

GRAVEL MINING UPDATE

Riverkeeper Don McEnhill

The world of gravel mining on the Russian River will be due for a change this winter when the First District Court of Appeals hears arguments from lawyer Stephan Volker against the approval of Shamrock's current mining permit. As with Volker's recent FOER/ SCWA lawsuit, the court of appeals will likely reverse the Sonoma County Superior Court decision against plaintiffs, POWR – of which FORR is a member. While the legal wrangling was going on, Shamrock has violated numerous permit conditions especially by mining 75% more tonnage than their permit allows and placing un-saleable fine sediment overburden and potentially hazardous fill from Shamrock's soils yard in the river channel as part of a "revegetation plan".

The estimated 350,000 to 400,000 tons mined from the river this summer is well over the allowed limit of 96,000 tons. A "revegetation" plan at Shamrock's LP bar site involved importing over 4,000 yards of material consisting of deck trash from a lumber mill, concrete truck washout pond fines and sediment collection pond fines. