



## Laguna's Precious Waters: Refuge and Recovery

By Kevin Munroe, Executive Director

*Photo: The Laguna de Santa Rosa, by Steve Gibbs*

As we come together to assess, understand and recover from the fires, it's essential that we not neglect the vital goals, programs and projects already underway. In fact, healthy, functioning wetlands are perhaps nature's most effective insurance policy against natural disasters, whether they are drought, flood, fire or the effects of climate change. Most extreme weather events are at least buffered, if not reduced by the incredible absorbent, water-storing and resilient characteristics of healthy wetlands. Wetlands hold and slow winter floods, store moisture and life during droughts, alleviate and buffer advancing fires; they are perhaps nature's most resilient ecosystem in the face of major disturbance. Restoring our wetlands quite simply means safer, more productive, more resilient communities that are better able to weather major change.

Rather than the trauma of these fires pulling us away from our work, they will instead crystallize, refocus and re-energize our efforts. Wetland restoration, conservation and education have never been more important. Please turn these pages to see the Laguna de Santa

Rosa Foundation in action; what we're doing now and tomorrow to directly strengthen your Laguna wetlands.

In addition to our many ongoing projects, the Laguna Foundation is also responding directly to the fire through the following initiatives:

- Providing work and meeting space at our Environmental Center for other non-profits severely affected by the fires.
- Partnering with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the California Native Plant Society to collect and store native seeds for fire recovery and erosion-control efforts.
- Offering our resources and expertise to several county-wide teams focused on collaborative, coordinated efforts to address the fire's impact.

*To learn more about how you can help the Laguna watershed recover from fire, please visit our website at [LagunaFoundation.org](http://LagunaFoundation.org)*



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## **Working with our Neighbors**

Thankfully, the Foundation headquarters remained unharmed during the fires. This good fortune allowed us to offer work space for our neighboring environmental non-profits whose sites were affected by fire. This became as much a gift for us as our guests. It gave us the opportunity to spend time with staff of both Pepperwood Preserve and Sonoma Ecology Center. As they held their marathon meetings in Heron Hall, we were able to re-connect with old friends, discuss collaborations and be inspired by their resolve.

In addition, the Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group held their conference in Heron Hall, with over 40 individuals from 19 environmental groups and government agencies. The goal - to blend and sharpen ideas on how best to face immediate and long-term restoration needs. With an "all hands on deck" attitude, participants looked toward our restoration future, formed working groups, sharing talent and resources. Thanks to Dee Swanhuysen (Greenbelt Alliance), Lisa Michelli (Pepperwood Preserve) and Caryl Hart (previous Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks) for their leadership.

The Laguna Foundation welcomes new and continued collaboration with all the dedicated groups who attended: Audubon Canyon Ranch, CalFire, California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Daily Acts, Forestry/ Watershed Scientist, Friends of the Mark West Watershed, Greenbelt Alliance, Gualala Community Forests, Gualala River Watershed Council, Occidental Arts and Ecology Center, Sonoma Ecology Center, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Pepperwood Preserve, Sonoma Resource Conservation District, Sonoma County Regional Parks, Sonoma County Conservation Action, Sonoma County Water Agency, California State Coastal Conservancy, and the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Dianne Smith

*President, Board of Directors*



## **Bring Back the Beavers!**

*By Sarah Gordon*

*Conservation Science Program Manager*

This summer, a couple enjoying a stroll along the Laguna observed a beaver near the Occidental Road bridge. This was extremely exciting news, as there have only been a handful of sightings in the Russian River watershed since

2010 and prior to that, the last documented occurrence was in 1881! After more than 100 years, beavers are recolonizing the watershed, from Sonoma Creek via Spring Lake, Santa Rosa Creek and now the Laguna.

Beavers are the largest rodent in North America, weighing 40 to 80 pounds. These herbivores have front teeth that continue to grow throughout their life and eat a wide range of plants. Their dwellings consist of mud-plastered wood lodges or bank burrows with underwater entrances. Beaver dams improve ecosystem functioning and water health by enhancing water quality (through sediment and nutrient retention) and increased water storage.

# A Feast of Fall 2017 and Winter 2018 Walks, Talks, and Classes!

Get to know your Laguna, whether it's through one of our outdoor or armchair adventures. Unless otherwise noted, pre-registration is required for all events. Details and registration at [www.lagunafoundation.org](http://www.lagunafoundation.org). Additional events added often.

## **Fire and the Lands We Call Home: A Renewed Approach for a Brighter Future**

Presentation with Dr. Sasha Berleman  
Thursday, November 30, 7:00-8:00pm. Sliding scale.

## **Are You Smarter Than Your Camera? Beyond Beginners Digital Photography**

Workshop with Dave Strauss  
Saturday, December 9, 9:00am-1:00pm. \$75.

## **Waterfowl of the Laguna and Pacific Flyway**

Presentation with "Duck Man" Dave Barry  
Saturday, January 6, 3:00-4:30pm. \$12.

