



PROFILES IN STEWARDSHIP: Matorana Family Winery and Vineyards

In 1983 Gio Martorana's family first purchased vineyards along Grape Creek, a tributary to Dry Creek in the Russian River and created a business that has since grown into the Martorana Family Winery. He was nine years old at the time. "My mom and dad used to picnic up at the end of Dry Creek," Gio recalls. "They liked it here so much they bought land and started growing grapes." Gio remembers spending a lot of his childhood days playing in the creek, catching fish, and seeing crawfish and turtles. "There seemed to be everything," he said, "and then it all slowly but surely went away, and so I started paying more attention to what was going on in the creek and what we could do about it." He said he decided to make changes in management methods that would be "better for the creek and better for people" because "it's the right thing to do."



Matorana Family Winery has been part of a variety of conservation and fish habitat improvement practices and projects over the years including:

Instream Habitat Enhancement 1990s: Installed large wood and habitat structures in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Conservation Corps, and many other partners.

Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration 2008: Implemented vineyard road modifications and vine removal to increase the riparian corridor, bank layback to address channel incision, native riparian planting, and large wood structure placement in partnership with the RCD and partners.

Instream Flow Restoration 2009: As part of the Russian River Coho Water Resource Partnership (www.cohopartnership.org) worked with the RCD to install a frost fan (wind machine) and agreed to discontinue use of an on-stream flashboard dam and water diversion from Grape Creek, benefitting both instream flow and fish passage.



Coho Broodstock Stocking and Monitoring: Provides access for the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program to stock and monitor coho salmon as part of the larger recovery effort in the Russian River.

Organic Farming: Martorana Family Vineyards is currently in the process of becoming certified by the CCOF, California Certified Organic Farmers. All of their wines are crafted from their own grapes which have been grown without the use of pesticides or chemicals for the past five years.

Consumer Education: Martorana Family Winery has begun to use its restoration efforts to educate wine lovers about the importance of land and water stewardship and to introduce new and perhaps unlikely audiences to the importance of fisheries conservation.

These voluntary efforts are paying off. "I've seen a lot more fish these past few years," Gio says. "And we get a lot of people stopping by our winery and our tasting room, particularly fishermen, thanking us for what we do, and telling us they really appreciate it."

In 2014, Gio was the recipient of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Private Lands Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Award that recognizes individuals or family run farms, ranches or forest land operations that have incorporated proactive conservation and environmental practices and exhibit outstanding stewardship of fish and wildlife resource. "I accept this award for all my neighbors and all of the people who have worked on Grape Creek." Thank you to Gio and all of our cooperating landowners in the Grape Creek Watershed that are working hard to continue Sonoma County's agricultural heritage while improving our natural environment and our local watersheds. The work of local landowners, the RCD, and partners and funders in Grape Creek Watershed received recognition in 2013 as one of the national Fish Habitat Action Plan Waters to Watch.