



January 2005

BCWC Newsletter

Protect • Educate • Research • Monitor • Network

2004 in Review,

by Jeannette Baumgardener, BCWC Chairperson

From the headwaters near the top of Blucher Valley Road to the flatlands at the Gravenstein Highway, our watershed is a microcosm of Sonoma County that contains your home, the homes of your neighbors, dairies, vineyards, Christmas tree farms, nurseries, berry farms, one public school, suburban housing developments, large and small commercial enterprises including antique malls, auto repair services, and a sod farm. And it includes the vibrant world of wildlife in our neighborhood. Most of the time unseen by us they carry on, often in spite of our negative impacts on them. If you don't live near Blucher Creek, you may not be aware of being in the Blucher Creek watershed, but if you receive this newsletter, you are. The watershed covers an area of about 17 square miles - from Kennedy Road in the north to Blank Road in the south and from Gravenstein Highway (at the sod farm) in the east to Burnside and Bloomfield Roads in the west. The water that flows off of your property is part of this watershed. It helps to recharge our groundwater and the Russian River, and supports the diverse wildlife in our watershed area.

In 2004, the Blucher Creek Watershed Council took significant steps toward its goals of "protecting, educating, researching, monitoring and networking" the watershed area on behalf of its residents.

Protection: Erosion Study: The results of the erosion study by Prunuske Chatham, Inc. were published on our website: www.bluchercreek.org, and are also available at the public library. We are awaiting news of our grant application to the Coastal Conservancy to fund a restoration plan.

Education: Informational Meetings: Our monthly meeting location was changed to Palm Drive Hospital, rent free, because as they told me: "We are a community hospital and we're here to serve the community." Average meeting attendance was 20 people. Topics discussed at our meetings included:

Ecological History *Well Information*
Wild Neighbors *Water Harvesting*
Fire Safety

In addition, Jane Nielson led a geology walk in the field, and Barbara Chasteen led a tour of the old cemetery at Knolls Corner.

We are lining up an exciting program of informational meetings for the coming year – and you are invited to participate. See our **Calendar** on the back.

Research: BCWC Resources: BCWC maintains a library of resources on many topics relevant to water, wildlife, maps, and organizations. Material may be borrowed by contacting Jeannette at 829-1452, or at jmbaum@infostations. The Council also maintains a **website** www.bluchercreek.org.

Monitoring: Well Level Monitoring: Marty Mac Millan's ongoing volunteer efforts to monitor wells for static groundwater levels has continued and expanded. With foresight, the BCWC purchased it's own equipment two years ago. Now a log is being created that will be part of the larger picture as Sonoma County assesses its groundwater situation in order to make crucial decisions about growth in the future. Please read Marty's article about the program.

Networking: Goldridge RCD Alliance: Our alliance with the Goldridge Resource Conservation District last spring allows us to apply for grants available to non-profit groups. The staff at the GRCD has expertise in grant writing, knows the resources and how to work both with landowners and regulatory agencies. Liza Hulette, GRCD Natural Resource Coordinator has been extremely helpful. Please read her article about dirt road pollution in this newsletter.

Our dues paying membership totaled sixty-eight individuals in 2004. Thank you all. We need YOUR MEMBERSHIP to continue our education efforts. We want YOUR INVOLVEMENT to help assure that we have enough high quality water for a healthy and productive future. I would like to personally invite retired or semi-retired folks to get involved. Some of you have special knowledge to share from years of Blucher Creek area living. Why don't YOU join us? Since the establishment of the Council, water has come to the forefront of local, indeed, global news. Come to our meetings to learn more about how the complexity of water issues affects your watershed. For those who are willing to devote a few hours a month, see *How You Can Help* – inside. Here is a place where a volunteer can make a difference. Please join us in conservation efforts for our unique, seventeen square miles of earth. A **membership form** is included on the last page of this newsletter.

Private Dirt Roads – Pollution Factor

Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (GRRCD) has recently established a partnership with the Blucher Creek Watershed Council to jointly address erosion problems in Blucher Creek. Through this partnership, the RCD has applied for two grants on behalf of landowners to assist them with engineering design, permitting and implementation of important erosion control projects. Most of these projects involve repair of existing stream bank failures or control of actively headcutting gullies. These restoration activities will help alleviate the sediment input into Blucher Creek and ultimately the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

Sediment is the number one pollutant to our north coast streams and rivers. Gullies and stream bank failures are an obvious sign of sediment being lost and washed away into our sensitive watersheds. However, much of the sediment actually comes from improperly maintained or installed rural roads. Road failures can contribute both fine and coarse sediment to streams, and accumulated road failures in large storm events can have catastrophic effects, such as filling in pools and reducing habitat complexity. Studies show that roads can contribute 50 to 80% of the sediment that enters streams (Hagans et al., 1986).

