

Restoration Update: 10,000 Trees and Counting

Catherine Cumberland, Restoration Program Manager

Last year's projects added another ten acres to the area that Foundation volunteers and staff have planted with native trees and shrubs. We started in January at Meadowlark Field with our first Tree-A-Thon. Over 100 volunteers showed up on a foggy morning to plant 870 trees, bringing the total at Meadowlark Field to about 14 acres planted. We'll return there several times this year, beginning in March when volunteers from Congregation Shomrei Torah, as well as our own LagunaKeepers, will sprig hundreds of willows into the wettest areas. In summer we'll be back to reconfigure the irrigation system, relocating the 8" irrigation main from the west side to the east side of the field. Finally, in October we'll plant the first phase of the massive (28-acre) project funded by Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District. We're planning for 1,500 plants to be installed by December.

Assuming the weather and the varmints are relatively cooperative, 80% of Meadowlark Field will have restoration plantings in various stages of growth by the end of 2012, for a total of 5,000+ plants installed over 44 acres. This represents a huge change for the better for the 53-acre Meadowlark Field, which has taken its share of hits from human uses over the past couple hundred years. The field has the distinction of being one of the few Foundation restoration areas accessible year-round to the public, so do take a walk there if you haven't had the chance. It's also the site of the southern end of the new Laguna Trail (see page 3), which begins at Highway 12, passes through Meadowlark Field to Kelly Farm and comes out at Occidental Road. This huge trail project is a sight in itself; well worth a visit in its own right.

After the Tree-A-Thon we ramped up for the Duer Creek planting. A pretty big project; 1,500 trees over eight acres, funded by a CalTrans environmental enhancement grant. Humble little Duer Creek, a narrow seasonal drainage with diffuse "headwaters" somewhere around Duer Road, now boasts a 100-foot riparian setback on both sides, densely planted with ten species of native shrubs and trees. Not bad for such a modest creek, which of course has also endured various human impacts over the years. We have the City of Santa Rosa's Reclamation Department

to thank for their vision of healthy riparian zones along all City farm creeks. Denise Cadman, City of Santa Rosa's Natural Resource Specialist, works tirelessly to protect and restore ecosystem integrity on the 500+ acres entrusted to her care. The City funded the planting and maintenance of an additional three acres on the west side of the farm road crossing Duer Creek, so the mature riparian corridor will extend along nearly the entirety of the creek. This is a good thing, since we've seen plenty of wildlife action out there, from frequent coyote sightings to pelicans circling the storage pond.

Once Duer Creek was planted we moved on to the Delta Pond project. After Duer Creek this two-acre site seemed like small potatoes – until we stuck a shovel in the ground! Construction grading and heavy equipment had left the soil compacted and embedded with rocks. We had to rent an auger and hire a posse of strapping young dudes to help us dig a mere 1-1/2 feet down. It took several days, but once the holes were dug the rest went fairly quickly. Students from the Summerfield Waldorf community service program came out to help and got 700 trees planted in three days. The students were a friendly, diligent bunch – veritable poster children for a Waldorf education. It was a pleasure working with them.



September 2007 aerial photo of Meadowlark Field looking southeast toward Highway 12. This photo was taken prior to the 11-acre planting in the northwest portion of the field. Note the complete lack of woody vegetation throughout the majority of the field.

Photo: J.M. Baeli

Executive Director Report - *David Bannister*

The Laguna and the Foundation have both been in the news a lot lately, and it has all been good! We are so excited about the Laguna being designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. This happened on the 40th Anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Treaty; be sure to read Hattie Brown's article on the recognition and the great celebration and award ceremony we had!

One of our great docents Betsy Sanville was recently featured in a Press Democrat article about why she loves teaching nature to children in the Foundation's Learning Laguna Program. There is still time to sign up and join Betsy in this wonderful program! Docent training classes start March 14th so if you hurry you can still get in! See the opposite page for registration information.

Yet another Press Democrat article was written about the Cotati Creek

Critters restoration and public education work in the headwaters of the Laguna in Cotati. The reporter and photographer came out on a Critter volunteer day in January when I happened to be present as a volunteer. We were planting native grasses in an area that had previously had trees planted. The Laguna Foundation is the fiscal sponsor of Cotati Creek Critters and is looking forward to continued collaboration with this great group and their restoration efforts in Cotati.

