



Friends of Sausal Creek

www.sausalcreek.org
(510) 501-FOSC (3672)

October — November '06

Monthly Meetings

October 18—Erik Grijalva, Field Operations Manager for the State Coastal Conservancy Invasive Spartina Project, will present an overview of the non-native Spartina (cordgrass) issue in the San Francisco Estuary, including the impact of Spartina on tidal marsh ecosystems, identification, regional coordination of treatment efforts, treatment approaches, and structure and goals of the Spartina Project.

November 15—Marc Hochman of the Media Committee for the McKillop Slide Task Force will discuss the current status of the McKillop slide and its impact on the surrounding neighborhood. He will also discuss progress being made with local and state agencies on finding long-term solutions to issues at McKillop Road and the toe of the slide.



Thank you, Michael Thilgen

After almost ten years of leading and inspiring the Friends, Michael Thilgen has decided to leave

the Board of Directors and focus on his many other projects. His involvement began in 1996 when a gathering of concerned neighbors met to discuss ways to help out Dimond Park and Sausal Creek. This discussion grew into the Friends of Sausal Creek (FOSC). It is safe to say that Michael was the heart and soul of the Friends in the early days. Since that first meeting, the Oakland native has spent countless hours and far more time than anyone else volunteering to make a clean, safe creek for the City of Oakland.

Michael is a landscape architect by training, a visionary by nature, and an activist by demand. With the city's blessings, he designed and created a native plant garden that is the envy of all the other neighborhoods. Smothered with alien ivy and blackberries, this "diamond-in-the-rough" portion of the Sausal Creek watershed was transformed into a sunlit-dappled creek, next to a children's playground filled with laughter. Here, children sit on stone rings that Michael set, and learn about topics like creek health, gardening, and appreciation for nature. Nearby the water beckons children to play, native trout have returned, and songbirds nest and rear their young.

Michael Thilgen has grown 20,000 plants for our projects, weeded,

dug, organized work parties, attended civic and political meetings, developed long-range plans and advocated creek policy region-wide all as a prodigious volunteer. But it is the duties above the call of ordinary civic-mindedness that sets Michael Thilgen apart from others. It is his humble nature and dedication to Nature that moves others to take up the FOSC cause. The respect he inspires has helped FOSC grow into a non-profit organization that is a region-wide model of how a community organization can get things done in a city where priorities direct funds to other critical issues. Without his leadership, there would be not a FOSC today. To say, "We'll miss him" is an understatement, for Michael's influence and inspiration have been essential for us to get to where we are today. He is now supported by an egalitarian group that shares the labors he once carried alone, but he is still first among equals.

—Mark J. Rauzon

Changes to FOSC's Education Program

For this school year 2006-2007, the Board of Directors of the Friends of Sausal Creek decided to put the Education Program on hiatus. One of the difficult challenges for the Board over the past few years has been recognizing that the Friends can only provide positive changes for the future if we continue to be fiscally sound. Since the funding for the education program did not come through this year, we have been forced to take a break and reevaluate the program.

The Friends of Sausal Creek remains committed to providing environmental educational opportunities for people of all ages. We are convening an Education Committee this fall to look at this program. We would sincerely appreciate any help from FOSC members in these efforts. If you are interested in helping us think about where to go with our Education Program, by either helping volunteer this year with classes that may request visits or by serving on the Education Committee, please contact me at FOSCtrails@aol.com.

I want to thank each and every volunteer who assisted with the program. More importantly, I would like to extend a special thanks to Sue Morgan, who developed the program and provided such enthusiasm and vitality to FOSC during the five years the education program was developing. I know that our efforts have made a tremendous difference in the lives of the children who were lucky enough to experience this terrific opportunity. May it continue.

—Eleanor Dunn

The Friends are sponsored by the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the City of Oakland, with additional support from private citizens . . . like you!

SUPPORT THE WORK OF FOSC

Please help us maintain and expand our efforts in the Sausal Creek watershed by making a donation today!