## **Waterfowl of the Laguna and Pacific Flyway**

Sunrise Natural History Walk with Dave Barry  
Sunday, January 7, 7:30-11:00am. \$30.

## **Winter Branches: Colored Pencil Drawing**

Workshop with Nina Antze  
Saturday, January 27, 10:00am-3:00pm. \$95.

## **Laguna Watershed Perspectives:**

### **Taylor Mountain Hike**

With Sonoma County Regional Parks and Laguna Staff  
Sunday, February 18, 9:00am-12:30pm. \$10.

## Get Involved! Volunteer Opportunities For All Ages

Volunteers are the heart and soul of our efforts to restore and share the wonders of the Laguna. More details on these and other ways to give back to the Laguna are available on our website.



### **Native Plant Garden Volunteer Day: First Friday of the Month from 9am–Noon** December 1, 2017, January 5, February 2, March 2, 2018

Laguna Environmental Center, 900 Sanford Road, Santa Rosa, CA

Share your passion for pollinators by helping our native plant garden thrive! Activities include planting, weeding, spreading wood chips, and general site cleanup.

### **Laguna Stewardship Days: Once a month on a Saturday from 9am–Noon**

December 16, 2017, January 20, February 10, March 17, 2018

Details of the site location announced 1-2 weeks in advance.

Help care for the Laguna and restore critical wildlife habitat! Tasks vary depending on the season and include removing old irrigation, sowing seeds, and planting trees.

### **NEW! Annual Training for Docents, Guides and Greeters: Spring 2018**

Details for orientation and training dates to be announced soon.

Docents, Guides and Greeters are trained volunteers that share their knowledge about the Laguna with all ages. The training program is a fun and engaging way to learn about the Laguna while making new friends!

## *Heron Hall Art Exhibits*

### **"Form & Color: It's Wild Out There"** Wildlife Photographs by Dave Strauss

*September 5, 2017– January 4, 2018*

*This exhibit focuses on the animals, birds, and insects of the Laguna Watershed.*

### **Upcoming Exhibit: "Naturally"** Prints and Paintings by Rik Olson

*January 9 – May 17, 2018*

Opening Reception

Saturday, January 13, 3:00-5:00pm. Free.

The gallery in Heron Hall is open to the public Monday through Friday, 9am - 5pm. Because of the various uses of the Hall, **please call in advance** to ensure the gallery is available for viewing: (707) 527-9277 xt. 107.

# Restoration Updates from Zimpher Creek

By Wendy Trowbridge, Director of Restoration and Conservation Science Programs



Restoration Technician, Asa Voight, teaches Conservation Corps North Bay members how to dig out blackberry roots with a broad fork. Photo by Wendy Trowbridge.

We are excited to announce our new restoration project on Zimpher Creek, funded by the Sonoma County Water Agency. The goal of this project is to remove Himalayan blackberry and replace it with a diverse and durable mix of native species. This is the first step in a collaboration with the City of Sebastopol to create a trail that connects the Sebastopol Community Center in the North with Tomadachi Park and the Joe Rodota Trail in the South.

Zimpher Creek is a short tributary of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, originating in Sebastopol near St. Sebastian's Church and flowing eastward 1.1 miles to its confluence with the Laguna in the Sebastopol Laguna Wetlands Preserve. The upper part of the creek remains relatively natural, but it goes underground just west of highway 116. Our project area focuses on the confluence where the creek daylights again right before it joins the Laguna.

The Conservation Corps North Bay helped us get off to a terrific start on this project by weed whacking the blackberry. Unfortunately, underneath all that blackberry

was a giant mountain of trash including 107 tires, huge railroad ties, and truckloads of other trash. On September 16, we hosted a group of hard-working volunteers who helped collect the trash. (Read more about this event on page 6.) If you missed this great cleanup event, there will be plenty more opportunities to help us dig up blackberry roots and plant native grasses, sedges and understory shrubs. Meanwhile, come down to the Sebastopol Laguna Wetlands Preserve and check out our progress!



# Reaching Into the Watershed

By Christine Fontaine, Director of Education Programs



Executive Director, Kevin Munroe, takes a group on a walk to explore Irwin Creek during a Watershed Perspectives event held over the summer. Photo by Anita Smith.

During the summer in the Laguna community education program, we offered an engaging series of classes on wildlife neighbors and another designed to sharpen water knowledge and the benefits of ecological restoration on water quality. Local experts taught about gray fox, American badger, mountain lion, gardening for pollinators, and sustaining groundwater resources, plus a special evening walk to Irwin Creek. Our new series of walks, Laguna Watershed Perspectives is focused on appreciation for our neighborhood creeks and the myriad ways the water, plants, wildlife and our daily lives within the watershed fit together. Together we explored Brush and Windsor Creeks and this season will take us to Taylor Mountain and Todd Creek.