The Sonoma West Times wrote an article about the generous donation by the Soroptimist International of Santa Rosa for the construction of an observation deck next to the pond at the Laguna Learning Center. This deck will have long views to the Mt. St. Helena, intermediate views to the Laguna and Irwin Creek and close up views of the pond. Many thanks to the Soroptimists for the donation!

Laguna Trail Update

Sara Press, Associate Open Space Planner, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District

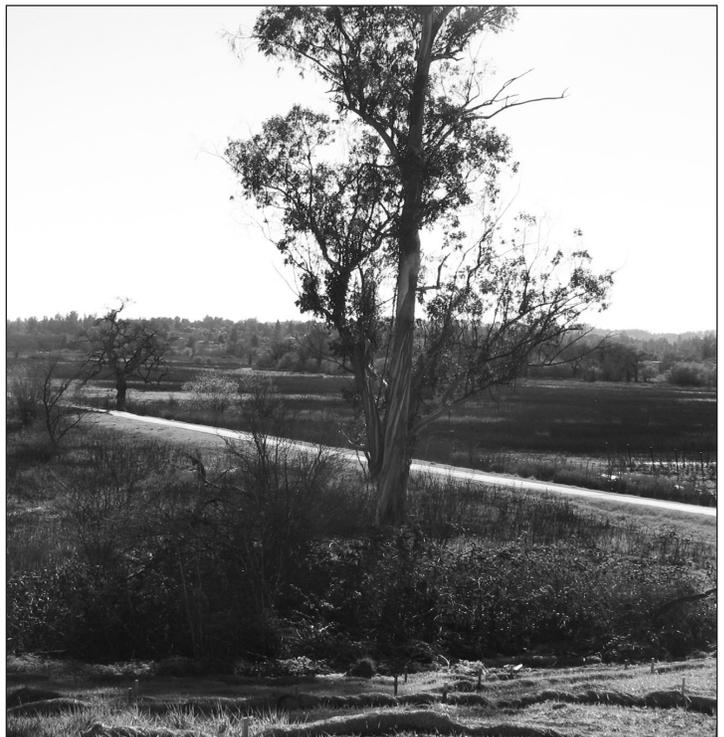
The first phase of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Protected Lands Trails Plan is under construction. Phase 1 is located along the western edge of the City of Santa Rosa's Kelly Farm and a portion of Laguna floodplain that the Balletto family has given to the County. This 1.8-mile trail extends between Occidental Road and Highway 12. After receiving all the necessary permits, construction of the trail and two staging areas began in late September. Although the intention was to finish construction in 2010, it was not possible to finish before the rains began in October. Work will resume once the area is dry enough and the necessary permits are renewed, which should be by early summer.

The trail and both staging areas still need to be finished, including installing a scenic overlook that will take advantage of sweeping views over the Balletto Easement and toward the Laguna, interpretive signage, bike racks, and gates, among other amenities. The remaining work should take about a month to complete. Once open, the trail will be accessible from two staging areas. One will be accessible from an access road off of Highway 12 located east of the Laguna channel. This staging area will be large enough to accommodate twelve vehicles, one wheelchair-accessible space, and up to three horse trailers. The other staging area, located off of Occidental Road, will be large enough to accommodate seven vehicles and one wheelchair-accessible parking space.

Sonoma County Regional Parks will be operating and maintaining the trail, as well as responding to any emergency calls. The rules and regulations for the trail will be similar to other Regional Parks facilities. Bicycles and horses will be allowed on the multi-use trail on Kelly Farm, which connects with the City of Sebastopol's Wetlands Preserve trail on Meadowlark Field. Dogs will be allowed with a leash on the multi-use trail, although not permitted on the 0.6-mile

pedestrian-only trail through the floodplain due to the sensitivity of the land, habitat and wildlife. The trails will be subject to seasonal closure during periods of heavy rain and flooding in the Laguna.

When construction is complete, the District and Regional Parks, along with project partners, including the State Coastal Conservancy, the City of Santa Rosa, the City of Sebastopol and the Laguna Foundation will hold a ceremony to officially open the trail.



