

## Laguna Middle Reach Restoration Initiative to Kick Off in 2006

BY MARK GREEN, *Resource Development Director*

This year, the Laguna Foundation will begin an extensive program of habitat restoration along the Laguna between Highway 12 and Occidental Road. This exciting project, the *Laguna Middle Reach Restoration Project* or "MRRP", will have multiple benefits to the Laguna's wildlife and water quality, and will improve the beauty and "wildness" of this area of the Laguna, where the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District plans to develop a hiking trail within the next few years.

The MRRP will be the largest single Laguna restoration project to date. It will reestablish and increase the density of native plants along 1.8 miles of the channel, rehabilitate 3-5 acres of degraded seasonal wetlands, restore 10 acres of oak savannah upland habitat, and provide livestock exclusion fencing to protect the watercourse on the property of willing landowners. The project will improve water quality and reduce aquatic weeds such as *Ludwigia* by reducing nutrient and sediment inputs and increasing shade over the channel, re-establish habitat connectivity and restore important habitat for more than 200 species of birds known to reside in the Laguna, improve conditions for endangered salmonid fish found in the Laguna, and restore habitat for rare, threatened and endangered vernal pool and seasonal wetland plants such as Sebastopol Meadowfoam.

The MRRP will be implemented on property held by the Open Space District, County of Sonoma, Cities of Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, and private landowners. It is the first project recommendation of the *Laguna Ecosystem Restoration and Management Plan* (RMP), which we will publish later this spring after two years of work. Funded by the State Coastal Conservancy, Sonoma County Water Agency, City of Santa Rosa, and Community Foundation Sonoma County, the RMP is a "blueprint"

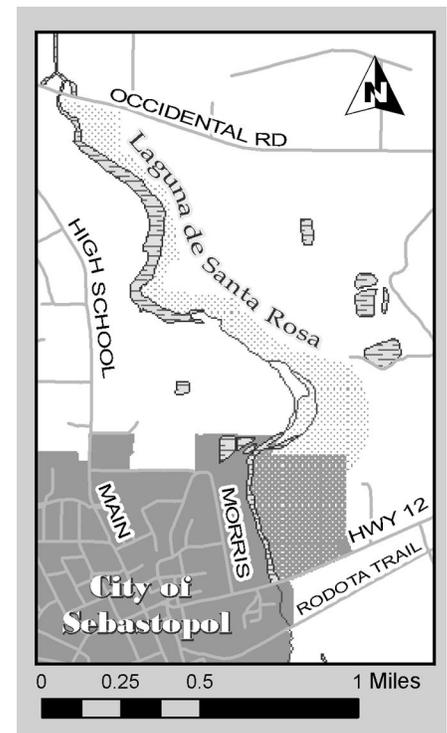
for restoring the health of the Laguna and establishing coordinated land management among Laguna landowners.

The Foundation wishes to thank the State Coastal Conservancy and the Community Foundation Sonoma County, which have graciously approved initial funding for this project. Other applications are pending.

We are excited to get started on this extensive program of habitat and water quality improvement. As the project proceeds, there will be opportunities for Laguna volunteers to participate in the MRRP through removal of non-native invasive plants and tree planting. Work days will be announced through *Meanderings* and the Foundation's website, so stay tuned!

### Legend

	MRRP project area
	Water bodies
	Sebastopol
	Streets



Map by Amber Manfree

## • Another New Year's Eve Freshet

• BY JOE HONTON, *Project Manager, Restoration and Management Plan*

• For me, this year's big event in the  
• Laguna was the December 31st flood. Of  
• course I know that the overflowing of the  
• Laguna's banks is one of its great features,  
• so my perspective on this flood was rooted  
• more in curiosity than in alarm.

• Like other similar floods, this year's  
• came after several days of sustained and  
• intense rainfall, and it predictably played out  
• in a textbook fashion. Curiously, the most  
• recent flood of this size also began on the eve  
• of a new year, reaching its crest on January  
• 1, 1997. Many of the area's long-time  
• residents can also recall the big waters of  
• January 9, 1995 and the even bigger waters  
• of the Valentine's Day flood of 1986. And

before that the record books tell us about the two Christmas Eve floods of 1964 and 1955.

