

# The Community VOICE

Rohnert Park, Cotati, & Penngrove

## Print Page

Creek stewardship includes trash pick-up

By Jenny Blaker  
Friday, October 3, 2008 2:36 AM CDT

When people thoughtlessly toss aside a can or a drinking water bottle or a candy wrapper, do they think about or realize the consequences of their actions? Many of these items end up in the creeks even if they didn't get tossed there initially.

Rainwater washes off sidewalks into gutters, roadside ditches and storm drains, eventually making its way to the nearest creek, and from there (depending on where you live) to the Laguna de Santa Rosa and perhaps eventually to the Russian River and out to sea.

A shoe, juggling balls, a car tire, broken bits of foam cooler, water bottles, Styrofoam peanuts and lots of potato chip bags are among the items that were picked up out of the Laguna Channel during an Earth Day trash pick up earlier this year.

Trash isn't only unsightly, it's a toxic hazard, and causes major environmental problems worldwide.

Much of the trash that gets discarded is plastic. The fact is that plastic does not biodegrade. It never really goes away, it just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces.

One volunteer noted, "There was lots of stuff that would just crumble and disintegrate into tiny pieces as I tried to pick it up." Those tiny pieces often wash or blow out to sea where they are a hazard to wildlife, which can mistake the plastic bits for food. According to the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, over 100 million tons of plastic exist in the world's oceans, and although 20 percent of it comes from ocean sources like derelict fishing gear, 80 percent comes from the land, from our watersheds.

In some parts of the Pacific Ocean there is six times more plastic by weight than zooplankton. Sometimes birds even feed plastic to their babies, thinking that the plastic is food, and tragically, many dead seabirds, fish and marine mammals have been found with their stomachs full of plastic bottle tops and other debris. Imagine your own dinner plate strewn with six spoonfuls of garbage for each spoonful of food - could you get enough nutrition before getting full?

Less than 4 percent of the plastic we use is recycled. The triangle of arrows around a number doesn't always mean that plastic product is recyclable.

Much of the plastic found in the ocean comes from consumer items that have been used just once, like drinking water bottles, straws, or plastic wrappers. Some of it leaches chemicals into the ocean, and some of it absorbs chemical pollutants, like the pesticide DDT, which accumulates in animal tissues and makes its way up the food chain into the foods we eat.

So this fall, Cotati Creek Critters are getting together with Sonoma County Water Agency, the City of Cotati, Transition Cotati and C-CORP (Concerned Citizens of Rohnert Park) to organize a collaborative fall trash pickup October 11, 9 a.m.-noon, to collect trash along the Laguna channel before the winter rains come and it gets washed downstream and out to sea.

Park at Ladybug Park on Liman Way in Rohnert Park and walk across the park to Cotati City well lot no. 2 on Lakewood Ave. A map is available at [www.CotatiCreekCritters.info](http://www.CotatiCreekCritters.info). For more information call 792-4422.

[component:image-photo-html]  
[component:image-cutline]