Laguna Trail- View from the soon to be built Observation Deck at Kelly Wetlands.
Photo: Christine Fontaine

Education Programs Looking Forward

Christine Fontaine, Director of Education Programs

Docents are raring to go for the spring 2011 Learning Laguna programs – our 24th season of the program. Between March 29th and May 27th we will be working with approximately 425 students from around the watershed, bringing the Laguna to their classrooms and bringing the students to the Laguna for experiential field trips the following week. The program is sought after by teachers because it helps them meet their science curriculum standards and because of the skilled and enthusiastic teaching by the docents who contribute hundreds of hours of volunteer time each year. May is call-out month, the time when teachers can register for Learning Laguna for fall 2011 and spring 2012. So, tell your 2nd-4th grade teacher friends to contact the Laguna Foundation education department so they, too can be included in the call-out for sign-ups.



Laguna Docents and students studying animal tracks.
Photo: Dana Vallarino

This spring docents will also be busy tabling at nature celebration events plus leading and assisting on many Laguna Learning adventure walks, a few of which are listed on page 5. We are looking forward to the opening of the new Laguna trail and, once open, plan to host several morning and evening walks this summer to help people get to know the habitat. Keep your eye on our e-newsletter for upcoming walks announcements and plan to join us to explore the Laguna. Also, remember to sign-up early for the Delta Pond Rookery walks – they sell-out every year! The registration fee we collect for the walks feeds our bus scholarship fund which enables school children to experience the Laguna first hand.

“Thank you for all that you do and thank you for the bus scholarship. Your field trip was the only one we were able to take this past year due to the economy and lack of funds.”

Monte Vista 3rd grade teacher

A big, exciting educational project in the works is the creation of signage for the Laguna Learning Center. Since last September our interpretive team has been crafting and refining messages that will teach visitors about the Laguna flora, fauna and ecosystem services. The created text is now in the hands of artist Faith Rumm who will skillfully (if not a bit magically!) transform the messages into lively, engaging, and beautiful interpretive panels that will appear

on the entry kiosk, the observation deck and the bridge, features of the Laguna Learning Center that have been designed by landscape architect Gene Kunit. The panels will be installed in sync with the construction and will be ready to greet visitors when the building is finished.

Don't miss out! There is still time to sign-up for Docent Training.

With the soon-to-open Laguna Trail, the impending construction of the Laguna Learning Center and the ongoing demand for Learning Laguna, we need lots of new volunteers to help deliver our education programs.

Training starts on March 14 and runs on consecutive Mondays from 9:30-2:30 until May 16. Over the 10-week course we explore the wonders of the Laguna, both indoors and out, including field trips to special places not open to the public. Trainees read interesting and stimulating articles, learn about the Laguna ecosystems and its natural and cultural history, and learn to teach the dynamic Learning Laguna activities; all the while having fun and bonding with fellow trainees and the entire docent circle.

Is this your year to become a docent? Contact Christine Fontaine: 527-9277x102 or christine@lagunafoundation.org

International Recognition for Laguna and Santa Rosa Plain

Hattie Brown, Conservation Science Program Manager

The Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Complex was named a Wetland of International Importance on World Wetlands Day February 2, 2011.

Beginning several years ago, the Laguna Foundation started the task of coordinating an application to the Ramsar Convention to recognize the Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Complex as a Wetland of International Importance. Since 1971, wetlands all over the world have been designated by the Ramsar Convention to highlight the importance of wetlands and the ecosystem services they provide. Ramsar is not an acronym. "Ramsar" or the "Ramsar Convention" is the abbreviated name for a treaty signed in Ramsar, Iran 40 years ago. The Ramsar Convention was born of the recognition that migrating birds utilize wetlands across national borders and so the importance of wetlands needed to be promoted internationally. Since its inception, our knowledge about the importance wetland ecosystems play has grown. Areas like the Laguna and surrounding Santa Rosa Plain provide flood abatement, groundwater recharge, recreation, and species habitat just to name a few. The Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Complex is of particular international importance

due to the rare and endangered plant and animal species found here in our unique vernal pool environments.

Properties adjacent to the Laguna main channel, tributaries, and within the surrounding Santa Rosa Plain make up the newest Ramsar site in the world. While we know locally that we live in a special place, this recognition signifies that the Laguna and Santa Rosa Plain are important beyond the watershed, the county, and even the nation. The Ramsar designation states that the Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Complex is important to the world and puts us on the map on a global scale.

February 2, 2011 was the 40th anniversary of the signing of the treaty in Ramsar and we held a small celebration to honor the public and private landowners who "listed" their properties as a part of our application to Ramsar. Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey as well as Supervisor Efrén Carrillo and local representatives joined private and public landowners for a small ceremony at the Lynmar Estate tasting room. We distributed certificates to participating landowners and toasted the Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Complex on a beautiful winter day.