But dates and numbers fail to convey the excitement and drama surrounding these events, and this drama began, for me, the night before the flood crest. My goal was to map the inundation level of the impending flood. Armed with a fully charged battery in my camera, a handheld GPS device, eleven custom made maps with one-foot contours, and a full tank of gas, I set out early Saturday morning, to capture as much of the floodwater's crest as I could. I snapped photos of every road/stream crossing south of Sebastopol to Cotati. My return trek

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## **Executive Director's Report - Dan Schurman**



As we kick off another year of restoration and education in the Laguna, I'm excited to be joined in the leadership of the Foundation by new President Susan Churchill. Susan came to us through our docent program and her enthusiasm for the mission and vision of the Foundation is positively contagious. She has the leadership skills and smarts of a highly successful businesswoman (which she was) and the passion for the natural world of a biologist (which she also was). We're looking forward to another successful year of growth for the Foundation.

Susan heads up a stellar Board of Directors for the Foundation that also includes Vice-president David Bannister, Secretary Brad DeMeo and Treasurer Jim Beyers. The rest of the Board (Bill Bettinelli, Denise Cadman, Dick Carlile, Jim Shelton, Guy Smith, Virginia Strom-Martin, George Tuttle, and newcomers Jeannette Anglin and Ed Smith) are equally impressive in their personal qualifications and dedication to the mission of the Foundation. We've assembled a first-rate team of leaders for the organization and we all expect great things in the coming year.

To start the year, the Board will go through an intensive planning process to

identify the short and long-term needs and priorities of the Foundation. We've grown so quickly during the past few years that we have some catching up to do with ourselves in terms of infrastructure needs such as bylaws, financial reporting, personnel policies, etc.

We also have three very large restoration projects in front of us that need planning and oversight, as well as our exciting campaign to renovate the historic Stone Farm into a Laguna Learning Center and headquarters for the Foundation. Already this campaign has raised more than \$1.2 million of the projected \$5 million goal – a fantastic start and we expect to complete the first phase (fixing up the house and grounds so we can move in as our offices) within a year!

Other exciting prospects in the coming year include our annual docent training (we already have more than 20 trainees signed up!); the next implementation phase of the regional plan for recovering the California Tiger salamander; the release of our Laguna Ecosystem Restoration and Management Plan; our continuing efforts to control Ludwigia; commencement of our Middle Reach Restoration Project; the publication of a Laguna Field Guide; the third annual Art & Garden Gala in September; and much, much more!

Thanks to all our volunteers, donors and supporters for making it all possible – it's only through our combined effort that we're able to do so much for the Laguna.

## **Another New Year's Eve Freshet**

*from Page 1*

through the swamped roads of the Santa Rosa Plain made for slow going and bridge closures at every major cross point confined me to the eastern side of the Laguna.

It wasn't until I reached the confluence of the Mark West Creek-Laguna complex, near River Road, that I was finally able to cross westward. Here especially, the immensity of the water captured my attention; I had always heard about the backwater effect of the Russian River at this point, but to see the oceanic-like inundation firsthand was to finally turn me into a believer.

On Sunday January 1st, I repeated my trek, in order to record changes in the water's edge over time. With the two major cross-Laguna bridges remaining closed, it was another long set of detours and cul-de-sacs getting to the water's perimeter. Heavy downpours continued to dog me throughout Sunday. During the next several days I

continued to monitor the receding waters taking GPS readings and more photos. By the time I had completed the week-long data gathering effort, I had taken nearly 400 photographs and more than 200 GPS data points.

I'm still in wonder at what transpired during those eventful days, and I question why I was driven to pursue the water so intently. Perhaps I shouldn't discount the motive that so many others shared that week: the motive that is based in beauty and wonder, because after all, the Laguna is at its grandest when its waters spread out onto the nearby fields, when the outline of the trees reflect on its surface, and when the great birds take flight overhead.

A sampling of some of the December 31st flood photos can be seen at: <http://www.lagunadesantarosa.org/RMP/Freshet/default.htm>.

## Learning Laguna... or Yearning Laguna?

BY MARY ABBOTT, *Education Coordinator*

When I grew up in the 1950s, I had a lot of freedom to roam the creek, sit in trees, and lay in the grass, entering the world of insects with my eyes, as they traveled to and fro. One of the best things my mother did for me was this: "Go outside and play!" So I did. Back then, we took this freedom for granted, but looking back, I see that something essential was formed then for the rest of my life.

I have noticed that as new docents enter our training program and tell their stories, they too have had simple yet compelling experiences with the natural world, connections they made as children. These memories created a lifelong yearning for more – more times like that. We often hear docents say, "I feel like I have come home when I am in the Laguna program." And they have.

The generation after us was not as lucky as we were; they got "Environmental Education." But, according to Richard Louv, author of the landmark book *Last Child in the Woods*, even a taste of direct experiences of nature allows children to sense what they are missing and create a powerful yearning for more. As we hear more and more from teachers that their students have very little, if any, time in the woods, or at the creek, we feel ever more passionate about bringing children to the Laguna. While Learning Laguna provides activities for children in the field, there is a lot of unstructured time – time for them to have the direct experience with their senses of hearing, smelling, touching and seeing a whole place. By the time they go home, they know what the web of life is and that they have a place in it. We

don't burden children with the human impacts on nature, or talk to them about saving places. We give them the chance to form a sense of place, in their hearts and beings, through fun and play. It is in this way that we create future stewards of the land.

One of our docents, Sharon Mansfield of Petaluma was trained in 2002. Having been an educator, Sharon resonated with the underlying philosophy behind Learning Laguna. When the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance (PWA) was formed, she began to put together an educational program for the school children of Petaluma based on Learning Laguna. Now in its second year, the program boasts 15 trained docents and because they are located at Shollenberger Park, they can host classes nearly all year. Sharon said, "Because of my training at the Laguna Foundation, PWA had a quick start up of its education program. I have tried to incorporate the friendliness, the encouragement, and the solid information I received, into our program." In March, the program was given an award from the Petaluma Parks Department. Congratulations Sharon!

**Do you have a yearning to be outside?** Please join our docents for a walk in the Laguna, a great chance to learn more. Walks start Saturday, March 18 and a full schedule can be found on the foundation website.

Please call Mary Abbott, 527-9277 ext. 102 or [mary@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:mary@lagunafoundation.org) for further information. Teachers yearning to take their students to the Laguna may apply for Learning Laguna 2006/2007 school year by going to our website.



Photo by Mary Abbott

## Staff Welcome



**A m b e r Manfree** joined the Laguna Foundation staff in July, 2005, as a field technician for the Ludwigia Control Project. Throughout the summer she monitored water quality and provided general assistance to Julian Meisler, the Project Manager.

When the field season ended in mid-October Amber's responsibilities shifted to assisting Joe Honton with the Restoration Management Plan. Her work involves mapping different aspects of the Laguna watershed, researching hydrologic changes over the past 150 years, and coordinating a forum for Geographic Information Systems specialists involved in conservation work. This network will strengthen regional conservation efforts and help like-minded organizations to share information more effectively.

Amber's background is in environmental conservation work and public outreach. She has previously worked with LandPaths, the Sonoma Land Trust, and the Sonoma Ecology Center.



As we go to print, we want to welcome **Catherine Cumberland** to our staff as Education Program Assistant. She joins us with a background

in environmental education, native plant propagation, and riparian restoration. Catherine also works as a Land Steward at the Fairfield Osborn Preserve and at Sonoma State's Native Plant Garden. She is an intern with the Bay Institute's STRAW program, an environmental education program where K-12 kids learn restoration principles and watershed science.

## Foundation Board Says Farewell to Guiding Lights, Welcomes New

The Board of Directors of the Laguna Foundation recently lost several of its “guiding lights”, people who’d either been with the organization for many years or who’d contributed greatly to our resurgence in recent years. As all boards must, ours is evolving, always changing and adding new blood and energy to maintain our momentum as we lose others who have put in their time and want or need to move on.

