

The Cresta Ranch Riparian Enhancement & Education Project

A partnership of Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District, Sotoyome Resource Conservation District, Sonoma County Regional Parks, Southern Sonoma County Resource Conservation District (FARMS Program), and the Friends of the Mark West Watershed

In 2007, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District (District) purchased the 340-acre Cresta Ranch. The property includes a key riparian corridor at the confluence of Mark West and Porter Creeks and provides important habitat for terrestrial, avian and aquatic species – including federally listed Coho salmon and steelhead trout. The property provides scenic vistas along Mark West/Porter Creek road, and has a long history of sustainable grazing management.

Together with other protected lands in the area, this purchase provides a continuous wildlife habitat connection in the Mark West Creek watershed. The District plans to transfer the property along with two adjoining properties to Sonoma County Regional Parks to create a future 1146 acre Regional Park and Open Space Preserve. In the interim, the District is working in partnership with the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District, the Friends of the Mark West Watershed (FMWW), Sonoma County Regional Parks, Southern Sonoma County RCD and other partners to manage and enhance the natural resources on the property, including native plant revegetation, assessment and monitoring of terrestrial and aquatic habitats, erosion control and invasive species management.



The Sotoyome RCD—in partnership with the District, Southern Sonoma County RCD, and the FMWW—received a \$20,000 grant through the Nature Restoration Trust program funded by Pacific Gas and Electric Company and administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for implementation of the Cresta Riparian Habitat Enhancement and Education Project. This community creek stewardship and education project will involve local high school students participating in the FARMS Leadership Program, as well as FMWW members. The project area includes the floodplain riparian corridor along Porter and Mark West Creeks within the Mark West Watershed. The project's goals include: expanding the riparian corridor, enhancing native plant diversity, and increasing habitat for terrestrial, avian and aquatic species. Additional objectives include environmental education regarding riparian and aquatic systems, engaging students and the community in hands-on natural resources education, educating students and the community regarding Sonoma County's agricultural heritage, and demonstrating how viable agricultural operations and healthy stream systems can be complementary.

