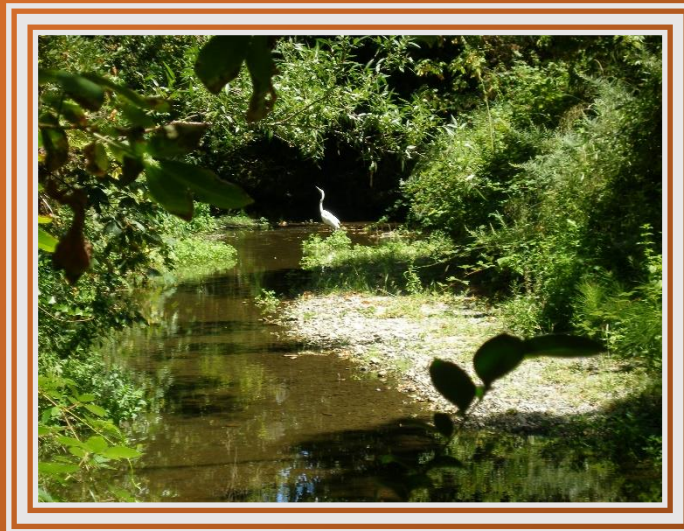


# 2014 Report

**Walnut Creek Watershed Council:**  
*A Year of Building Strong Partnerships*





Bob Simmons  
Council Chair

Igor Skaredoff  
Vice Chair

Rinta Perkins  
Staff to Council (2013)

Lisa Anich  
Staff to Council (2014)

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Cover Photo Courtesy of: Friends of San Ramon Creek

# Walnut Creek Watershed Council

## ***Government Agency Supporters:***

Central Contra Costa Sanitary District  
Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority  
City of Concord  
City of Lafayette  
City of Martinez  
City of Orinda  
City of Pleasant Hill  
City of San Ramon  
City of Walnut Creek  
Contra Costa County  
CCC Flood Control and Water Conservation District  
Contra Costa Resource Conservation District  
East Bay Municipal Utility District  
East Bay Regional Park District  
Town of Moraga

## ***Non-profit Agency Supporters:***

Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen  
Friends of the Creeks  
Friends of San Ramon Creek  
Greenbelt Alliance  
Mount Diablo Audubon  
Muir Heritage Land Trust  
Save Mount Diablo  
Sustainable Contra Costa  
Sustainable Walnut Creek  
Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

