

## **JUNE 11, 2018 NUESTRA TIERRA/OUREARTH RADIO INTERVIEW**

### **What is the RRWA?**

A coalition of eleven cities, counties and special districts in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, habitat restoration and watershed enhancement. The RRWA works to promote cooperation and implementation of projects that protect watershed resources, restore fisheries and improve water quality at reduced cost to our member agencies and communities they serve.

### **Who is the RRWA?**

Membership includes: Ukiah, Cloverdale, Healdsburg, Windsor, Sebastopol, Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Count of Mendocino, County of Sonoma, and the Sonoma County Water Agency.

### **What is a watershed?**

A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that falls in it and drains off of it goes to a common water body. The Russian River Watershed starts north of Ukiah and Redwood Valley, extends as far south as Cotati and flow to the Pacific Ocean.

The Russian River is 1,485 square miles of land, 110 miles of river, home to 360,000 people, 238 creeks, and 63 fish species.

### **What is storm water runoff?**

When it rains, storm water in paved areas runs off the paved land and goes to a local storm drain system.

### **What is storm water pollution?**

When storm water runs off of paved areas, the water will collect any pollution on the ground. This can include trash, oil, grease, pesticides, fertilizers, pet waste, and even dirt. Storm drains convey water and storm water pollution to the nearest creek or river without any form of treatment. So, any pollutants in storm water runoff end up in our nearby water resulting in harming the fish and wildlife in the creek, and causing pollution in our drinking water supply. Some pollution can result in unsafe swimming conditions resulting in beach closures preventing people from being able to swim in the river on a hot day.

### **What does it mean to be part of the pollution solution?**

There are simple things everyone can do to help reduce or prevent pollution from running off into rivers and creeks:

- Don't litter, pick up trash;
- Avoid overwatering your landscaping. Overwatering results in runoff of water which not only wastes water, it transports pollutants from your garden to the creek.
- Plant native plants in your landscaping. Native plants will need less water, pesticides, and fertilizers. Less water for irrigation will reduce the amount of runoff generated and result in less chemicals being washed down the storm drain.

- Apply minimal amounts of pesticides and fertilizers and never apply them right before it is about to rain.
- Properly dispose of all hazardous waste including paints, automotive fluids, electronics, light bulbs, and chemicals.
- Pick up pet waste. Pet waste contains bacteria that can cause disease. Leaving pet waste on the ground can lead to that bacteria running off into the river and causing harmful bacteria in our rivers and creeks.
- Avoid car wash water from running off. Washing your car generates wastes in the wash water runoff including soaps, grime, oil, and car fluids. Try washing your car on an unpaved area or in an area where runoff does not reach the storm drain. Or better yet, take your car to the car wash.
- Limit power washing activities. Power washing results in the use of a lot of water and can result in pollution in runoff. If you must power wash, try sweeping the bulk of the material you are trying to manage. Never power wash leaves, debris, or sediment directly down the storm drain.

### **What type of projects have the RRWA been working on?**

Safe Medicine Disposal Program: Don't flush your unused medications down the toilet or throw them in the trash! Recent studies show that pharmaceuticals in rivers and streams, if present at high enough concentrations, can harm aquatic wildlife. When flushed down the drain, some medications are not completely removed by wastewater treatment plants and are discharged to surface waters.

Russian River Friendly Landscaping: RRFL is a whole systems approach to design, construction, and maintenance of the landscape which supports the integrity of one of California's richest and most diverse ecosystems: the Russian River watershed. These guidelines are set out to promote water and energy conservation, protect water and air quality, and conserve and protect wildlife habitat. RRWA will be hosting a workshop on RRFL principles in February 2019.

Environmental Column: Each month the RRWA publishes an environmental column on a topic of interest to promote environmental awareness and education. Recent topics published include: "Love Your Lawn, Love Your River," "Let's Celebrate Earth Day," "You Toilet is not A Trash Can," and "Fire Safe Landscaping."

### **Where can people go to learn more?**

Visit [rrwatershed.org](http://rrwatershed.org)