Mail this form with check made payable to:
Friends of Sausal Creek, P.O. Box 2737, Oakland, CA 94602.
FOSC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and your contribution is fully tax-deductible. A receipt will be sent for your records.

Name _____

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Friends of Sausal Creek

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Don't miss our monthly meeting on Oct. 18 and Nov. 15, 7-9pm at the Dimond Library. Newsletter printed on recycled paper. Thanks for recycling!

Controlling Invasive Spartina

The San Francisco Bay Estuary supports the largest and most ecologically important expanses of tidal mudflats and salt marshes in the contiguous western United States. This environment supports a diverse array of native plants and animals. Over the years, many non-native species of plants and animals have been introduced to the Estuary, and some now threaten to cause fundamental changes in the structure, function, and value of the Estuary's tidal lands. Among these threatening invaders are several species of salt marsh cordgrass (genus *Spartina*). In recent decades, populations of non-native cordgrasses were introduced to the Estuary and began to spread rapidly. Though valuable in their native settings, these introduced cordgrasses are highly aggressive in this new environment, and frequently become the dominant plant species in areas they invade, at the expense of native species.

One of the non-native cordgrass species in particular, Atlantic smooth cordgrass, and its hybrids (formed when this species crosses with the native Pacific cordgrass) are now threatening the ecological balance of the Estuary and, if untreated, are likely to eventually cause the extinction of native Pacific cordgrass, choke tidal creeks, dominate newly restored tidal marshes, and displace thousands of acres of existing shorebird habitat. Once established in this Estuary, invasive cordgrasses could rapidly spread to other estuaries along the California coast through seed dispersal on the tides. Non-native invasive cordgrasses dominate greater than 500 acres of San Francisco Estuary mudflats and tidal marsh—on State, Federal, municipal, and private lands—and are spreading rapidly.

The California State Coastal Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed the San Francisco Estuary Invasive Spartina Project in 2000 in an effort to regionally coordinate Spartina control efforts throughout the Estuary. The purpose of the Spartina Control Program is to arrest and reverse the spread of invasive non-native cordgrass species in the Estuary and to preserve and restore the ecological integrity of the Estuary's intertidal habitats and estuarine ecosystem.



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FOSC ACTIVITY CALENDAR

Unless otherwise noted, call 501-FOSC or email coordinator@sausalcreek.org for information about all activities. For details about ongoing projects, check the Volunteer section of the Friends' website at www.sausalcreek.org.

Monthly Meetings

3rd Wednesday of the month.

- Wednesday 10/18, 11/15.
7pm-9pm at the Dimond Library,
3565 Fruitvale Ave.

Board of Directors Meetings

2nd Wednesday of the month.

- Wednesday 10/11, 11/8.
7pm-9pm at the Chabot Space
& Science Center. All welcome!

Saturday Workdays

Most, but not all, Saturdays

9am-noon—Restoration Activities
1:30-4pm—Nursery Activities
For more info, visit www.sausalcreek.org/volunteer/calendar.html.

Aquatic Insect Sampling

3rd Sunday of the month.

- Sunday 11/19. 9:30am-noon;
call Emma Brown to confirm,
510-527-2507.

Water Quality Monitoring

Quarterly.

- Sunday 10/22. 9am-noon;
call Mark Lane to confirm,
510-219-8036.

Bird Monitoring

*Quarterly, Sequoia Arena,
Joaquin Miller Park.*

- Saturday 10/21. 8am-noon;
call Mark Rauzon to confirm,
510-531-5887.

The Spartina Control Program is implementing a coordinated, region-wide eradication program, comprising a number of on-the-ground treatment techniques to stave off this invasion. The Control Program will be focused within the nearly 40,000 acres of tidal marsh and 29,000 acres of tidal flats that comprise the shoreline areas of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma, and Sacramento counties. The Control Program is needed to prevent further degradation and loss of the natural ecological structure and function of the Estuary.

—Erik Grijalva

Hear Erik Grijalva talk more about the important work of the Invasive Spartina Project at FOSC's October 18 member meeting.

October-November '06 newsletter contributors:

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