Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

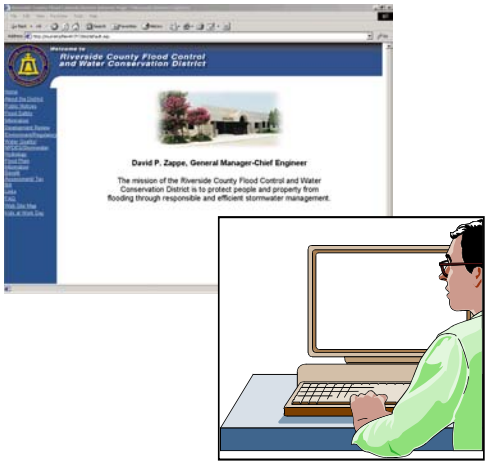
BACKGROUND

Murrieta Creek Flood Control Environmental Restoration and Recreation Project

- The project begins downstream of Old Town Temecula near the Shell service station, and extends 7 miles upstream to Tenaja Road in the city of Murrieta.
- Congress has authorized the overall project and declared that the Federal Government would be responsible for funding 65% of the overall project.
- Approximately $2 million in annual flood damage reduction.
- Elimination of flood insurance requirements for properties within the FEMA floodplain.
- Creation of 163 acres of habitat, natural backwaters, 9 acres of freshwater ponds, and transition zones from fresh water marsh to willow riparian habitat.
- 50+ acres of open space park, including soccer and baseball fields.
- Multipurpose trail system throughout entire length of project for equestrians, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Let us know about your experiences with Murrieta Creek. How can we help make Clean Up Day better? What suggestions do you have for the Creek? E-mail a note to: projectinfo@co.riverside.ca.us or let us know if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

The next time you are on the Web, bookmark this page: http://www.co.riverside.ca.us/depts/flood/. It's the Riverside County Flood Control District's Web address. Or, from Riverside County's site (http://www.co.riverside.ca.us), from the County Department drop-down list select **Flood Control.** As you peruse it, you will see that everything about it is easy - easy to find information and easy on the eyes.



MURRIETA CREEK CHRONICLE

Fall 2002

Update

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is continuing with its design efforts on the channel through Old Town Temecula. Construction drawings for Phase 1, which consists of channel deepening and widening from the southern end of town near the Shell Station, upstream to First Street, will be completed in early December. The Corps has defined the real estate requirements for Phase 1 and the District has hired an appraiser to value properties required for the channel improvements. The District is working closely with the City of Temecula to secure several parcels that have been dedicated to the public for use on the project. These dedications will help to reduce the overall cost of land acquisition. Construction activities on Phase 1 of the project are scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2003.

Additionally, hydraulic analyses are underway for the 240-acre detention basin in the vicinity of Jefferson Avenue and Cherry Street. The Corps is working to strike a balance between the amount of flow released by the basin into the downstream channel and the height of embankments around the basin. The Corps is striving to minimize or eliminate any levees originally proposed within their 2000 Feasibility Study Report.

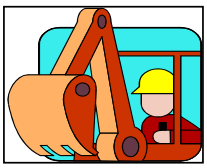
The District, Corps and both cities have met several times during the last quarter to discuss issues such as aesthetic landscaping of the project, design of the bicycle/pedestrian and equestrian trail system, and funding of the local share of the project. On October 15th, District staff made a presentation on the project to the Murrieta City Council. That presentation included an overview of the project's progress to date, as well as a schedule of upcoming milestones for the project. A similar presentation to the Temecula City Council is scheduled for November 26th .

Project Element - Environmental Restoration

There is a significant opportunity to restore degraded habitat along Murrieta Creek in concert with flood damage reduction measures with the Murrieta Creek Flood Control, Environmental Restoration and Recreation Project.

Murrieta Creek has been altered several times since the late 1800's, and has been channelized for flood control since the 1930's. Restoration along the creek banks, within the channel, and in and around its tributaries and floodplain would not only bring back historic habitat functions, but also invite a large array of desired wildlife and plant species, including sensitive species, while reducing the extent of undesirable exotic species. The ecological resources of Murrieta Creek and its associated hinterlands have been identified as a resource of extremely high concern. Several resource agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, have indicated that Murrieta Creek is one of the last high quality minimally disturbed riverine environments in southern California. These same agencies have indicated that, prior to the destructive floods of 1993, there was a much higher quality environment associated with the creek in many areas, particularly downstream of Warm Springs Creek. Much of the degradation has been caused by flood destruction of valuable riparian habitat.

Santa Margarita River Watershed Trash Cleanup



On Saturday, September 21, 2002 more than a thousand volunteers joined Federal, State and local agencies, and private organizations to clean up the watershed of the Santa Margarita River, the last free-flowing river on California's south coast. The 26 mile long watershed includes the Conservancy's Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve, whose staff organized this highly successful clean-up day. The clean-up extended from the river's headwaters in the Cleveland National Forest to Fallbrook, just east of Camp Pendleton, and included tributaries such as San Mateo, Murrieta, De Luz, Temecula, Warm Springs, Sandia and Rainbow Creeks.

Volunteer crews trucked off over 50 tons of junk and waste, including abandoned appliances, furniture, household trash and construction debris from the landscape. A hearty thank you to all those volunteers from all of us who enjoy the Creek so much.

Cnemidophorus hyperythrus beldingi???

Don't be frightened, it's just one of the many animals that inhabit the Murrieta Creek Environmental Restoration Area, and known to its friends as ...

Orange Throated Whiptail Lizard

Distinguishing characters: A distinctive species with five or six light colored stripes down a black, brown or grey dorsal side; middle stripe may be forked at both ends; whitish-yellow or cream on venter; orange throat (females and juveniles may lack this character); head is yellow-brown to olive colored; tongue is forked and flicked continually.

Juveniles: Legs and tail are cobalt blue.

Dimorphism: Entire ventral surface of males including tail may be orange, although pregnant females may also have some orange especially lining the lower jaw; colors are most distinct in the breeding season; males have larger femoral pores than females.

The orange-throated whiptail lizard, *Cnemidophorus hyperythrus beldingi*, is a California species of concern. It has specific soil requirements and is dependent upon a single species of termite as its principal food source. The Orange-Throated Whiptail inhabits a variety of plant community types that thrive in loose, well-drained soils including chaparral, coastal sage scrub and coastal strand vegetation (Bostic, 1964), and oak woodland, grassland and riparian communities. They are primarily found at elevations below 2,800 feet. Whiptail populations are closely associated with their principal food source, western subterranean termites, Reticulitermus hesperus, and the habitat that supports them. Bostic (1966) estimated that termites comprise 85% of the Whiptail's diet, approaching 100% from September through November.

The Whiptail relies on its striped color pattern for camouflage, which is particularly effective when the Whiptail is motionless in the shade beneath overhead structures. Perennial shrub cover is important for adults, hatchlings and juveniles.

Females deposit their eggs in thick patches of annuals and grasses. This cover type may afford the best protection for hatchlings or provide the structure that supports food of the appropriate size. Average home range size for adult males is 500ft^2 and 3000ft^2 for adult females.

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