Maintaining a dirt road can be difficult and expensive. Treating road erosion problems in Sonoma County is especially complex because slopes are generally steep and geologic features and soil types are naturally unstable. One way that GRRCD has been able to assist landowners in Sonoma County is to apply for state funds or grants that will enable us to hire professionals, such as geologists, soil conservationists, engineers, or environmental scientists who can make recommendations to landowners regarding road maintenance, design and upgrades. For example, a road project is currently underway in the Dutch Bill Creek Watershed. A road assessment was conducted in 2002 through funding from California Department of Fish and Game.

Two things that private landowners can do without hiring a professional include:

- Make sure that road surface is appropriately rocked
- Clean out culverts during and after a storm event to significantly reduce the chance of the road being “blown out” by a blocked culvert diverting flows

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact *Lisa Huette*, Natural Resource Coordinator, GRRCD (707) 823-4662 or goldrdge@sonic.net

How You Can Help BCWC

- **Website enhancement and updating:** a few hours initially, then an hour or so each month.
- **Errand Running:** 1 hr. here and there, local.
- **Organize our records:** a few hours initially, then an hour or so each month.

Well Monitoring Program

The Blucher Creek Watershed Council is conducting a long-term study to chart and assess the fluctuations of the water table in our area. The purpose of this study is to learn more about and increase our understanding of the source and availability of our local ground water.

To collect data for this study we are measuring the static water level of private domestic wells in accordance with standard practices. In order to have a representative sample for this study, we urge you to consider participating in this study, and welcome all who want to participate.

Those who participate will receive a copy of each measurement we take of their well for their own personal records. A chart summarizing the data (without names or addresses) will be available to the whole group. In order to achieve as comprehensive a picture as possible as to what is going on in our area we also plan to correlate the collected data with other environmental factors such as rainfall, plant life and the local geology.

For further information, please call *Marty MacMillan* (707) 823-8874.



Great Horned Owls

Isis Howard, age seven attends Harmony School.

Hello to everyone who reads this article, my name is Isis and I live in the Blucher Creek water-shed. I like most animals and one of my favorite animals is the Great Horned Owl. Here is a story about a Great Horned Owl:

One day at my house we were working outside and my mom saw a Great Horned Owl. It was near night but she could see it and hear it. The next day my mom looked for it in the same place she saw it the day before, and then she found it, and she saw a big possum, a black cat, a doe, and lots of birds around the Great Horned Owl. That's the end of the story. This fall I have seen the Great Horned Owl twice – both times at dusk. If you are out near nightfall, you may see one also.

The following facts I learned by researching the Great Horned Owl on the internet: The Great Horned Owl can be found in many situations including tree and cactus cavities, nest boxes, cliff ledges, and old crow, squirrel or hawk nests. Courtship and territory formation begins in early winter and the juveniles are dependent on the adults through the summer and sometimes will not leave their parents territory until forced to, in late fall.

Websites of interest:

SWiG: <http://owlfoundation.net/swig.html>
O.W.L. Foundation: <http://owlfoundation.net>
The OWL website has links to many important water issues and events, including the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury Report, "Got Water?"
http://owlfoundation.net/web-pix/pdf-files/Got_Water.pdf, the announcement of Sonoma County's new Water Coalition
<http://owlfoundation.net/SCWC-PressRelease.html> and the issues surrounding Rohnert Park's recently-released Water Supply Report:
http://owlfoundation.net/RP_WSA.html.

SWiG (Sebastopol Water Information Group)

By David Minium

The Sebastopol Water Information Group (SWiG) was formed in 2003, in response to the growing local concerns about sustainable groundwater supplies. SWiG's mission is to seek information about local groundwater issues and inform the community. To work with City of Sebastopol officials, County and State water agencies, and local groups to:

- Safeguard present/future water supplies in the Sebastopol area
- Gather and analyze groundwater supply and quality data in the Sebastopol area
- Establish credible monitoring programs for private wells
- Organize community forums on groundwater issues
- Advocate for local and Countywide sustainable water management.

SWiG's has found that the City of Sebastopol currently operates four wells, and Sonoma County Water Agency has three wells near the Laguna de Santa Rosa that together pump five to six million gallons per day average. The domestic wells and agricultural wells of unincorporated area residents probably draw their water from the same source as Sebastopol and the Sonoma County Water Agency wells.

We know private wells in the unincorporated area south of Sebastopol are going dry. We know the water table has declined significantly, **60 feet, on average**, (the height of a 6-story building) since 1985 in the area from the Sebastopol Holiday Inn to Lone Pine Road. SWiG has not found conclusive studies to help us determine whether current use exceeds supply or to analyze the fundamental reasons for private wells are going dry.