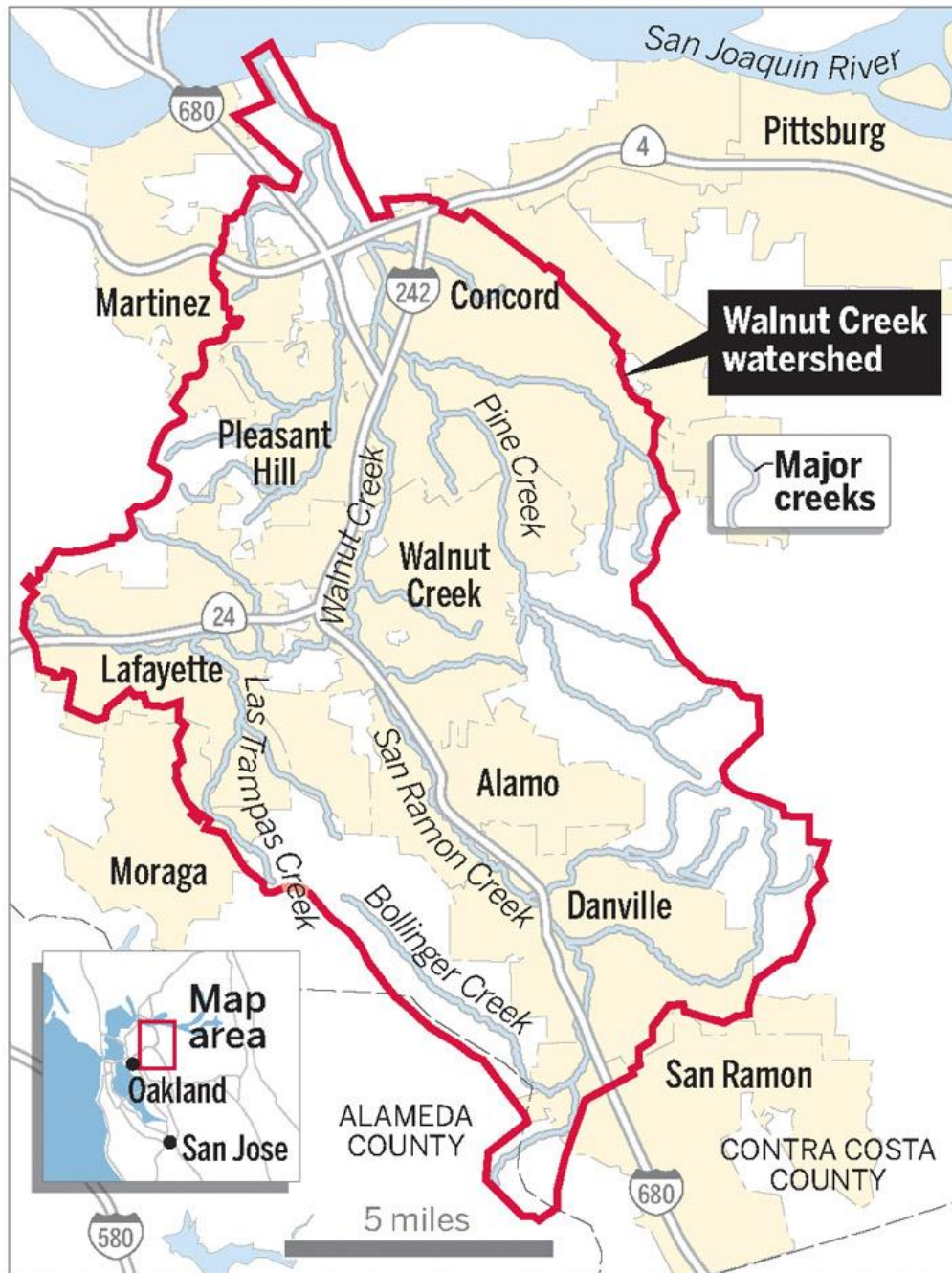
## ***Business and Industry Supporters:***

Tesoro Refining & Marketing Company, LLC

## Walnut Creek Watershed Map

### Ranging watershed funnels to the bay

The Walnut Creek watershed covers 150 square miles of central Contra Costa County, with myriad smaller creeks feeding Walnut Creek before emptying into the San Joaquin River near Martinez.



Source: Contra Costa County Flood Control & Water Conservation District

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

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- Lower Walnut Creek Restoration Project
- Friends of San Ramon Creek
- Friends of the Creeks
- Friends of the Creeks & the City of Walnut Creek Pollinator Garden Renovation
- Save Mount Diablo
- Contra Costa Resource Conservation District



## Executive Summary

There were two significant achievements in the Walnut Creek Watershed in 2014.

The first was that Congress enacted the Water Resources Reform and Development Act. One provision of that legislation abandons the Corps of Engineers jurisdiction over flood control on the lower 2.5 miles of Walnut Creek and on Pacheco Creek. This enables the Flood Control District, with the support of the Watershed Council, to start the planning process for a more natural and environmentally friendly portion of the lower 2.5 miles of Walnut Creek before it enters Suisun Bay. The planning process will be a multi-year effort, and the subsequent work will also take considerable time, but this is a very important step to the restoration of the watershed.

The second was the result of the expansion of Broadway Plaza over a portion of San Ramon Creek. The Regional Water Quality Control Board (Board) and the Department of Fish & Wildlife (Department) required the developer to mitigate the impacts on the creek. Since no mitigation opportunities in the watershed had recently been identified, the mitigation resources were going to be diverted to another watershed. However, the Board and the District asked the developer to work with the Watershed Council in identifying and providing advice on the selection of the location for the mitigation project.

In response, the Council canvassed its supporters for a listing of possible projects. We received a total of 17 projects in three cities. This list was ultimately narrowed down to six that appeared to meet the mitigation criteria. We anticipate hearing about the final decision shortly, and it will be the first moderate-sized restoration project in the watershed. As important as this restoration project will be, it is equally important that we have identified other restoration projects in the watershed. Together with the Lower Walnut Creek project, this is the harbinger of further restoration efforts in the watershed.