Tree-A-Thon Report

On a beautiful sunny day in January 85 people came out to plant 500 trees and understory plants on Irwin creek. These fantastic supporters of the Foundation were either volunteer fundraisers, their donors, or experienced LagunaKeepers who taught the other volunteers what to do and how to do it. Many thanks to: Stuart Schroeder of Stone Horse Farm who generously provided draft horse drawn carriage rides from our office down to the planting site, Whole Foods Market Sebastopol who provided drinks, snacks and disposable shopping bags, Guayaki who provided Yerba Mate drinks, and Ramona Haller who provided unbreakable reusable dishware. Special but more thanks to Lynmar Estate for hosting a post-event luncheon for the top fundraisers and donors.

And, of course, many, many thanks to the volunteers and their donors who raised or donated over \$22,000 to support our Restoration, Education and Conservation Science Programs. Special mention goes to our top five fundraisers:

1. Denise Cadman \$4,165.61
2. Ken and Susan Churchill \$2,505.00
3. Chris Engel \$2,475.04
4. Ava & Adam Persinger \$1,930.77
5. Kate & Emma Quinlan \$1,118.85



Tree-A-Thon volunteers Denise Cadman and daughter Rosalie enjoying planting trees together. Photo: Henry Trione

The Tree-A-Thon is a great event! Not only does it generate vital funds for the Foundation, it also gets plants in the ground with volunteer labor that we could not have gotten planted any other way. And, this kind of riparian forest restoration has multiple ecosystem benefits: improved water quality, improved wildlife habitat and connectivity and reduced water temperature. Talk about a win/win project!

LagunaKeepers Calendar

Habitat Restoration Volunteers

Be sure to wear shoes & clothes you don't mind getting dirty. Only heavy rain cancels. Snacks are on us, but do bring gloves, water, and friends! For more information contact Catherine Cumberland: 527-9277 x108 or catherine@lagunafoundation.org.



Meadowlark Field

Saturday, March 19, 9am - noon

We'll install hundreds of willow sprigs to kick off the Open Space District's huge planting project: 3,000 trees by 2015. Meet at the Chevron station just east of the Laguna at 5640 Hwy 12, Sebastopol.

Earth Day Event at the Native Plant Garden

Saturday, April 23, 9am - noon

Celebrate Earth Day by exploring the diversity of California native species! Volunteers will plant grasses, irises, and shrubs in the final phase of installation at this site. In addition, we'll continue the expansion of the Joint Wetlands planting: hundreds of native plants bordering a seasonal wetland, grading into oak woodland higher up the slope. Meet at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, 4300 Llano Rd, Santa Rosa; follow signs to the "Administration" building.

Laguna Uplands

Saturday, May 14, 9am - noon

A change of pace for this site: thistle attack! Join us to get your aggressions out on this nasty weed. Meet at the end of Palm Avenue, Sebastopol, just south of Palm Drive Hospital.

Summer Interns Needed in Restoration Department

The Restoration Department will begin accepting applications in April for our Field Internship Program. Interns will assist with installation, maintenance and monitoring of plantings, weed control, irrigation installation and maintenance, weed mapping, and collecting and compiling restoration project data. Internships are unpaid, except for one Tree-a-Thon internship, which pays a \$500 stipend upon completion.

Must have a valid driver's license, reliable transportation, and ability to work outdoors in variable weather conditions. Familiarity with MS Office Software a plus. GPS/GIS skills useful but not necessary. Applicants should email resume, number of internship units desired (45 work hours per unit), and dates of availability to: catherine@lagunafoundation.org.