Another way we are reaching further into the watershed is with the developing "Storm Water Solutions" program. High school students are getting their own opportunity to understand how water moves in the watershed and

what it carries across their school campus and to the creeks. In this real-world context, the Laguna Foundation, alongside several of our environmental education partners and teachers at Montgomery High School, are helping students get to know where the water goes, the storm drain system, Matanzas & Spring Creeks, Low Impact Development strategies and how wetland plants and ecological restoration projects can improve wildlife habitat and water quality. Using knowledge gained from their investigations, students will design and implement their own on-campus projects intended to capture and sink water, and prevent physical and chemical pollution from entering storm drains and their Laguna tributary creeks. This pilot series is launched and we aim to include more schools in the coming years.



Working together and exploring together, neighborhood to neighborhood, campus to campus, we can all take part in caring for the Laguna waters, one tributary at a time.

# Volunteers for Trash-Free Waters

By Maggie Hart, Outreach Coordinator



Staff and volunteers collected enough trash along Zimpher Creek in one day to fill three truckloads!

More than 60 hearty volunteers joined our annual Great Laguna Cleanup (Part of *Coastal Cleanup Day*) on Saturday, September 16, in the Laguna Wetlands Preserve in Sebastopol. We covered a quarter mile of the Americorps Trail and picked up enough trash to fill three brimming truckloads plus another large pile of recyclable material. Through this annual effort, we ensure trash is picked up before the rain starts falling and trash washes into our waterways and ocean. This event is a fantastic reminder that each of us, all ages and abilities, can do small but important things to help clean up our Laguna waterway.

A big **thank you** also goes to Village Bakery and Allegro Coffee for donating snacks and coffee for the event to keep everyone energized.

## Wings, Wine and Wetlands was a tremendous success!

Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to ALL of our event sponsors, attendees and volunteers for your support.

### Bald Eagle \$5,000

Bob & Sharon Rubin

California Department of Fish & Wildlife  
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### Red-tailed Hawk \$2,500

Doug Lipton & Cindy Daniel, Healdsburg SHED

### Golden Eagle \$1,000

The Heck Foundation  
Kathi and Greg Jacobs  
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Joe and Linda Maloney  
Moira Hill Design  
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### Great Blue Heron \$500

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# Notes From the Field: Gravenstein Creek

By Brent Reed, Ecological Program Manager

The October fires will lead to increased erosion on the burned lands and send sediment downstream in the creeks. How does the Laguna Foundation's work help with any of this? One example is our Gravenstein Creek Project in Santa Rosa.

This project involves actively restoring a riparian (streamside) buffer on this tributary to the Laguna. The vegetation will trap silt-laden runoff from adjacent cultivated fields and collect additional sediment when the creek swells with storm water and moves onto the floodplain. The trees will provide shade for the creek to cool the water and retain oxygen for fish and other aquatic animals, and provide a variety of food and shelter options for a diverse array of wildlife. Riparian buffers in the creeks downstream of the burned areas of our watershed will provide these same services.

At Gravenstein Creek we are planting over 4,000 native trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges and understory plants to form a 100'-wide vegetated buffer on both sides of the creek, adding 10-acres of "new" riparian forest. The surrounding fields support the ongoing hay farming operations on the City of Santa Rosa's Brown Farm that use reclaimed water. The plants in the riparian buffer will uptake nutrients from the reclaimed water.



*The mowed lines at the Gravenstein Creek project, March 2017, show the new riparian buffer. Photo by Brent Reed.*

You can lend a hand in our efforts to improve water quality and restore native habitats by participating in our Laguna Stewards volunteer days, one Saturday per month from September through May.

*For more information on how you can volunteer with the Laguna Stewards, please contact Brent Reed at (707) 527-9277 x101 or email: [brent@lagunafoundation.org](mailto:brent@lagunafoundation.org).*



## Help Turn John & Heidi's \$50,000 into \$100,000 for the Laguna!

Local residents John Weinstein and Heidi Stewart will match all gifts to the Laguna Foundation received by December 31, thereby doubling the value of your donation. **Help turn their \$50,000 into \$100,000 for the Laguna!**

*"Now more than ever, the Laguna Wetlands will be playing an important role filtering water quality and capturing sediment and chemicals that will be washing down from the fire damaged areas. The Foundation is already out collecting native seeds in and around unburned areas throughout the watershed for restoration, and developing protocols to prevent erosion-control from areas of high fire intensity." -John & Heidi*

Healthy wetlands act as powerful buffers against disasters like fire, drought and flood. Their ability to absorb weather extremes helps create a safer and more resilient landscape. Your donation and this match will help strengthen the Laguna Wetland ecosystem now and for the future.

***Please donate by December 31st. Thank you.***



Founded in 1989, the Laguna Foundation is a place-based organization focused on the Laguna de Santa Rosa. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with the mission to restore and conserve the Laguna de Santa Rosa, and to inspire public appreciation of this Wetland of International Importance. The Foundation conducts educational programs, implements conservation science and restoration projects, 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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Photo by Jerry Dodrill

