



# Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians

## Environmental Protection Department

### Newsletter

Volume I, December 2013: Storm water pollution/ Reuse of Items/Septic System

#### **Pollution in the Waterways**

With the rainy season approaching it is important to understand where all that storm water is going and what it picks up along the way. Coyote Valley is positioned along three waterways: Russian River, Forsythe Creek, and Salt Hollow Creek. Watersheds are powered by water velocity and gravity. Everything from a higher point will be caught in the water and that will run off and be carried into the waterways. This pollution coming from a wide area of land is called Non-Point Source Pollution (NPS). This includes things like oil spilled in driveways, chemicals washed off of trash, pieces of trash ending up in the waterways, pesticides, fertilizers, pet wastes and

erosion. It is important to think about what is outside that could be carrying toxins to the water before it rains. It is also important to be careful with large open areas of soil and creating roads and trails to the waterways which may cause the stream bank to erode and fall in. If too much soil washes into the creeks and river it causes what is called siltation. This fills up the deep pools needed to for fish survival in the summer time, reduces water quality, and covers up the gravel which can suffocate the eggs of spawning fish that are laid there. Also, many plants and animals in the waterways are sensitive to chemicals and pesticides and reducing the flow of them into the waterway is important for its health. Fertilizers washed into the waterway can interrupt the nutrient cycle. When this happens excessive algae

can grow in the summer time reducing the oxygen for fish, altering water temperature and reducing water quality. Being aware of what we throw in the trash and how it is stored and what is sprayed or spilled on the ground helps improve water quality and assist in healthy streams.



The above photos show where vehicle use has created defined trails in the stream bank. This can cause further erosion and

collapse of parts of the bank silting the stream.



The above photo is an example of algae growth which becomes worse when there are added nutrients in the water way. The most common added nutrients causing this problem are Nitrogen and Phosphorus. This can be from a combination of fertilizers, animal wastes, and detergents. If possible, select phosphorus free biodegradable soaps and detergents. This is particularly important for products being used to wash cars or pets out in the yard, which may directly

be caught in storm water.



The above picture is of a pile of old tires on a creek bank. This kind of solid waste pollution in the waterways can both leach chemicals into the soil and water and entrap wildlife.

On November 1, 2013 the Environmental Department held a cleanup of the Russian River on the Reservation. Following are photos of the cleanup.



On October 31, 2013 the Environmental Department brought a watershed model to the Halloween party and the children were able to work on an interactive display to learn about storm water. A photo is enclosed below.



The children were able to spray water on to simulate rain and discover how it picked up pollutants and flowed to the river.



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#### **Reuse and Reduce Solid Waste**

Many items that are thrown away can be reused. This is particularly true around the holidays. Shiny items like ribbon scraps, old CDs and cleaned mylar bags make great items for crafting with children. Christmas ornaments can be made out of rolled wrapping paper scraps. Cards can also be made with shapes cut out of these items. The possibilities for reuse are endless. Also, often items are thrown away which may be outdated but are still functioning.

Many times there is someone else who would use the item in its current form. E-waste like televisions, computers, microwaves, cell phones and tablets can all be recycled at the transfer station for free and the metals are extracted and reused. Reuse and recycling save the environment and save money. They save money because they reduce solid waste volume, which is expensive to dispose of. They help the environment because they are not adding to the landfills and reuse raw materials. There are countless ways that items can

be reused and recycled and our staff would be glad to assist you if you have any questions about reuse and recycling. Also, if you have any ideas of ways items can be reused try them out and share the ideas.

The Environmental Department is working with the Education Department to create Christmas crafting ideas for the youth out of reused materials. We are looking forward to seeing the creativity of the children fill the Education Department Christmas tree!

## Help Keep the Septic System Functioning

Septic systems function through living organisms digesting and treating the waste. In order for them to do their job it is important to be careful what is flushed down the toilet or drains because that ends up in the septic system. When the septic doesn't function properly due to incorrect items in it, health hazards can be posed and it is costly to deal with the waste. If it belongs in the trash please put it in the trash and not down the toilet or drain. In general solid materials not related to bodily functions should not go into the septic system. Solids not to be washed down include: food scraps, coffee grinds and grease

even when it is liquid.

**Septic Systems can be kept healthy by:**

-Keeping grease, cooking waste or food scraps out of the drain.

-Keeping sanitary items, condoms, diapers or baby wipes out of the toilet.

-Avoiding drain cleaners.

-Using only small amounts of cleaners with disinfectant.

-Not disposing of household chemicals down drains or toilets.

-Always disposing of medicines at a pharmacy or other designated spot.

-Household hazardous waste can be disposed of safely and for free at the Hazmat Vans.

-Conserving water helps keep the system from getting overloaded.



Even wipes which are listed as flushable don't break down and can cause serious blockage issues in systems as seen in the photo below.



Remember that a backed up septic can come up drains and into your home. It is a serious health risk and costly to remedy. Please carefully consider what goes down your drain and your toilet.