You don't need to be a specialist to jump in and help. Join SWiG. For more information or to get on the distribution list call 823-6657 or email SWiG at phebesor@sonic.net. Donations to SWiG are fully tax deductible. Please make checks payable to: The O.W.L. Foundation (and PLEASE write SWiG on the memo line of your check)
Send to: O.W.L. P.O. Box 127, Penngrove, CA 94951

Rainwater Harvesting

By Alistair Bleifuss and Ann Cassidy

If low-flow fixtures, short showers, drip irrigation, and all other practical water conservation measures haven't been enough to support a limited water supply, consider harvesting rainfall. Rather than piping or ditching water off of your property during the rainy season figure out how to retain it for later use. This can be done two ways. The first method is to store water in rain gardens, swales, or ponds, allowing it to soak into the ground and building up your water table. Gardens and landscaping will have more soil moisture to draw on later into the dry summer months. Permaculture commonly employs such techniques and a web search will provide workable ideas.

The second method is to capture and store rain that falls on roofs or other impermeable surfaces. 600 gallons of water will land on a one thousand square foot roof during a one-inch rainfall. It is relatively inexpensive to bypass the first flush of runoff that contains debris from the roof and gutters and store clean water. Sand, ultra-violet, and other types of filters can be used to produce potable water. The trick is to store enough water for use in the summer. Large water tanks are expensive. Two plastic 500-gallon tanks are the most economical and can be linked together in a series. Occasionally, used tanks are available at a discount from wineries or other commercial enterprises.

Supplying households with rainfall collection systems is common in the Caribbean, India, Hawaii, and other places with little groundwater, contaminated surface water, or lack of municipal supply systems. A good place to start a web search is "Texas Guide to Rain-water Harvesting" at: <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/publications/reports/RainHarv.pdf>

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Alistair Bleifuss and Ann Cassidy supply their home in Bodega with a rainwater harvesting system. Alistair presented this topic at the September BCWC meeting.

Remembering Bud Nahmens

By Charlie Judson, Weeks Well

"Bud did more for conservation in the watershed than any-one I can think of. He ran the dairy (and his father and mother before him) on Canfield road. In the last 20 years he worked with the Nature Conservancy and the Open Space Conservation District and leaves permanent protections on hundreds of acres bordering Blucher Creek. He was an active participant in the Vernal Pools Task Force.

For the last 15 years or so Bud and his wife Jan ran Pic-a-lilly Gardens on Schaeffer Road. He was not an "environmentalist", but I think he was proud to be a "conservationist." He loved his family ranch land and took pride in the permanent protections he negotiated with the Open Space District and the Nature Conservancy... He could easily have cashed out big time but chose not to. I admired him."



**BLUCHER CREEK
WATERSHED COUNCIL**
2100 Blucher Valley Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472
707.829.1452

Calendar of BCWC Events

Regular Meetings held 2nd Wed. of month at Palm Drive Hospital Community Room, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Feb. 9: Watershed Friendly Livestock (Mud & Manure) Management

March 9: Watershed Poetry Reading, at Coffee Catz Café, Gravenstein Station, Sebastopol

April 13: What To Plant Where, Patricia Canfield, Appleton Forestry Native Plant Nursery

May 11: Local History

June 8: General Members Meeting

Sunday, June 12, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Visualizing the Watershed: Plein-Air Art Workshop with Nancy Ricciardi,
Location and details TBA

July ??: Annual Potluck is back! Date, location and details TBA

Your well • Your property value • Your well being • Our Water • Our environment

These are our concerns. Your membership dues are needed to ensure that we are able to conserve our resources, maintain property values, monitor water issues in our watershed and deliver a newsletter to each and every property owner in the Blucher Creek Watershed.

“We” are a handful of volunteers committed to protecting our watershed. If you are able, we also invite you to join us in person and meet your neighbors, have fun and learn about our unique microcosm of Sonoma County. Join our well monitoring program. Come to our educational meetings. Sign up for our email list to stay informed. Check our website: www.bluchercreek.org. Above all, we need your financial support – join the organization that is working hard on your behalf. Complete and return the membership form below.

*BCWC Chairperson, Jeannette Baumgardner; Vice Chair, Dan Quinn;
Treasurer, Steve Howard; Secretary, Paul Andre Schabracq*

2100 Blucher Valley Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472
707.829.1452



**Blucher Creek Watershed Council
Membership Form**
(Send to address at the left)

Here’s my membership fee to join the Blucher Creek Watershed Council. The fees for January–December 2005 are:

- Families: \$35
- Retiree Families \$ 25
- Singles: \$25
- Retiree Single \$15
- Low Income: \$10

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

- I would like to monitor my well.
- Please inform me about informational meetings and other how-to information.

Thank you! You’ll hear from us soon.