

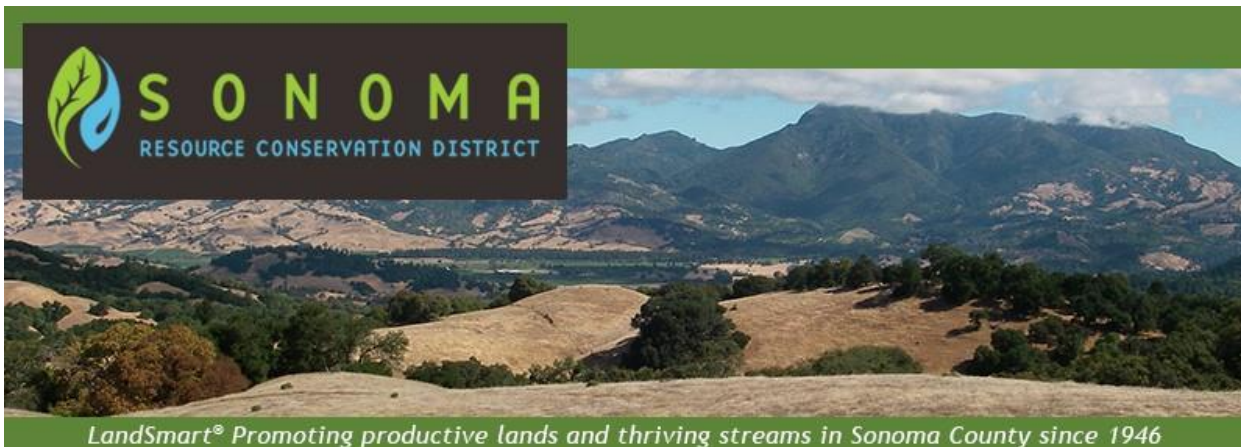
Water Storage Projects and Salmonid Recovery through the Coho Partnership Program

Fish and wildlife are an integral component of any ecosystem and can be vital indicators of the functionality and well-being of our local watersheds. For years landowners have voluntarily implemented beneficial water management projects which support livelihood, agricultural operation efficiency, and wildlife habitat, termed multi-benefit projects as the results serve both humans and our ecosystems. The Sonoma and Gold Ridge RCDs, in collaboration with the Coho Partnership, a consortium of organizations concerned about coho salmon recovery, work with a number of rural and agricultural landowners to develop water storage and flow enhancement projects in priority Russian River tributaries.

The Partnership began in 2009 with the goal to “return a viable, self-sustaining population of coho salmon to the Russian River watershed” in Sonoma County. Seeking additional eligible landowners for participation in the voluntary water storage program offered through the Partnership, the RCDs continue efforts in the five priority watersheds of Dutch Bill, Grape, Green Valley, Mark West, and Mill Creek. The Partnership integrates landowner outreach and recruitment, hydrologic and fisheries monitoring, and water policy and permitting expertise to improve streamflow and water supply reliability in the core watersheds. Residents and landowners who source water from creeks and shallow, near-stream wells in the upper reaches of these creeks may be eligible for funds to work with the RCD to design and construct water storage and conservation projects. Projects include rainwater catchment systems, off-channel storage tanks or ponds, and water use efficiency improvements.

As of June 2015, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) had awarded the Partnership \$3.7 million, leveraged with \$7.5 million in partner match, to implement its business plan. Partner organizations have leveraged additional funding from agencies such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and California Department of Water Resources to develop and implement projects that improve conditions for coho and further the goals of the initiative.

Incorporated into the mission of the RCDs’ LandSmart water resources and reliability program are the goals of increasing the amount of water flowing in our streams during the summer dry season and assisting landowners in developing more secure and reliable water supplies,



especially important in years of drought. Utilizing stored water resources during the summer dry season means less water drawn from the creeks, allowing wildlife access to freshwater when they need it most. Assisting landowners in reaches of these streams where healthy salmon habitat is most critically needed – where salmon live during the most sensitive parts of their lives — such as spawning and rearing their young, make this work even more imperative.

