



RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707) 833-2553 • www.rrwatershed.org

Your Watershed:

Coastal Cleanup, River Cleanup and Illegal Dumping

Where can you find 2,400 pounds of dumped metal, 116 tires, 108 cubic feet of recyclables and seven *thousand* pounds of household garbage? Sadly, you can find all of that in the Russian River. That is what 350 volunteers collected during this September's Russian River cleanup event in the stretch of river between Cloverdale and Guerneville. Another 2,757 pounds of trash and 961 pounds of recyclable materials were collected by 226 volunteers from 39 miles of Sonoma County coastline.

The Russian River Watershed Association acknowledges and thanks the hundreds of volunteers who participated in September's River and Coastal Cleanup events. By removing trash from coastal and river shorelines, we protect wildlife and water quality, and we beautify our environment.

Although some of this trash is the result of careless littering, another significant source is illegal dumping along our creeks, rivers, and coastlines. Household garbage and discarded appliances, tires and other items are dumped along creeks, rivers and roadside ditches throughout the county. In addition to compromising the beauty of our waterways, illegally dumped materials pose safety and environmental risks to people and wildlife as they can leach hazardous chemicals, block drainage ways and cause flooding.

A coalition of Sonoma County agencies has been working collaboratively to implement the "Keep Sonoma Clean" program which is designed to aggressively combat illegal dumping and littering along county roadways. Features of the program include:

- Illegal dumping remediation to remove and properly discard illegally dumped materials from areas with a high incidence of chronic dumping
- Expedited response to illegal dumping activity for more rapid cleanup of dump sites, and to discourage additional dumping at those locations
- Varied and convenient *legal* disposal options including drop-off locations and community clean up events
- Preventive barriers, signage, lighting and surveillance to make it more difficult for individuals to discard unwanted items illegally, and to identify and catch perpetrators
- Enhanced code enforcement to enable county Hearing Officers to conduct abatement hearings
- Media relations and community outreach to modify attitudes and educate the public about littering and illegal dumping
- Follow-up monitoring and reporting to determine which combination of methods most successfully prevents illegal dumping.

Surveillance cameras have been installed by county road crews in rural sites around the county where illegal dumping is common. This program has been successful in catching illegal dumping



RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707) 833-2553 • www.rrwatershed.org

in action. The first criminal case prosecuted in Sonoma County resulted in the perpetrator being fined \$250, assigned 40 hours of community service and placed on one-year of probation. Other cases are pending

A website, www.keepsonomaclean.org, has information on illegal dumping, how to report a site or dumping in progress, and legal disposal options in Sonoma County. Public awareness and education about illegal dumping is key to this program. In addition to the website, the County is posting signs, using radio advertisements, and distributing information at community events to get the word out about the illegal dumping problem.

It's important for all of us to get involved. If illegal dumping is not reported, the problem grows. Simple actions on your part can help keep a small problem from becoming a big problem. Here is what you can do to help.

- If you see an illegal dumping is in progress, contact the law enforcement agency for that area. Be prepared to provide as much information such as: the location, a description of any vehicle or individual involved, and a license plate number. Illegal dumping that occurs within city limits should be reported to the local police department; in unincorporated Sonoma County it should be reported to the Sheriff's Department.
- Report existing illegal dump sites by calling 877-565-DUMP (3867). For comprehensive information about legal ways to dispose of unwanted items in Sonoma County, visit the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency's web site at www.RecycleNow.org or call the Eco-Desk (707) 565-3375.

Do your part to keep your community clean and green.

This article was authored Cristina Goulart of the Town of Windsor and Lisa Steinman of the County of Sonoma on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (www.rrwatershed.org) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement