

**From:** Bill Denneen <bdenneen@kcbx.net>  
**To:** <commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov>  
**Date:** Mon, Apr 16, 2007 8:30 PM  
**Subject:** WETLANDS

**Wetland/Riparian Policy**

Deadline: 4/19/07 12 noon

RE: "Comment Letter - Wetland and Riparian Area Protection Policy"  
 COMMENT:

I am a retire College Biologist. I write articles for our  
 local paper about local wetlands:

RIPARIAN HABITAT

By Bill Denneen

Keep trash out of creeks. If you live near the water  
 drainage system in Nipomo do not use it as a place to put unwanted  
 material-----a dump. Plastic irrigation tubing is particularly  
 troublesome. It makes a tangle with branches and debris forming a dam  
 resulting in adjacent flooding. This tubing should not be dumped in  
 the creek and not burned as it makes a poisonous gas.

Fall is an important time to remove trash from the  
 creeks, before the winter storms arrive. On Saturday September 30,  
 from 9AM to Noon - The Nipomo Community Services District is hosting  
 "Nipomo Creek Cleanup Day". Participate in Creek Day as a great way  
 to improve the beauty of Nipomo while sending a message that illegal  
 dumping and polluting is not acceptable in our community. We meet at  
 9 AM at the Adobe Plaza to register and form cleanup crewa. Info at  
 929-1133 or email:

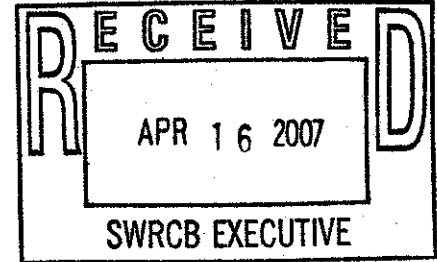
Madonna at <mdunbar@nipomocsd.com>.

Wetlands are sacred to Biologists because they provide  
 critical feeding, breeding and spawning grounds for one-third of our  
 endangered plants and animals, and a myriad of waterfowl, migratory  
 songbirds, and other wildlife. Wetlands recharge ground water  
 supplies, control floods, purify water that flows through them and  
 are the nurseries for the fish of the seas. Wetlands are vital to the  
 economic and environmental health of our nation, yet they are being  
 lost at the alarming rate of 300,000 acres per year in America.

Wetlands include estuaries, swamps, bogs, vernal pools,  
 riparian corridors, marshland, creeks and sloughs. California has the  
 dubious honor of having lost more than 90% of its historic wetlands,  
 the largest percentage of any state in our nation. Prior to the  
 arrival of our civilization the US had 5 million acres of wetlands  
 with only a half million remaining. This is horrendous to a  
 biologist. Local example of wetlands are west  
 of Guadalupe, Cienega Valley, Black Lake Canyon and Nipomo &  
 Haystack Creek. The situation gets even worse as we become  
 "losangelified" and former wetlands start growing houses .

Our culture has not been kind to this resource. We have  
 abused, dredged, diked, bulldozed, channelized, diverted, silted in  
 and contaminated this pristine resource in the name of "progress". A  
 few years ago there was a big tractor parade in Santa Maria. The  
 parade ended at the County Government Center. Over 200 tractors  
 with 400 farmers gathered to protest regulations to protect  
 wetlands; there was one lone demonstrator for wetland protection  
 (me). When I carried my sign: "Save Our Creeks" one farmer yelled  
 out:"save our geeks" which got a big laugh (even from me). The  
 farmers invited me to their excellent  
 BBQ which I appreciated.

I have watched with great pain the slow inexorable



destruction Oso Flaco Creek. State Parks with the help of the Nature Conservancy have been doing a fine job taking care of the lake itself while at the same time ignoring the drainage into the lake. I first saw this riparian corridor in the 1960's. I wish I had taken pictures. It had high bio-diversity, giant willows, cottonwoods, songbirds, watercress, Yerba Manza, duckweed, Azolla, bulrushes, muskrats, black-shouldered kites, raptors, cattails, all kinds of insects, amphibians, garter-snakes and even horsetails. Western Pond Turtles once lived here.