Perhaps most significant among those who recently left the Board is **Dan Smith**, who came to the Board in 2002 when he saw both the power of our vision to recreate a thriving Laguna ecosystem as well as the need to create a dynamic organization to accomplish it. Dan not only led the Board as President during this period of resurgent growth, but he and his wife, Joan Marler, provided the funds to establish an office and a professional staff, the necessary first steps in creating the identity and the capacity to tackle that vision. During the course of Dan’s tenure, he and Joan have donated significant funds to the Foundation, providing the “start-up capital” that has us where we are now. The Foundation and our entire community owe Dan and Joan a huge debt of gratitude for their generosity, their leadership, their courage and their vision. Dan’s other endeavors, most notably running a successful restaurant in Berkeley, have recently consumed so much of his time that he had to withdraw from the Foundation Board, but his inspiration and vision will live on in our work. Thank you, Dan and Joan!

Another recent departure from the Board is **Carolyn “CJ” Johnson**, who joined the Board in 1998 when the Foundation was a struggling, all-volunteer organization with no significant programs. Along with fellow Board member Bob Evans and her lifelong friend and long-time Laguna volunteer, Raini Sugg Vallarino, CJ created the Foundation’s docent education program. They designed the program, created the curricula and the docent training materials, and organized and led the trainings and the classroom visits and field trips. The program has become one of the most highly respected environmental education programs in Sonoma County and the cornerstone of the Foundation’s work. Over the years, CJ came to be the conscience of the organization, always reminding us of the essential purpose and values we must embrace as we grapple with the practical and political challenges inherent in our work. Thankfully, CJ will remain an active docent and will continue as the Chair of our Education Committee in 2006.



Photo by Mary Abbott

**Miles Ferris** was the last remaining founding Board member of the Foundation, having been there in 1989 when we were formed. In his capacity as Director of Utilities for the City of Santa Rosa, Miles was a vital part of the Foundation over the years. His department assisted the Foundation in countless ways, with donations of meeting space and office support as well as making the City’s properties in the Laguna available for field trips and restoration project sites. Behind the scenes, Miles was and continues to be an effective advocate and ally for our work. His connections and political savvy have been invaluable as we’ve entered the arena of taking on larger restoration projects. Even though he won’t be serving on the Board, we’ll still rely on Miles for his insights, acumen, wisdom and advice.

**Tom Lambert** came to the Laguna Foundation as a volunteer Laguna Keeper, one of the many who help on the ground with planting and clean-up. A professional fisheries biologist, Tom brought a wealth of scientific knowledge to the Board when he joined in 1998. He quickly became our go-to guy for heading up our nascent restoration program and was always there to take on the thorny problems no one else wanted – an essential part of any successful organization. Tom will remain active on our Restoration Committee.

We also bid farewell to **Glenn Minervini-Zick** as a Board member, but who will always be a part of the organization. Glenn joined the Board in 2002 and served a critical role as our lone financial professional on the Board, effectively acting as our CFO during the past few years of rapid growth. Glenn and his wife Franny, one of our lead docents, are well-known to many in our community and their spirit of generosity and involvement will continue to feed the Foundation. They’ve been called away from us by other developments in their life, but we

don’t expect them to be gone for long.

We’ve also said hello to two new Board members who we’re extremely excited to have on our team: **Jeanette Anglin and Ed Smith**. Jeanette has recently “retired” after a 36-year career in public education that included stints as Principal of Rincon Valley Middle School and Piner and Ridgway High Schools. In addition, she’s served as a board member of the Sonoma County Regional Parks Commission, the Community Foundation of Sonoma County, the California School Administrators Association and the California League of High Schools. She presently serves as a member of the Sonoma State University Academic Board, the Tribal Council of the Graton Rancheria, and as President of the Charles DeMeo Teen Center (Chop’s).

Ed Smith, Ph.D., is one of Sonoma County’s most accomplished natural scientists. Dr. Smith’s experience encompasses teaching and research, working in and with the private sector, as well as participation in the development of regulatory and public policy at a state and national level. He is trained as an aquatic biologist and has done extensive specialized work in animal behavior and toxicology. His current research involves the behavior of salmonids and invertebrates exposed to various stressors and problems in biodiversity. He is a past member of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and he currently teaches hydrology and watershed management at SRJC.

