



NEWS RELEASE

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Streets to Creeks Multi-County Campaign Launch to Prevent Creek Pollution in the Russian River Watershed

SANTA ROSA, CA – A coalition of cities, counties, towns, and special districts that share the Russian River watershed have partnered to raise awareness about neighborhood storm drains and their connection to the vitality of our local creeks. Many community members are unaware of the fact that the storm drains in our streets, go directly into local creeks, and ultimately flow into the Russian River.

The campaign focuses on raising regional awareness about impacts to our watershed and water quality by educating residents about one essential fact -- only rain should ever go down the storm drain. Neighborhood storm drains are an extension of local creeks and streams; any water, debris, or pollutants that make their way into a storm drain flow untreated to local creeks and eventually into the Russian River. To protect our region's waterways, it is important that everyone knows what they can do to help limit pollution and be part of the solution.

The campaign centers around a simple reminder – *Storm Drains Connect Streets to Creeks* and emphasizes that all members of the community share a responsibility – *Ours to Protect*. The agencies participating in the campaign each chose a creek or waterway to inspire communities to act in the best interest of our watershed.

“Our watershed creeks feeding the Russian River are truly hidden gems. We are highlighting special creeks in our communities that we are working hard to protect,” said Cloverdale Mayor Melanie Bagby,

Chair of the Russian River Watershed Association Board. “It’s one thing to ask the community to protect our creeks, it’s another to show them what they are protecting.”

In addition to building awareness, the campaign also calls to action the community to help be a part of the solution. The initial campaign focuses on four easy ways to protect creeks, with simple changes that make a big impact on water quality and creek health.

The four topic areas are car washing, pet waste, yard care, and trash. The multi-media campaign will use a variety of print, digital, and radio ads to educate and encourage the community to take action. The campaign promotes simple, and creek-friendly, habits that help keep neighborhood storm drains clear of debris and pollutants. The four topic area campaign messages are as follows:

Car Washing: Washing your car at a professional car wash is ideal, where waste water is captured and treated or recycled. If you wash at home, divert water to where it can soak into the ground, like a lawn or planter strip. Use a bucket and empty soapy wash water into a sink. Remember, any water that goes into the gutter, goes directly into our creeks untreated.

Pet Waste: Scoop the poop. Sure, it’s the neighborly thing to do on a walk, but managing pet waste in your backyard is important too. Scoop, and toss pet poop into your garbage bin before water has a chance to transport pollutants (i.e. bacteria) it into a backyard drain, that flows untreated to a nearby storm drain.

Yard Care: When tending to your yard or garden, check the weather and your watering schedule. Runoff from rain, or even irrigation, can wash fertilizer, herbicides, landscape materials, compost, and leaf debris into the storm drain, causing potential impacts to our local creeks. Remember – timing is everything.

Trash: Pick up all trash you see in the street before water or wind arrives and carries it to a nearby storm drain. If it is out of the street, it is away from our creeks.

“We are excited to help our community build a stronger relationship with our creeks. Simple changes make a big impact.” said Santa Rosa City Councilwoman Victoria Fleming, a member of the Russian River Watershed Board. “This will be a multi-year effort to increase our community’s connection with our beautiful creeks and change behaviors to reduce creek pollution.”

StreetsToCreeks.org

Participating Agencies:

City of Cloverdale, City of Cotati, City of Healdsburg, City of Rohnert Park, City of Santa Rosa, City of Sebastopol, City of Ukiah, County of Sonoma, Russian River Watershed Association, Sonoma County Water Agency, Town of Windsor

About The Russian River Watershed:

The Russian River watershed is a rich and diverse region of nearly 1,500 square miles of forests, agricultural lands and urban lands in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. The mainstem of the Russian River flows 110 miles from its headwaters near Redwood Valley and Potter Valley to the Pacific Ocean near Jenner. The watershed is home to approximately 360,000 people, 238 streams and creeks, and 63 species of fish – three of which are listed as threatened or endangered: Chinook salmon, Coho salmon, and Steelhead trout.

The Russian River Watershed Association (RRWA) is a coalition of eleven cities, counties and special districts in the Russian River watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, habitat restoration, and watershed enhancement.

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