

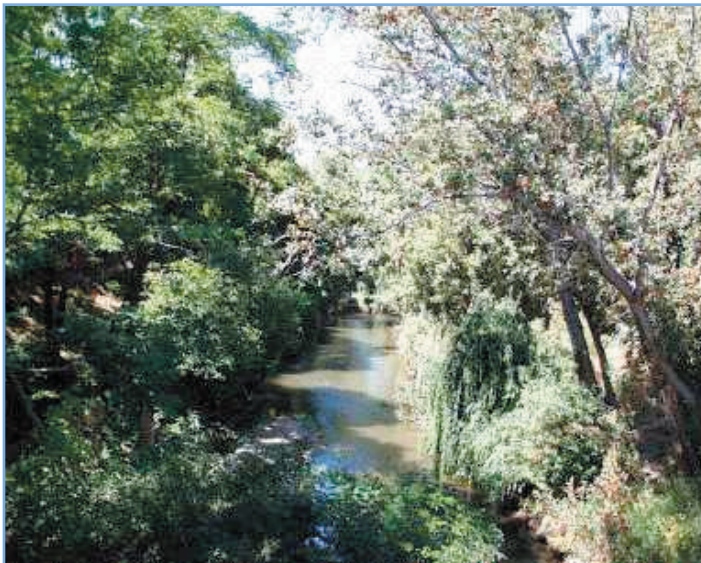
How to Be a Good Stream Steward

Handout 3 of 7

Actions taken in your own backyard can prevent and reduce harm to your local stream. By being a good stream steward, you help protect your property and that of your neighbors from flooding, slope failures and erosion.

Stream Stewardship means

- Respecting the value of healthy streams,
- Treating streams in ways that will sustain their benefits for current and future generations,
- Recognizing that each of us needs to do our part in preserving streams,
- Managing streamside land in a manner consistent with public health and safety and respect for property rights.



The following Best Management Practices (BMPs) have been developed to support the protection of streamside natural resources. Many practices apply to vegetated stream areas. If the stream banks by your home have been lined or hardened, please consider the practices that apply to your site and to the creek or bay down stream.

1. Water Quality

- Direct surface drainage away from streams and do not allow water to sheet flow over unvegetated areas of the stream bank.
- Encourage infiltration by minimizing paving materials and installing pervious materials such as porous pavers, wood or gravel.
- Use vegetated buffer zones to reduce surface runoff into streams.
- Plant landscape materials that minimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Use organic soil amendments rather than chemical fertilizers.
- Do not drain pools or spas to the storm drain, gutter or creek. Chlorine and copper algaecides are toxic to aquatic life. Drain to the sanitary sewer or let chlorine dissipate for two weeks and drain to landscaping.
- Dispose of vegetation debris, lawn clippings and animal waste with your recycling or household trash. Although biodegradable, too much organic material degrades the riparian habitat.

2. Streambanks and Streambeds

- Preserve existing riparian vegetation. This includes both trees and understory shrubbery.
- Keep structures out of the stream zone. Stairs and retaining walls can degrade creek banks and impact your neighbor's stream bank.
- Drain roof gutters to landscaped areas or to the street. Pipes draining onto or above the stream bank can cause erosion.
- Don't dam or take water from the stream.
- Monitor the stream bank condition. Replant barren or disturbed slopes as soon as possible or provide erosion blanket or straw to protect slope until permanent vegetation is established.
- Do not use tires or broken concrete for erosion repair or slope protection.
- Eroded stream banks should be repaired with "soft" methods, such as geotextiles or soil filled mats or for severely eroded areas, boulders interspersed with willow wattles. Seek professional help with this work to ensure proper installation that protects the stream, your property and your neighbors' properties.
- If possible, coordinate with upstream or downstream property owners to design and implement streambed or streambank improvements for a reach of stream.



Biotechnical erosion repair.

3. Vegetation

- Plant riparian vegetation to provide shading of streams, where possible.
- Use native watershed-specific plants or non-local California natives. When planting in riparian areas exclude invasive plants from your landscaping plan.
- New native plantings may need irrigation to help ensure establishment but should be weaned from irrigation for long-term survival.
- Remove invasive plants from riparian corridors, especially those which spread rapidly and degrade riparian habitat, such as pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*) and *Arundo donax*.
- Do not place structures within the drip line of mature riparian trees, such as oak, sycamore, alder, etc.



Giant reed (*Arundo donax*)

4. Fisheries:

- Preserve in-stream and near-stream riparian vegetation with canopies providing shade and nutrients for aquatic life.
- Avoid removing woody debris, which provides fish habitat in streams unless it poses a flooding or erosion threat.

Invasive plant removal can require special techniques. Contact the Santa Clara Valley Water District for additional guidance at 408- 265-2607, ext. 2650.