There were also several administrative changes this year. We are pleased that the City of Concord passed a resolution of support. This means that eight of the nine municipalities in the watershed have passed a resolution of support. Second, we created an Executive Committee to guide some of the decision-making efforts. This Executive Committee was particularly useful as we reviewed the 17 projects for the Broadway Plaza mitigation project. Finally, the Flood Control District has entered into an agreement with the Resource Conservation District to provide administrative support for the Watershed Council for three years.

The rest of this annual report is a compilation of reports submitted by stakeholders interested in showing the results of their efforts in 2014. This shows a wide variety of activities going on that contribute to the health of our watersheds.

For 2015, we have a number of goals, including developing a vision plan for the watershed, improving our public outreach and education efforts, and supporting the restoration efforts by the friends groups and the cities. We will be hosting a community session in the evening in March to inform people about the watershed and to discuss the opportunities for restoration in the watershed. We hope you can make it!



## Description of the Watershed

The Walnut Creek Watershed is the largest watershed in Contra Costa County totaling 146 square miles or 96,000 acres, in size. Its 340,000 inhabitants account for over 35% of the County's population. The watershed extends from San Ramon on the south and Martinez on the north to Moraga and Orinda on the west and Concord to the east. From protected natural lands (Mt. Diablo State Park, East Bay Regional Park District lands, and Walnut Creek Open Space) and grazed lands to suburbs and urban creeks, our watershed has a bit of almost everything.

The Walnut Creek watershed has 309 miles of creek channels - accounting for almost a quarter of all mapped creek channels in Contra Costa County. Over 70% of the channels (by length) in the watershed are natural, meaning they have no flood control or flow restriction devices. Almost 16% of the creeks are in concrete channels. Another 12% are constructed earth channels. Less than 1% of the channels are riprapped. All of this watershed information is from the *Walnut Creek Watershed Inventory* (Feb 2013).

### **Mission** of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council

Our mission is to support community efforts, scientific studies, public education, and restoration projects which protect and enhance beneficial uses and resources in the entire watershed. The Council encourages sharing of information and promotes collaboration among the stakeholders.

### **History** of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council

In 2011, several individuals representing different organizations began meeting to discuss how to create a community-based group with an interest in improving our watershed. After several months, they decided to create a watershed council and started the organization process. The result is the Walnut Creek Watershed Council (Council), which is a voluntary, non-regulatory stakeholder group that supports a healthy and sustainable watershed. As of the end of 2014, Contra Costa County and eight of the nine cities and towns in the watershed, together with several non-profit organizations and other governmental organizations, have expressed their support. The complete list can be seen in the beginning of this report.

### **Goals** of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council

Our goals for 2015 and beyond are ambitious. At the top of the list is working towards a vision for the future of the watershed and identifying specific steps that need to be taken to get there. We seek to increase watershed awareness through educational events and on-the-ground projects with community groups. Additionally, we plan to be actively involved in supporting restoration and planning efforts in the Lower Walnut Creek and in the Broadway Plaza mitigation projects.

## **Educational Activities in the Watershed 2014 Collaboration Report**

The Walnut Creek Watershed Council would like to acknowledge those individuals, agencies and groups that are doing outstanding educational work within the Walnut Creek watershed. These groups help to create the future of our watershed! By working with young people to educate them on the importance of restoration and clean water practices, these groups are ensuring the future stewardship of the watershed. We commend them on their admirable efforts to make a difference with the young people of our communities.

### **College Park High School Earth Club**



The College Park High School Earth Club has been cleaning Grayson Creek, in the local community, for the last two years. Students in the club have removed trash ranging from beer cans to car windshields from the creek. Earth Club is currently working to prevent littering in the creek. In December 2014, we also participated in a native plant restoration project at Deer Lake in Shell Ridge.

### **Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen**

Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen club is a non-profit organization dedicated to the support and conservation of native fish and their environment. Our club members participate in a state program called "Trout in the Classroom" by working with local schools to bring in trout eggs for students to rear and observe and then release as young fish. Approximately 40 local classes participate in the program.



### **Watershed Watchers**

Future watershed education - Maria Velken and Patrice Hanlon are environmental education consultants who signed a contract with the City of Walnut Creek's Clean Water Program this year to present a program called Watershed Watchers to elementary age school children in Walnut Creek. This program is still in the development phase but holds great promise! It is expected to be presented in 2015.





## City of Lafayette Creeks Committee 2014 Report



*Volunteers Removing Old Tires and Car Parts during Creek Day at Lafayette Community Park*



*Interpretive panel installed on Mt. Diablo Blvd. pervious path by Eagle Scout candidate Will Hirsh.*

- Contributed comments for Lafayette Downtown Design Guidelines regarding visions, goals and guidelines for development along creeks in the Lafayette Downtown Specific Plan area.
- Wrote an RFP and obtained City of Lafayette funding to hire a consultant to create a Downtown Creeks Preservation, Restoration and Development Plan for Lafayette.
- Installed two interpretive panels along pervious path on Mt. Diablo Blvd. funded by CCC Fish and Wildlife Committee grant. Signs were installed as an Eagle Scout project. Scouts also removed ivy and other invasive plants along the Lafayette Creek corridor.
- Provided several proposals for riparian habitat enhancement projects in Lafayette in response to a Walnut Creek Watershed Council request for proposals.
- Staffed an informational booth at Lafayette's Earth Day celebration.
- Held a successful Creek Cleanup Day at the Lafayette Community Park.
- Provided letters of support for a Clean Water Program grant to fund a Walnut Creek Watershed coordinator, the California Urban Streams Partnership for a grant to support workshops on bioengineering techniques in Lafayette and elsewhere in the watershed, and a grant to support the Lafayette Station Parking Lots Improvement Project by BART, which will include low impact development improvements and interpretation of Happy Valley Creek in BART station area.
- Provided money for the installation of riparian viewing areas along Lafayette Creek by the Lafayette Community Garden and Outdoor Learning Center group.

Please Visit our Website at  
[www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/city-departments/public-works/creeks/creeks-committee](http://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/city-departments/public-works/creeks/creeks-committee)



## City of Walnut Creek's Clean Water Program 2014 Report

### Council Adopted Single-use Carryout (Plastic) Bag and Polystyrene-based Food Service Ware ordinances



The City Council of Walnut Creek approved several strategic priorities for FY 2012-2014; one of which was to develop ordinances that promotes our community's environment. The data obtained from conducting trash hot spot assessments and cleanup since 2010 showed that plastic bags and pieces of polystyrene-based containers were among most commonly found litter. This littering is an increasing blight on land and poses water quality problems due to the persistence in the environment for many years.

On March 18, 2014 the City Council of Walnut Creek adopted the Single Use Carryout Bag Ordinance, which prohibits both restaurants and other retailers from distributing single-use carryout bags. Retailers are required to charge a bag fee of 10 cents, which is retained by the retailers (the purpose of the fee is to encourage customers to bring their own reusable bags). Under this ordinance, allowed bags include 'protective' paper and plastic bags without handles (for meat and produce), dry-cleaned clothes, prepared foods and prescriptions.



The operative date for retailers was set as September 18, 2014 and for restaurants was set as December 17, 2014. Staff developed informational materials outlining how the Bag Ordinance will impact them, describing the types of bags banned and permitted, and identifying where to find resources.



On June 3, 2014, the City Council adopted a polystyrene-based food service ware ordinance to reduce the volume of such waste that is generated in Walnut Creek. The ordinance applies to all food vendors (restaurants, coffee shops, cafeterias and food trucks) and became effective on December 18, 2014. The City itself – specifically City facilities, City-sponsored events and City-permitted events –

will also be prohibited from using polystyrene-based disposable food ware. All City departments, franchises, contractors and vendors doing business with the City will not be able to purchase or acquire food service ware made from polystyrene.

For more information, contact Rinta Perkins, Clean Water Program Manager. Email: [perkins@walnut-creek.org](mailto:perkins@walnut-creek.org). Phone: (925) 256-3511



## Contra Costa County Flood Control & Water Conservation District Walnut Creek Watershed Accomplishments 2014 Report

In 2014, Contra Costa County Flood Control District maintained their strong relationship with the community through volunteer events, by beginning exciting new projects and continuing old ones. The District fulfilled its purpose of reducing flood risk, while prioritizing environmental protection and conservation.

