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No Dumping in Creeks: Towns Try to Clean Up Their Act

By Sophie Braccini



Debris on the side of Moraga Road close to the church Photo Sophie Braccini

As the rainy season starts it's the responsibility of property owners to make sure that pollutants do not enter the creeks and rivers that flow through, or are immediately adjacent to, their properties. Lamorinda's cities have a reputation for tough enforcement of the rules and regulations that work to prevent surface water contamination. Yet local governments and their contractors have not always focused intently on holding themselves to the same strict requirements to which the rest of the community is obligated. All too often, it takes a reminder from the community to get cities to walk their talk.

At 155 Moraga Road in Moraga, debris from the East Bay Municipal Utility District's (EBMUD) pipeline project was still lingering by the parking lot of the Christian Community Church. A large pile of debris had been left in proximity to a creek with no protection and another stack of asphalt debris was left adjacent to a storm drainage system. When we mentioned that fact to Town staff, they immediately went to inspect the site and that same afternoon had Mountain Cascade (EBMUD's contractor) start removing piles and mitigating impacts.

In Orinda, we went to 433 Moraga Way, by the parking lot of the Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, just before the Thanksgiving weekend. There we found large heaps of dirt and asphalt piled by the creek with absolutely no protection from runoff. Corrective action was implemented by contractor KJ Woods after we contacted the city.

In Orinda, the city ordinance code states that, "The permittee shall effect and

maintain precautionary measures necessary to protect adjacent watercourses and public or private property from damage or erosion, flooding and deposit of mud or debris originating from the site.... Minimizing increases in no point source pollution caused by storm water runoff from development that would otherwise degrade local water quality.... Require developers and owners' builders to control storm water quality impact of their projects during construction required developers of projects with significant storm water pollution potential to mitigate impacts through site planning and design practices and/or installing storm water treatment controls."

The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) confirmed that cities are subject to the same regulations as individual homeowners.

"We have to be exemplary in protecting our creeks," said Moraga Inspector Dana Blatner. "We've monitored the pipeline project during the whole time and I called EBMUD and Mountain Cascade as soon as I became aware of the problem."

At 433 Moraga Way, the erection of a protective fence began the day after we talked to Cathleen Terentieff, Orinda Storm Water Program Manager, and we were invited to come and see the site by Kevin Fitzpatrick of KJ Woods.

On site, Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (Central San) Community Affairs Representative Chris Carpenter explained that it is part of Central San's job to protect the creeks.

"We install protective barriers before the beginning of the rainy season," explained Fitzpatrick. When it rained during the Thanksgiving week, KJ Woods said they protected the debris with plastic covers held down by sand bags. On site, we saw workers completing the setting of the protective fence. "We are serving the community," added Carpenter, "Central San is engaged in a renovation project of the sewage systems of both Orinda and Lafayette and we have 35 sites open at this time. If the public has questions they can call me at (925) 229-7316."



Kevin Fitzpatrick explains how the protective fence works Photo Sophie Braccini

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