Laguna Outings Calendar

Public Education Program

Laguna Evening Exploration

Saturday, March 12, 4:30 – 8pm

Celebrate arrival of spring and get an up close look at the Laguna de Santa Rosa at dusk. Laguna Foundation docents and City of Santa Rosa Natural Resource Specialist Denise Cadman will lead this exploration of Alpha Farm, a City of Santa Rosa property that supports both local agriculture and wildlife habitat. We'll keep our eyes out for owls, bats, coyotes and other Laguna residents, talk about Laguna restoration projects, and enjoy a picnic dinner. Pre-registration required via LandPaths www.landpaths.org

Vernal Pools of the Santa Rosa Plain

Saturday, April 23, 9am – noon

Vernal pools are a beautiful and ephemeral phenomenon each spring and Sonoma County is one of the few places in the world where they exist. The unique environment of vernal pools provides habitat for numerous rare plants and animals that are able to survive and even thrive in the harsh environment of fluctuating wet and dry conditions. Want to learn more? Join us for this field learning adventure! Pre-registration required via LandPaths www.landpaths.org

Delta Pond Rookery with Laguna Docents

Saturday, April 30, Multiple AM walk times

This annual event is not to be missed! The trees between Delta Pond and the Laguna are host to a sizable rookery of great blue herons, double crested cormorants, plus great egrets with their wispy breeding plumage. Come watch the adults endeavoring to keep up with demanding chicks who are trying to out-compete nest-mates and prepare for first flight. The sights and sounds of all this activity are indeed awe-inspiring.

This event is a fund-raiser for the Learning Laguna bus scholarship fund- \$10 per person. Buy tickets on our website: www.lagunafoundation.org

Family Wetland Day

Saturday, June 25, 10am – 2pm

The Laguna was recently named a wetland of international importance and here is an opportunity for your family to learn about it and to experience the magic of this special place. Docents will be on hand at several learning stations around the wetland. Upon arrival, each child will receive a learning "passport," scavenger hunt list, and a trail map. Follow the map for fun, hands-on adventure. Complete the passport for a special reward at the end! Bring a picnic lunch so you can linger and enjoy this special day. Pre-registration required via LandPaths www.landpaths.org

Will You Help Us Finish the Laguna Learning Center?

We are excited to report that we have now completed the design of Phases II and III of the Laguna Learning Center and hope to have a building permit in hand by the time this issue of Meanderings hits the press. Then, weather permitting, we will begin construction next month and hope to have this incredible project we have been working on for 6 years, completed by year's end.

Phase II, the Interpretative Building and Phase III, the landscaping and signage is being partially paid for with a \$805,000 grant from the Coastal Conservancy, but they require us to match a portion of these funds. With your support, we are hoping to raise the matching funds by selling the remaining naming and dedication opportunities.

We hope you will want to be recognized for your support or memorialize a loved one by making a donation to this wonderful project. Having the Center complete will enable us to further our mission to preserve, restore and educate the public about the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

Below is the list the available naming opportunities, which all include a plaque or sign with the dedication. Thanks to all the wonderful donors who have already supported the project with their dedications!

Farmhouse	\$67,000	Ken and Susan Churchill
Observation Deck	\$30,000	Soroptimist International Santa Rosa in memory of Dora Finnemore
Heritage Garden & Orchard	\$30,000	Caryl Hart/Nathan M. Ohrbach Foundation in memory of Jerome K. Ohrbach
Bio-Retention Pond	\$25,000	Available
Entry Kiosk	\$15,000	Available
Foot Bridge Over Swale	\$15,000	Available
Knoll with Heritage Oak	\$11,000	Greg Young in memory of Moira Chatton
Entrance Gate	\$10,000	Available
Bench	\$5,000	Joany Przekop in memory of Henry Przekop
Picnic Table & Water Fountain	\$4,500	Mary Frances Laier in memory of Jim and Mary Frances Laier
Bench	\$4,000	Tom McGinley in memory of Helen McGinley Adams
Bench	\$4,000	Eight Available
Picnic Table	\$2,500	Five Available
Drinking Fountain	\$1,000	Al Coppin, Keegan & Coppin



YES! I'd like to purchase a dedication opportunity and support the completion of the Laguna Learning Center.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Item _____

Dedicated to the memory of: _____ (Leave blank if you prefer no dedication.)

I'd like to make a general donation towards the Laguna Learning Center in the amount of \$ _____

If you have any questions please call David Bannister at 527-9277 ext 103.

Thank you to our generous supporters since our last *Meanderings*...