Clear water flowed in the creek. I always stopped here with my Biology Classes on our way to the Nipomo Dunes. Now it is a channelized, sterile, very silted ditch. It is rapidly filling in Oso Flaco Lake. Agriculture has expanded so that all that is left of this once rich riparian corridor is an ugly ditch ----this pains a biologist.

In California we have destroyed 98% of our riparian habitat. These areas provide wildlife habitat, protect adjacent areas from flooding, filter our drinking water, clean polluted water. Wetland soils and plants absorb heavy metals, pesticides, and other toxins, preventing them from washing downstream or migrating to groundwater. Through various processes not yet fully understood, they can immobilize or transform many toxic substances, removing them from the food chain. The importance of wetlands may not be readily apparent until AFTER they are destroyed.

Join in the creek clean-up on September 30, 9AM at Adobe Plaza. Become proud of our community. Your life will be enriched and Nipomo will be a better place to live.

Bill Denneen, 1040 Cielo Ln, Nipomo, 93444 929-3647

//

#### SNOWY PLOVERS:

By Bill Denneen

Kathlene Goddard Jones (KGJ) trained me well--- if you believe in an enviro-issue 'hang in there, do not waver'. Vehicles do not belong on the beach nor in the dunes----removal is top priority for me. The Dune Center (DC) had scheduled an event at Oso Flaco Lake (OFL) with Huel Houser for Oct. 16th. They sent out 200 invitations with 'non-invited' guests not welcome. I did not get an invitation. I decided to protest the vehicles on the beach and dunes on the road leading to OFL..

I announced that I would be there demonstrating for Snowy Plover protection and removal of vehicles.. The DC had a representative (paid?) checking out my "demonstration". He talked to me about my plans. He saw my signs (PLOVER LOVER, BEACH NOT A ROAD, PROTECT CRITICAL HABITAT etc.). He must have reported to the Dune Center as the DC did not take Huel Houser to OFL at all---I walked on OFL Road with my :PLOVER LOVER sign for over an hour (great exercise)

The number of Western Snowy Plovers has dropped 30% in the past decade. They are heading toward extinction. The Bush Administration which is hostile to the Endangered Species Act continues it's assault on nature by reducing by 40% the number of beaches that are designated as Critical Habitat for Snowies. There is no science behind this decision. It is based solely on economics (money). Grover & Oceano claim that they would lose millions of dollars if vehicles

were excluded . In my opinion decisions should be based on good science---not on money.

The Oceano Dunes State Vehicle Recreation Area (ODSVRA) has been "studying" the mouth of Arroyo Grande Creek for decades. It is Critical Habitat for Snowy Plovers and Steelhead Trout which must cross a "road" in order to swim upstream to reproduce. The beach is functioning as a 'sink'. A 'sink' is an area where a species is attracted but is unable to reproduce sufficiently to maintain their numbers. There were 50 Snowie nesting sites along the west coast but only 8 are now left--- one at the mouth of Arroyo Grande Creek.

In 1998, 78 Snowy Plover eggs were produced in the SVRA on the beach with 60 producing chicks. Of these 60 fledglings only 11 survived to fly away. This is a survival rate of only 18%----not enough to maintain the species. They are headed toward extinction.

With Bush's new ruling State Parks will now no longer be required to remove the vehicles from the mouth of AG Creek---they can end their endless "studies". The breeding season (March 1st to Sept.30th) snowies court, lay eggs on the dry sand, incubating and hatch eggs. The male raises the young while the female goes off to another beach to meet a new male---women typically like this role reversal. It makes for 3 'clutches' per year---biologically very efficient. The newly hatched fledglings are tiny and blend in with the sand and must feed at the waters edge on insects, worms and tiny crabs. The attrition (death) rate is extremely high.

The mouth of Arroyo Grande Creek has become a 'road' with thousands of vehicles passing on a busy weekend. This is the main entrance to the SVRA. The Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Division of State Parks receives over \$60,000,000./year from the gas tax to promote vehicle use as a type of 'recreation'. Vehicles use a fuel (oil) which is running out, contributes to global warming and pollutes the air we breathe. Driving OHVs may make the corporations that manufacture them very rich and powerful but should no longer be considered a type of "recreation".

The time has come to stop the degradation of the natural world.. As a Biologist I feel obligated to point out that the Bush Administration is taking our culture in the wrong direction--- it's an assault on nature. As a result we have become an "endangered species" and Bush has headed us in a "terminal" direction.



