

Published January 22nd, 2020

## Residents pull together to restore native planting on creek banks

By Pippa Fisher



Residents showed up in force Jan. 12 to get the job done. Photo Pippa Fisher

Gathered next to Sotheby's Realty on Mt. Diablo Boulevard toward Lafayette's western end on a recent Sunday morning, a group of about 30 willing and able folks of all ages were eager to help with a planting project on the banks of the creek.

With some background knowledge delivered to the assembled group by John Zentner, chairman of the board for the Restoration Trust - an Oakland-based organization whose mission is to assist in restoration of land to native conditions and to promote native habitats - the volunteers got to work in small groups to plant native grasses, replacing the highly invasive, non-native plant, arundo.

Zentner explained how arundo, first planted by early European immigrants, has grown out of control especially along the creeks and is a flood and fire hazard that chokes out native, perennial plants, which are naturally more fire resistant and which provide food, shelter and breeding habitat for wildlife.

Armed with small trowels, the volunteers planted creeping wild rye on the sunnier upper edges of the creek and Santa Barbara sedge and field sedge lower down near the water.

If it was backbreaking work, no one was complaining. In fact everyone seemed to be having fun. As time went on, volunteers shed layers of clothing as they warmed up with the labor. Members of Girl Scout Troop 33137 took part, working toward their Silver Award along with members of the Youth Commission and members of the Creeks Committee, together with Lafayette Mayor Mike Anderson and City Council Member Teresa Gerringer.

The event is the result of the Lafayette Creeks Committee's work to secure financial support from the Walnut Creek Watershed Council and matching funds from the city. The funding made it possible to hire contractors through the Restoration Trust to remove the arundo prior to this planting event, and to pay for the replacement native plants. Creeks Committee Member Jeff Gilman explained that labor and ongoing maintenance will be handled by volunteers in the future.

There are several areas along the creeks that need this type of restoration work. Gilman says this particular area was chosen for the first event for its central location and visibility, and that there will be signage to mark the spot and draw public attention to the work.

Creeks Committee Chairman Will Elder was very happy with the strong turnout of volunteers. "We had a waiting list for this event," said Elder, who noted that the plan will be to go all the way along the creek toward the reservoir.

Anderson agrees. "This first phase of the Lafayette creek restoration project was a great success with so many Lafayette residents working together and having a good time; while making a significant and lasting improvement to our city," he said. "What a perfect start for a truly beneficial project."



Mayor Mike Anderson (left) shares a joke with Restoration Trust Board Chairman John Zentner as they work. Photo Pippa Fisher

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[back](#)

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