Membership Donations

Keith Abeles and Amy Levin, Loren Amelang, John Anton, Martha and J.M. Baeli, Marty and Gary Bannister, Terry and Steve Beck, Jenny Blaker and Neil Hancock, Benn Blincoe, Richard Bloom and Bridget McCoy, Harry Boatright, Tish Brown, Dennis Calabi and Gretchen Whisenand, Lenore and Al Carrion, Sherry Catlett, Robert Cerniglia, Marcia Coleman, Buzz and Cindy Danner, Laraine Downer, Peter and DeeAnne Edwards, Wendy Eliot and Michael Fitzgibbon, Richard and Wendy Foster Evans, David and Sally Ewald, Mark and Jean Farmer, Skip Ginsburg, Khatiba Grais and Howard Ballinger, Alex and Margaret Guo, Linda and David Hanes, Harmony Farm Supply, Diane and Bryant Hichwa, Don Jackson, Michele Anna Jordan, Sandra Poysa and Jim Jordan, Louisa Leavitt, Les and Nancy Lewis, Loma Del Sol Vineyards, Inc., Connie Mahoney, Ruth Mankin, Linda Marietta, David Maris, Patricia McLaughlin, Joyce and Mark Mellander, Nancy Moorhead, Barbara Moulton, Jane Nielson, Robert Orr, Doris Parker, Alexis and Angela Persinger, Linda Phillips, Joan Przekop, Mike and Margo Requarth, Susan and Jerry Roth, Ruth Sanford, Robert Sargent, Janet Seaforth, Greg Sharpe, Michael Sherwood, Arthur and Judith Slater, Gail Dubinsky Spielman, Amy and Greg Stanton, Vic and Karen Trione, Dale and Elaine Trowbridge, Bob Truax, Gene and Mary Wilkinson.

Tree-A-Thon Donations

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Tree-A-Thon Donations Continued

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Harry Boatright, Elaine Booth, Christopher Bornman, Carole Harbard, Nancy Isaac, Tom and Gail Powell, Rotary Club Of Rancho Cotati, Joan Simon, Kate Symonds.

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Churchill Cellars, Sustainable H2O Solutions, Carle, Mackie, Power & Ross LLP, Heck Foundation, ComputerLink PC & Network Management, Performance Design Group, PYXIS Consulting, Whole Foods Market, Sebastopol.

Wish List

Perhaps you own & would like to re-home one of these items!

Large outdoor umbrella and stand, 18V cordless power drill with charger, laptop computer (less than 3 years old), paper shredder, conference room chairs (without arms), 4x4 pick-up truck, full-size refrigerator for storing seeds & plant samples.

Please contact Maggie Hart: 527-9277x107 or maggie@lagunafoundation.org.



The **Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation**, founded in 1989, works to preserve, restore, and inspire greater understanding and appreciation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa wetland complex, which is the largest tributary of the Russian River and one of Sonoma County's richest wildlife area. The Foundation conducts educational programs, implements preservation and restoration projects, conducts scientific research, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, and advocates for appropriately managed opportunities for the public to enjoy the Laguna.

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Please renew your Laguna Foundation membership to ensure you keep receiving this newsletter!

Pennyroyal Mint Control

Hattie Brown, Conservation Science Program Manager

Pennyroyal is an invasive perennial weed that thrives in wetland environments. It has invaded many of the vernal pools or seasonal wetlands in Sonoma County. The Laguna Foundation's Adopt a Vernal Pool program documented Pennyroyal in approximately half of vernal pools surveyed on the Santa Rosa Plain and suspect that the weed poses a significant threat to the survival of endangered plants.

Vernal pools, which fill with water in the winter and slowly drain over the spring and summer, are relatively immune to invasion of non-native species. They are regarded as a refuge for native plants in California including threatened and endangered species. Pennyroyal, however, has a tenacious ability to germinate and thrive in standing water making it a significant threat to endangered plants. Locally, Pennyroyal threatens the persistence of three vernal pool plants: Sonoma sunshine, Sebastopol meadowfoam, and Burke's goldfields.



Last spring we launched a pilot study to investigate the effectiveness of three methods of controlling Pennyroyal in vernal pools: (1) hand pulling only; (2) hand pulling followed by herbicide; and (3) herbicide only compared to a control, or no treatment. All three were equally effective at eliminating the Pennyroyal by the end of the summer. It remains to be seen how much of the weed will regrow this year and so we will continue the pilot study and meanwhile expand it to a larger scale.

This spring and summer, we will manage Pennyroyal at numerous properties across the Santa Rosa Plain. If you are interested in assisting with this Pennyroyal control effort, and would like to hand pull this invasive weed, please contact Hattie Brown by email: hattie@lagunafoundation.org.

Pennyroyal mint removed from a vernal pool by hand.

Photo: Hattie Brown