The District applied for and was awarded a \$206,500 Department of Water Resources grant to install six new stream gauges in the Walnut Creek Watershed. Once installed in 2015, these new gauges will be used to monitor the water levels in the creeks in real time, and will be instrumental in forecasting when creeks are at risk of flooding.



The fall of 2014 was busy with lots of great projects. The Grazing Study entered its third and final year. The study is designed to see whether goats, sheep or herbicides were most effective for managing vegetation within a stream channel. In September the District sponsored a trash pick-up on Pine Creek as part of the City of Walnut Creek's Community Service Day. During the event volunteers cleaned up over 500 pounds of trash and debris. The District kicked off the rainy season with the third annual Creek and Channel Safety Awareness Program, which collaborated with Mount Diablo High School to create a video promoting the "Stay out, Stay Alive" message to teens.

On December 6, 2014, the District held its annual volunteer event, Giving the Natives a



*Volunteers from Pittsburg High School's  
P.O.W.E.R. Club Planting Native Plants*

Chance, at the Clayton Valley Drain. Contra Costa County Public Works teamed up with Pittsburg High School's P.O.W.E.R. Club, Boy Scout Troop 239 of Pleasant Hill, staff from the office of Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, and The Restoration Trust, who provided the plants. Together, volunteers planted a grand total of 1,800 native plant plugs, including Baltic rush and Santa Barbara sedge, all in the span of three hours. The event allowed volunteers to learn about their local creeks and flood control channels while improving the native habitat around them.

To Learn More about our Purpose, Visit our  
Website at <http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/2593/About-the-Flood-Control-District>





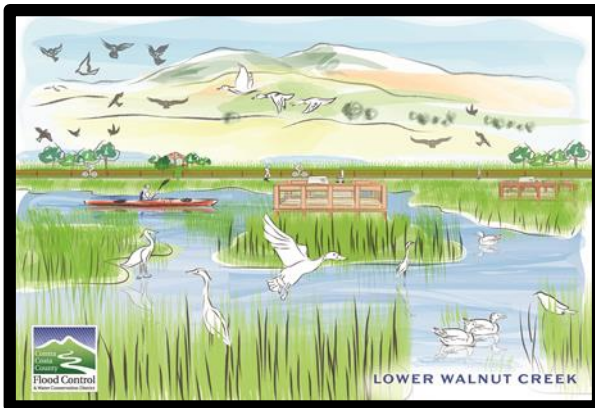
## Lower Walnut Creek Restoration 2014 Progress

After a decade of restoration planning work with the Corps became hopelessly stalled, the Flood Control District decided to go it alone, and petitioned congress to “selectively deauthorize” the lowest 4 miles of Walnut Creek. When President Obama signed the legislation on June 10, the four miles of creek was removed from the Corps system and returned to local control.

In July, the District held a press event and celebration on Pacheco Marsh, adjacent to the mouth of Walnut Creek. At this well attended event, Congressman Mike Thompson, and speakers from Contra Costa County, East Bay Regional Park District, and the Muir Heritage Land Trust talked about the restoration opportunities made possible by this legislation.



Soon afterwards, the District solicited professional consulting assistance to facilitate a community-based restoration planning effort. The District issued a request for qualifications, led site tours and held informational sessions for interested firms. Over forty individuals and firms took part in the process.



Staff from the District and the Muir Heritage Land Trust reviewed all of the statements of qualifications and invited three firms to submit proposals and sit for a formal interview. The interviews were held in mid-November, and in early February 2015, the District’s Board is expected to approve the contract with staff’s recommended firm. The kickoff of the restoration planning process is on schedule for an early 2015 start.

The District has applied for two grants to fund additional planning capacity and for early implementation of demonstration projects on Lower Walnut Creek. You can visit the project’s website to learn more, or to get involved.

More information about the project can be  
Found at <http://www.lowerwalnutcreek.org>.

## Friends of San Ramon Creek 2014 Report



The Friends of San Ramon Creek support programs and projects which promote a healthy San Ramon Creek and the 54-square mile San Ramon Creek Watershed. The Friends of San Ramon Creek focused on public information, creek cleanup and Arundo removal this year. Jennifer Stern from the RCD helped support us. There were several Friends' meetings and ice cream is a regular feature of our activities. The public is always welcome to attend!