**WETLANDS**

By Bill Denneen

New Years weekend had about 5 inches of rain on Nipomo Mesa ---much like what occurred on March 5th in 2001. I checked out the Nipomo Creek water flow and estimate damage was actually less than in '01.. The Land Conservancy has led creek clean-ups during the past 4 years making the difference. If you own property or live near the water drainage system I urge you to continue to keep trash out of this fragile drainage system.

Plastic irrigation tubing seems to be the biggest problem. It makes a tangle with branches and debris forming a dam resulting in adjacent flooding. This tubing should not be dumped in the creek and of course not burned as it makes a poisonous gas.

Wetlands include estuaries, swamps, bogs, vernalis, riparian corridors, marshland, creeks and sloughs. California has the dubious honor of having lost more than 90% of its historic wetlands, the largest percentage of any state in our nation. Prior to the arrival of our civilization the US had 5 million acres of wetlands with only a half million remaining----this is horrendous. Local example of wetlands are west of Guadalupe, Cienega Valley and Black Lake Canyon. The situation gets even worse as we become "Losangelified" and former wetlands start growing houses (Point Sal Dunes) .

Wetlands are sacred to Biologists because they provide critical feeding, breeding, and spawning grounds for one-third of our endangered plants and animals, and a myriad of waterfowl, migratory songbirds, and other wildlife. Wetlands recharge ground water supplies, control floods, purify water that flows through them and are the nurseries for the fish of the seas. Wetlands are vital to the economic and environmental health of our nation, yet they are being lost at the alarming rate of 300,000 acres per year.

Our culture has not been kind to this resource. We have dredged, diked, bulldozed, channelized, diverted, silted in and contaminated this pristine resource in the name of "progress". A few years ago there was a big tractor parade in Santa Maria. The parade ended at the County Government Center. Over 200 tractors and farmers gathered to protest regulations to protect wetlands; there was one lone demonstrator for wetland protection (me). When I carried my sign: "Save Our Creeks" one farmer yelled out: "save our geeks" which got a big laugh (even from me). The farmers invited me to their excellent BBQ which I appreciated.

I have watched with great pain the slow inexorable destruction Oso Flaco Creek. State Parks and for awhile the Nature Conservancy have been doing a fine job taking care of Osos Flaco Lake while at the same time ignoring the drainage into the lake.

I first saw this riparian corridor in the 1960's. I wish I had taken pictures. It had high biodiversity, giant willows and cottonwoods, songbirds, watercress, Yerba Manza, duckweed, Azolla, rushes, bulrushes, muskrats, black shoulded kites, raptors, cattails and all kinds of insects, amphibians, garter-snakes and horsetails. Western Pond Turtles once lived here. Clear water flowed in the creek. I always stopped here with my Biology Classes on our way to the Nipomo Dunes. Now it is a channelized, sterile, very silted ditch. It is rapidly filling in Oso Flaco Lake. Agriculture has expanded so that all that is left of this once rich riparian corridor is an ugly ditch ----this pains a biologist.

In California we have destroyed 98% of our riparian habitat. These areas provide wildlife habitat, protect adjacent areas from flooding, filter our drinking water, clean polluted water. Wetland soils and plants absorb heavy metals, pesticides, and other toxins, preventing them from washing downstream or migrating to groundwater. Through

various processes not yet fully understood, they can immobilize or transform many toxic substances, removing them from the food chain. The importance of wetlands may not be readily apparent until AFTER they are destroyed.

The pressure to obliterate wetlands comes from out exploding numbers. I call it the "silent invasion" which comes mainly from Central America. It used to be due to high teenage pregnancy rate with Santa Maria leading. With Planned Parenthood leading, sex education, contraceptive availability and back-up abortion provided we have finally reduced teen pregnancies. In California alone we have "exploded" to 34 million----a number which in my opinion is about 30 million more than what is sustainable. I call it the "people glut" much like the rabbits in Australia.

It is so gratifying to see Nipomo Mesa change direction in its degradation of this precious riparian biome under the guidance of SLO Land Conservancy (544-9096). There will be the Annual Nipomo Creek Clean-up in early October----participate.