The legacy of these recently departed Board members and the promise of the new inspire confidence in all of us that the tremendous strides we’ve made in recent years will continue as we grow to the next level of organizational ability and achievement.

## Opportunities to Get Involved with the Laguna Watershed!

### BECOME PART OF THE LAGUNA RESTORATION TEAM AND JOIN THE LAGUNA KEEPERS.

Saturday, April 22: Stone Farm hedge row planting. National Youth Service Day volunteers will be planting hundreds of plants and installing irrigation at the future home of the Laguna Learning Center. Meet and park at 5743 Occidental Road. Carpooling is strongly encouraged. Workday is from 9am - noon. Be sure to bring your gloves, water, tools and wear appropriate shoes for outside work. And bring some of your friends too; we always need new LagunaKeepers! RSVP to Mary Abbott, Education Coordinator, at [mary@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:mary@lagunafoundation.org) or call 527-9277 ext.102.

**TAKE A WALK IN THE LAGUNA!** All walks take place at the Sebastopol Wetlands Preserve with parking behind 425 Morris Street, unless otherwise marked. A great way to learn more about the Laguna, our docents are also available for group tours and will be offering walks on these dates in 2006. Members free, \$5 donation others.

Saturday, March 18 – 9:15 am  
 Wednesday, April 12 – 6:00 pm  
 Saturday, April 22 – 9:15 am  
 Wednesday, May 3 – 6:30 pm

Saturday, May 27 – 9:15 am  
 Wednesday, June 7 – 7:00 pm  
 Saturday, June 10 – 9:15 am

### SPECIAL WALK TO DELTA POND, SUNDAY, MAY 21- 9:15, 10 & 10:45 AM.

Advance Registration is Required! This docent led walk to Sonoma County's largest Egret and Heron rookery will be a fund raiser for the Learning Laguna bus transportation scholarship fund. This is an easy, three mile round trip. Plan on spending at least two hours on the trail. More details upon registration. Join us in helping more young children make a trip to the Laguna by chipping in \$10 for the walk!  
 Please email [mary@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:mary@lagunafoundation.org) to register.



Painting by Molly Eckler

**WANT TO DEEPEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAGUNA?** The Docents will be offering a series of "Three Walks and Talks in the Laguna" beginning Saturday, April 29.

The series will include walks to Delta Pond and Kelly Farm. Members, \$45 (non members \$65). For further information, contact Mary Abbott, Education Coordinator, at [mary@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:mary@lagunafoundation.org) or call 527-9277 x.102.

**COTATI CREEK CRITTER PLANTING DAYS.** The Cotati Creek Critters are coordinating volunteer efforts to plant 2000 native trees and shrubs on 5000 linear feet of Laguna Channel in Cotati over two years. Help join their efforts!

Saturday, April 8: Community planting day. Meet at Ladybug Lot on Lakewood Avenue, adjacent to Ladybug Park, in Cotati.

For further information or if you have a community group that would like to get involved, please contact Jenny Blaker, Outreach Coordinator at [jenny@creeks.cotati.info](mailto:jenny@creeks.cotati.info) or call 792-4422.

### Thank You, Laguna Foundation Volunteers!

Since our last newsletter, Laguna-Keepers have planted hundreds of trees and shrubs in the laguna, cleaned up and prepared the Stone Farm site for construction, the intrepid Swamp Dawgs have kept Brown Farm and Fish and Game properties off the Joe Rodota Bike Path free of trash and camping, **Rob Sanville, Ryan Dixon, and Robert Thille** have kept our computers and website running, and the Docents took nearly 300 school children into the Laguna. What would we do without you?

Special thanks goes to **Fircrest Market** of Sebastopol for providing snacks and refreshments for our hard working LagunaKeepers.

## Creating a Lasting Legacy

With every passing year, the Laguna Foundation is making strides towards restoring the Laguna's rightful place as a thriving and beloved centerpiece of Sonoma County's landscape. Through education of young and old, wildlife habitat restoration, and establishment of the Laguna Learning Center, we can see a day—not far off, now—when, like the Russian River, everyone in the county knows what the Laguna is and cherishes its value.

