Coordinator for the MBNEP.

ESTUARY LEARNING CENTER A BIG HIT AT LOS OSOS LIBRARY

Over 50 youth attended a hands-on Estuary Day Event at the Los Osos Library this April. The event celebrated the library's new estuary learning collection that was purchased with a MBNEP grant.



With the help of a watershed model, a group of kids learn how everyday activities can contribute to water pollution.

Attending youth tasted pickle weed from the salt marsh, made water cycle bracelets, viewed phytoplankton under a microscope, explored interactive software on the library's new estuary-dedicated computer, and paged through a dozen new educational books. For more information about the new collection at the Los Osos library call 805-528-1862 for hours information and stop by - they are located at 2075 Palisades in Los Osos.

JOIN THE VMP FALL SHOREBIRD MONITORING EFFORT

Break out those scopes and binoculars to join other experienced shorebirders for the fall 2004 shorebird monitoring effort organized by the Morro Bay Volunteer Monitoring Program.

The event will be on Saturday, August 28th from 8 a.m. to noon. Birders will conduct counts via land or boat. The bay, sandspit and strand are divided into 15 regions with teams of two conducting simultaneous counts in each region.

The survey methodology was developed by the Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory and was first conducted in this area in 1988.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Ann or Chris at the MBNEP office at 805-772-3834 before August 12th.

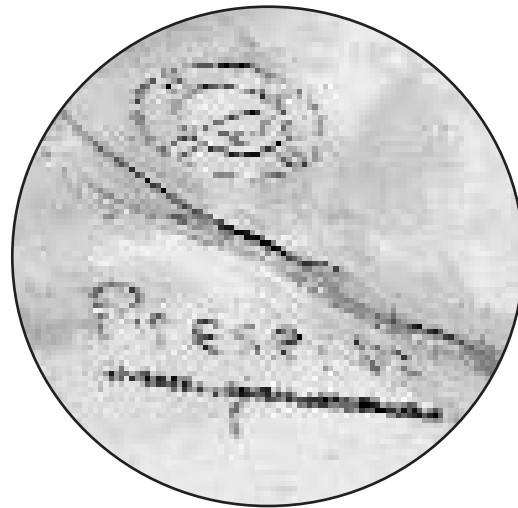
CENTRAL VALLEY YOUTH HELP PROTECT CENTRAL COAST MARINE RESOURCES

Over 200 students, teachers and parent volunteers jumped on buses the morning of March 31st, Cesar Chavez Day, and traveled to the Central Coast. The "day of learning and service" wasn't spent in souvenir shops or relaxing in the sand, these volunteers were busy cleaning our beaches.

The field trip to the beach was part of an outreach program that aims to teach inland youth about the importance of our coastal resources. Students first received a presentation by MBNEP staff and a few weeks later answered the call for coastal stewardship by participating in a beach cleanup.

Students discovered a variety of trash littering the beach, but one item topped the list for the second year in a row: cigarette butts.

The California Coastal Commission is the statewide coordinator of the Kid's Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup, the year-round Adopt-A-Beach program, and Coastal Cleanup Day (held each



Students take a stand in the sand, asking everyone to help preserve coastal resources. Cayucos Creek runs through the formation, reminding us of the link between watersheds and water quality.

Photo by Abe Perlestein

fall). All of these programs are funded by the generous support of the Whale Tail License Plate Fund. Over 80,000 plates have been sold since 1996, raising more than \$4 million dollars for marine education and protection. For more information about the California Coastal Commission's programs and how to buy a Whale Tail Plate, call (800) COAST-4U or visit www.coastforyou.org.

U.S. COMMISSION ON OCEAN POLICY RELEASES PRELIMINARY REPORT

The Oceans Act of 2000 called for the creation of a U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy to develop recommendations for a comprehensive national ocean policy.

The Commission has recently released its Preliminary Report, which calls for significant changes in federal agency structure, strengthening coastal and ocean science, and enhancing ocean education.

The last congressionally authorized commission to review and make recommendations on national ocean policy was released in 1969. That report had far-reaching implications including the creation of NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and the enactment of the Coastal Zone Management Act. The Preliminary Report notes that since the authoring of that 1969 report, more than 37 million people, 19 million homes,

"THE OCEANS
AFFECT AND SUSTAIN
ALL LIFE ON EARTH."

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and countless businesses have been added to coastal areas, contributing to depleted resources, lost habitat, and pollution.

The current Report recommends an ecosystem based management approach that recognizes the complex interrelationships among the ocean, land, air and all living creatures. A dozen critical actions are recommended by the Commission, including establishment of a National Ocean Council chaired by an advisor to the President. The Commission called out the National Estuary Program as a success for its regional watershed-based management approach. While noting that limited federal funding has slowed project implementation for some NEPs, the report states that the "assessment and planning process used by the NEP holds promise for the future."

The Commission is working to complete a Final Report that incorporates nationwide comments. You can learn more about the Commission and their Report at www.oceancommission.gov.

MBNEP PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

COASTAL SAN LUIS RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD) is dedicated to the conservation of soil, water, and natural resources. The CSLRCD's primary goal is to help make conservation and watershed stewardship a winning proposition for landowners and the general community.

The CSLRCD helps landowners care for their land by bringing in trained professionals to identify potential problems and offer sustainable land management solutions. Examples include rotational grazing systems, vegetative buffer strips along creeks, repair of erosion sources and use of cover crops. Because these projects can be cost prohibitive for some land owners, obtaining financial assistance to implement on-the-ground projects is also a large part of what the CSLRCD does. As a special District, they are funded entirely by grants and contracts. Staff locate grants for dozens of projects in the watershed each year.

The Morro Bay estuary benefits from the CSLRCD's work in many ways. Caring for the creeks and land in the watershed can reduce sedimentation and nutrient loading in the bay, along with improving turbidity and dissolved oxygen levels in the creek habitats. The CSLRCD spearheaded the Chorro Flats restoration project, one of the most significant projects implemented on behalf of the bay. Lower Chorro Creek, once an artificially narrow channel, has been fully restored to its natural path along with a floodplain that serves as a sediment trap and wetland habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Raising awareness in the community about watershed management issues is also part of the CSLRCD mission. Staff offer tours of District project sites, as well as provide speakers and educational information for community groups and schools. Learn more at www.coastalrcd.org or by calling their office at 805-772-4391.



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