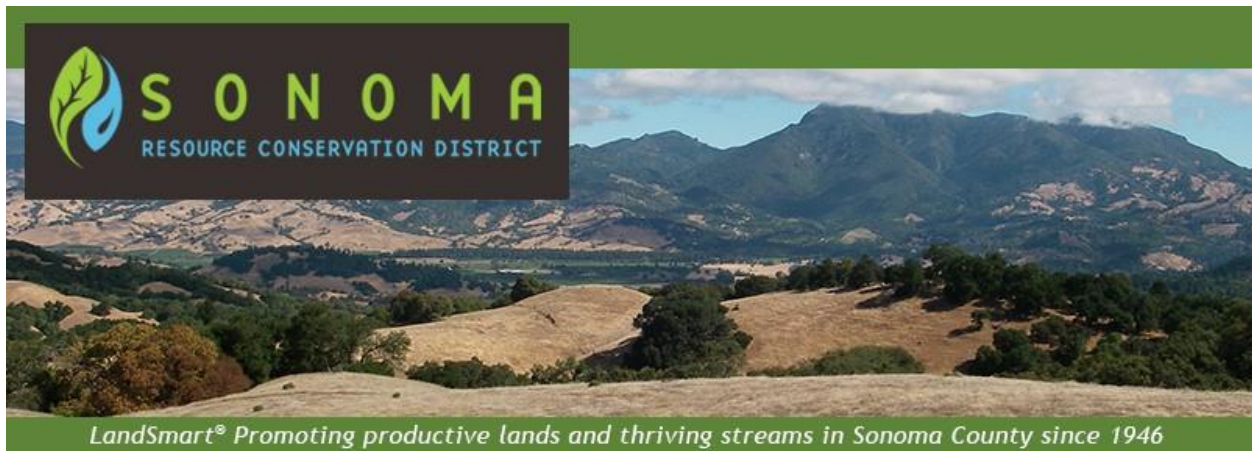
A Snapshot of Flow Improvement Projects in the Five Priority Watersheds

Grape Creek Streamflow Enhancement and Offstream Storage: All known frost protection diversions from Grape Creek have been eliminated and summer pumping for irrigation reduced. The Partnership has installed one wind machine for vineyard frost protection, one off-channel irrigation/ frost protection pond, and has received partial funding for an off-channel irrigation pond on another property. The latter project will eliminate the use of groundwater for summer irrigation. The Sonoma RCD has finished implementing a stream habitat enhancement project last year and is working on a proposed streamflow improvement project that incorporates a off-channel habitat feature and rainwater harvesting component on another vineyard to complement past work in Grape Creek funded by the Partnership.

Mark West Rainwater Catchment: Landowner outreach has resulted in fourteen potential sites for rainwater catchment projects, some of which are planned on actively managed forest land. These projects are intended to replace the use of groundwater in the summer months with rainwater captured during the winter.

Mill Creek Rainwater Catchment: A demonstration rainwater catchment project with a local elementary school will incorporate educational elements. Additional outreach has focused on a critical flow recovery reach of Mill Creek, and constructed two rainwater catchment projects in this reach in fall 2015.

Dutch Bill Creek Projects: This Westminster Woods Water Conservation and Storage Project eliminates a major direct diversion along the prime coho salmon spawning and rearing reach of Dutch Bill Creek by replacing summer diversion of creek water for irrigation of playing fields with water that is collected and stored during the winter rainy season. Installation of a more efficient irrigation system and replacement of existing turf with drought-tolerant grass has reduced the amount of water required for irrigation. Water storage tanks were built in the fall of 2015, and the project will be complete in the spring of 2016.



Green Valley Creek Projects: Five off-channel storage and alternative water source projects in the upper watershed are in the design phase. These projects address both direct diversions and water extraction from shallow alluvial wells along upper Green Valley Creek and Purrington Creek. All five projects are to be constructed in 2016.

To find out if your property is in an area of Dutch Bill, Grape, Green Valley, Mark West, or Mill Creek served by these programs, visit our websites at sonomarcd.org or goldridgercd.org. Staff are also available in both offices to direct you to helpful resources and answer any questions you may have. Additional information about the Partnership can be found here: www.cohopartnership.org.