Our work is driven by a vision not of the next year or two, but of decades and centuries to come. To fulfill this vision and ensure the Laguna is stewarded forever, the Laguna Foundation must remain active and vital. That's why some of our members are including the Foundation in their estate planning.

It's tax season again. If you are planning your estate or philanthropy and would like to include the Foundation, we have relationships with financial and legal professionals who can help. Call Mark Green, Resource Development Director, at 527-9277, extension 103, or email [mark@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:mark@lagunafoundation.org) to request our brochure, *Planned Giving to the Laguna Foundation*. Thanks for considering the Laguna in your financial planning.



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*was made possible by*  
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## Laguna Learning Center Rehabilitation on the Horizon

BY MARK GREEN, *Resource Development Director*

With the promise of spring in the air, the Foundation is gearing up to build the first phase of the Laguna Learning Center. We submitted building permits to the City of Santa Rosa in February and hope to begin construction in early summer. Pledges to the capital campaign to build the Center now exceed 25% of the \$5 million estimated project budget, and outreach to prospective donors and grant programs are in full swing.

The Laguna Learning Center will rehabilitate historic Civil War-era farm buildings on Stone Farm, a property owned by the City of Santa Rosa and leased to the Foundation which overlooks the Laguna from a rise north of Occidental Road. We will rehabilitate these buildings and add a new building in the style of the historic structures, creating an educational center to celebrate and interpret the Laguna's natural, Native American, and agricultural history. The Center will be a focal point where the public can learn about the Laguna and participate in its restoration. The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District is planning a system of Laguna trails nearby, so the Learning Center will be a perfect place for visitors to learn about the Laguna before jumping out on the trail.

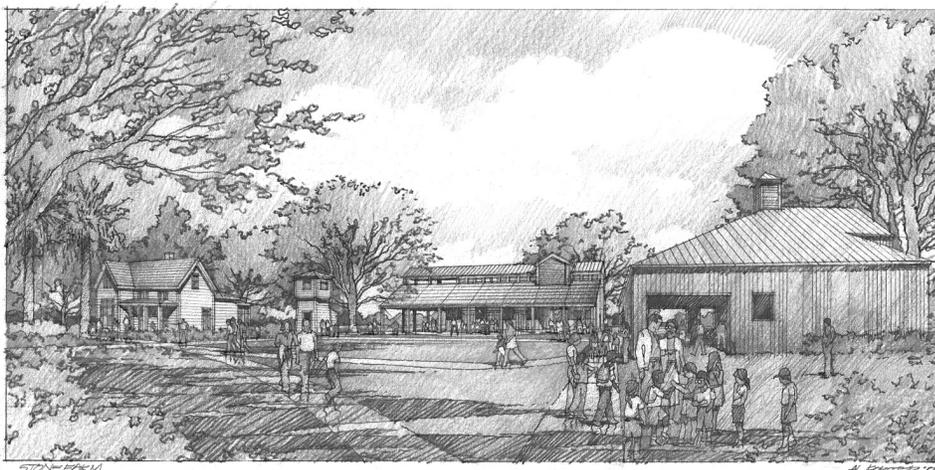
At the end of January, we submitted an application for a substantial

grant for the Laguna Learning Center through the California Cultural Heritage Endowment. Our local representatives to the State Assembly and Senate are working hard to help us secure this grant support.

Meanwhile, outreach for campaign support continues with the generous help of such community leaders as honorary campaign co-chair Connie Coddling, and positive response continues to grow. We are also reaching out to the local construction and engineering contractors' groups to seek in-kind contributions to the project, and their early response appears enthusiastic.

All in all, things are rolling right along for the Laguna Learning Center — a project that has something for everyone to love. Our hope is that if we continue to work hard and our network of supporters keeps growing, we could complete this campaign and construction of the Center within the next three years.

If you can help, please call us! The Laguna Learning Center is a community project, and we welcome your donation pledges, volunteer commitments, and contributions of in-kind construction services.