- **Program on the San Ramon Creek Watershed.** Mary Grim gave a well-researched power point presentation at the Danville Library on March 12. It was part of a series from the library and Museum of the San Ramon Valley titled **Water\*Earth\*Sky** and drew a crowd of about 40 people.
- **Earth Day** was recognized on April 19 on the grounds of the Danville Library next to the Creek, in cooperation with the Town of Danville and Sustainable Danville. Friends set up a table and helped welcome the East Bay Regional Park District's mobile visitor center and a naturalist tour to the event. Neal Johnson, in cooperation with the Boys Scouts, helped with a cleanup. He also brought a display of bizarre items found in back of his house in the San Ramon Creek.
- **Arundo was removed** in several locations along the Creek in September and early October. Dick Heron, David Bowen, Don Speetzen and Beverly Lane did a follow-up to our 2013 clean up on both sides of the El Portal Bridge on the border of Alamo and Danville. Creek owners in that vicinity are taking ownership of this eradication of Arundo with FSRC support.



*Volunteers demolishing Arundo in San Ramon Creek near El Portal Bridge*



*EBRPD Mobile Visitor Center at Danville's Earth Day adjacent to San Ramon Creek*

To learn more about Friends of San Ramon Creek,  
Please Visit our Website at [www.ccrd.org/FOSRC.html](http://www.ccrd.org/FOSRC.html)



## Friends of the Creeks 2014 Report



**Education:** We conducted a classroom session and field trip for an eighth grade class at a new private school in Walnut Creek for children with diverse learning styles. The field trip included taking a water sample.

**25<sup>th</sup> Annual Downtown Creek Cleanup.** At least 190 people participated this year in removing trash from 2.5 miles of creek channel. Since the volume of trash has declined over the years, we now include habitat restoration activities; this year we weeded the butterfly habitat in preparation for redesigning and replanting.



**Pine Creek Cleanups:** We have long wanted to expand our activities beyond downtown. In September we combined forces with Flood Control to lead groups that cleaned two separate stretches of Pine Creek in eastern Walnut Creek on Community Service Day.

**Creek History Talk:** 1914 marked Walnut Creek's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. As our contribution to the centennial celebration, Lesley Hunt gave a talk on the history of the creeks in the Walnut Creek watershed. We did four other outreach events.

**Habitat Restoration:** In addition to weeding the butterfly habitat, we removed arundo from a downtown property during the Week of Caring, AAA volunteers remulched the Creekwalk, and we planted some trial native plants in the creek channel in December.



*Volunteers Cleaning up Trash from Pine Creek on Community Service Day*



*Volunteers Cleaning up the Creek Near Civic Park*

To learn more about Friends of the Creeks,  
Please visit our website at [www.friendsofthecreeks.org](http://www.friendsofthecreeks.org)



## Friends of the Creeks & the City of Walnut Creek Pollinator Garden Renovation 2014 Report



*Wednesday Volunteers- Irrigation Installation December 2014*

In the spring of 2014, a weekly volunteer group was formed at Civic Park to maintain the Creek Walk, the Oak Demonstration Garden, and to begin the process of clearing the site for the new pollinator garden, formerly known as the butterfly garden that is located at the east of the park area near the canal trail. Weekly volunteers and students from Springstone School in Lafayette cleared weeds, pruned and prepared the area for mulching during Walnut Creek's Community Service Day.

On Saturday September 27, 2014, Park personnel installed the bender board for the pathways, and the irrigation lines for the area and 50 volunteers moved decomposed granite and natural mulch pathways to the area. In December volunteers installed in-line drip irrigation to the site where 19 garden beds will be planted featuring native plants attractive to butterflies, native bees and other pollinators.

