

# The Mendocino County Resource Conservation District: Conserving Mendocino County's Working Landscapes

by Patty Madigan

Since 1945, the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District has supported voluntary conservation of the county's natural resources and working landscapes. A five-member, volunteer board of directors meets each month to help guide the application of state, federal — including Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA cost-share programs — and other financial assistance to conservation planning and on the ground restoration projects.

Some of MCRCD's recent projects include:

- **The Navarro Watershed Restoration Program.** From 2000 to 2006, the RCD and the State Coastal Conservancy partnered to implement recommendations of the Navarro Watershed Restoration Plan, which calls for repairing road systems, riparian (streamside greenbelt) areas and fish habitat. Patty Madigan, Navarro Coordinator since 2001, helped organize the Navarro Watershed Working Group, which brings resources, energy and local expertise together to implement a variety of projects. To date, the MCRCD has leveraged more than \$4 million in restoration funding for restoring the Navarro River watershed.
- **Coordinated Permitting.** In 2000, MCRCD obtained a grant from the Conservancy to launch several projects including a streamlined permitting program, in collaboration with the NRCS, and Sustainable Conservation. The program is the first of its kind north of San Francisco Bay — and the second in California. This program is under renewal and to be expanded countywide.
- **Conservation Publications.** MCRCD distributes the Handbook for Forest and Ranch Roads, and a video or DVD on progressive road design and maintenance; The Navarro Watershed Guide to Care and Restoration, a user-friendly booklet with watershed maps to enable the layperson to plan a restoration project. Although developed for the Navarro watershed, the Guide is applicable to all of Mendocino County. To obtain any of these publications, call 468-9223 x 101, order online at [www.mcrccd.org](http://www.mcrccd.org), or stop by the MCRCD office.
- **Russian River Projects.** MCRCD recently completed a watershed assessment on Forsythe Creek, a major tributary of the Russian River between Ukiah and Willits. Many projects were identified from the assessment, which will guide future implementation efforts. South of Ukiah and north of Hopland, MCRCD has assisted landowners in the McNab Creek and Feliz Creek portions of the Russian River. Projects to date feature road assessment and implementation, and stream bank and riparian restoration, including native plant restoration.
- **Giant Reed Control.** *Arundo donax*, commonly known as “Giant reed,” is both an unwelcome pest plant and a fire hazard, along much of the Russian River watershed and had started to creep into the Navarro River system. Originally planted by landowners seeking solutions for stream bank failure, or introduced through backyard gardening, this riparian invader can be difficult to control. Interested landowners who are concerned about the spread of *Arundo* on their property are encouraged to contact MCRCD.