*Laguna Learning Center Rendering by Al Forster*

## What is Adaptive Management for Ludwigia Control?

BY JULIAN MEISLER, *Restoration Project Manager*

Although it seems like Year One of the *Ludwigia* Control Project just came to a close, planning for the coming season is already in full swing. A visit to the control areas in mid-February revealed several miles of channels nearly free of *Ludwigia* save for a few incipient stems. Although there will undoubtedly be some regrowth this summer, as creeping runners reach out across the channel, the contrast from a year ago is absolutely striking.

In the flooded fields of the Laguna Wildlife Area (north of Occidental Road) the results are less pronounced, where there was too little water to mechanically remove the treated biomass. However, we are currently designing a new treatment approach that will increase our success in these difficult areas. This is a three-year process, and each year we will continue to improve and modify

the *Ludwigia* project to reflect changing conditions and new information. In the language of the restoration world, this is known as *adaptive management*.

So what is the plan for the coming season? In the channel areas of both Rohnert Park and the Laguna Wildlife Area, the approach will be the same as last year, application of the aquatic formulation of glyphosate followed by mechanical removal. In these sections, we anticipate significantly less biomass to be present — needing far less herbicides and less mechanical removal. In the flooded fields of the Laguna Wildlife Area our approach is still in the planning stages. Our concept is to design a comparative analysis of two herbicides, glyphosate and triclopyr, which will help answer several critical questions. What is the relative effectiveness of the

two treatments for controlling *Ludwigia*; what is their relative impact on the other wetland plants; and what is the resulting effect on mosquito control? We are still in consultation with the regulatory agencies but a final implementation plan is expected in early spring.

The Laguna Foundation's report on the first year control effort is available on our website [www.lagunadesantarosa.org/RMP/Ludwigia\\_Status.htm](http://www.lagunadesantarosa.org/RMP/Ludwigia_Status.htm). Also available on the site are final reports prepared by Clean Lakes, Inc., the contractor hired by the Laguna Foundation to carry out the herbicide application and mechanical removal, and by Blankinship & Associates, our water quality consultant. We will be updating this site as the second year of the *Ludwigia* Control Project moves forward, so aficionados may want to add a bookmark!

**Thank You to our generous supporters since the last Meanderings...**

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**Laguna Learning Center**

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Founded in 1989, the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation works to preserve, restore, and provide opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn about the Laguna, Sonoma County's richest region of wildlife habitat.

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The **Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation**, founded in 1989, works to preserve, restore, and inspire greater public understanding and appreciation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, a rich and extensive complex of freshwater wetlands on the North Coast of California. The Foundation conducts educational programs, implements preservation and restoration projects, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, and works to develop appropriately managed opportunities for the public to enjoy the Laguna.

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## The Cotati Creek Critters are Growing Roots

BY JENNY BLAKER, *Outreach Coordinator*

Hundreds of volunteers have planted hundreds of native trees and shrubs along the Laguna in Cotati since the last issue of *Meanderings* - a direct result of the Urban Stream Restoration grant from the California Department of Water Resources in summer 2005.

In September, representatives of the Laguna Foundation, the City of Cotati, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the City of Rohnert Park, joined the Creek Critters to celebrate a Grand Opening at "Ladybug Lot." The Lot now houses a shipping container storing tools and equipment; bins for compost and potting soil; and a nursery of young trees.

The Critters gave presentations to churches, scouts, and Sunday schools, contacted the press, and generally made an all-out effort to attract the local community. The efforts bore fruit. From October to November the number of volunteers for community tree-planting days rose from ten to over 50. The calendar from January to

April filled-up quickly with special workdays for cub scouts, synagogues, a cohousing community, students from Sonoma State and the Santa Rosa Junior College, STRAW volunteers (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed, a project of the Bay Institute) and an Acorn Soupe school group.

In January, a new series of evening events began with Denise Cadman's inspiring presentation on the "Biology of the Laguna." In February the topic was "Creating Wildlife Habitat in Your Own Backyard."

The Cotati Creek Critters' project is sponsored by the Laguna Foundation and the Sonoma County Water Agency, with the support of the City of Cotati, and funded by the California Department of Water Resources.

Stewardship Coordinator, Wade Belew (right), transports native plants along the Cotati Creek trail by tricycle. **To volunteer at an upcoming planting day, please see the calendar of events listed on page 5.**



*Photo by John Hewitt*