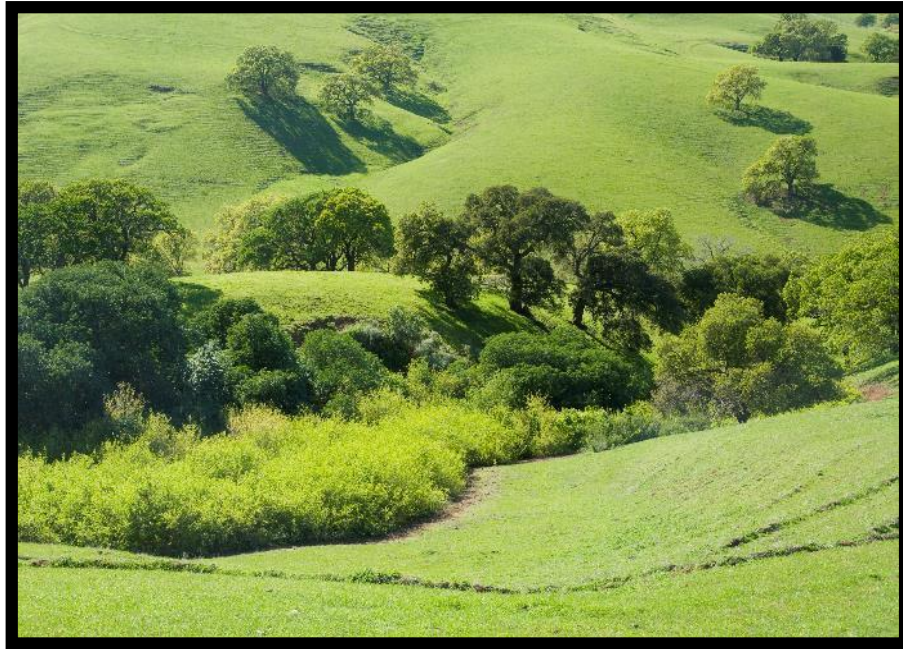
Volunteers are the heart of this project; to date they have logged 1,447.5 hours for the Creek Walk area. They meet each Wednesday from 9-1. To find out more about the project or opportunities to volunteer contact  
Patrice Hanlon, Volunteer Coordinator  
Email: [phpatrice@gmail.com](mailto:phpatrice@gmail.com)



Funding for the Restoration Project was made possible  
by a Grant from Fish and Wildlife, City of Walnut Creek Clean Water  
Program, the City of Walnut Creek Parks Department and Friends of the Creeks.



## Save Mount Diablo 2014 Report



**Mangini and Poppies-March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008**  
(Photo by: Scott Hein)



### **Our Achievements in 2014:**

- Stewards of the 208 acre Mangini Ranch property near the headwaters of Galindo Creek.
- Maintained 3 miles of trail on Mangini Ranch.
- Partnered with a local rancher to use cattle as a means to manage endangered species habitat.
- Controlled noxious weeds - Artichoke thistle and *Dittrichia graveolens* on our Mangini Ranch property near the headwaters of Galindo Creek.
- Hosted 3 major recreational events (cycling & running) that had a total of 3,000 attendees in parks within the Walnut Creek Watershed.
- Led 8 public hikes in the watershed, with a total of 150 attendees.
- Monitored eleven agency agendas each month for projects that could have impacts to cultural, natural and scenic resources in the Watershed

Please visit Save Mt. Diablo's website at [www.savemountdiablo.org](http://www.savemountdiablo.org)



## Contra Costa Resource Conservation District 2014 Report

In 2014, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) entered a partnership with the Contra Costa Flood Control and Water Conservation District to support the efforts of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council and local creek groups in the watershed. The Flood Control District is funding CCRCD to provide staff support to Council, expand public outreach for creek stewardship and educational activities, and assist with new initiatives within the watershed.

Lisa Anich took the reins as coordinator of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council this year. She will assist in creating a cohesive and informed group of agencies, creek groups, and citizens working together toward a better watershed. She will be working with the council to encourage both community and agency participation.



CCRCD coordinator, Heidi Petty is serving as coordinator for the Walnut Creek Watershed Creek Groups. She will be working with local creek groups to provide services, organizational assistance and public outreach. Heidi and Lisa will be closely collaborating on the happenings and events in the Walnut Creek Watershed as a whole.

Ben Wallace, Executive Director, is currently a member of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council's Executive Committee. He is committed to the continued progress of the council and its role in facilitating collaboration between agencies, organizations, and individuals working toward a healthier, more natural watershed.



Contra Costa Resource Conservation District prepared this Achievements Report with printing services provided by the Flood Control District.

For Further Information on our Programs and Services, please see our website at  
**[www.CCRCD.org](http://www.CCRCD.org)**.







*Design Layout of this report by: Heidi Petty, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District*  
*Funding for printing this report was provided by: CCC Flood Control and Water Conservation District*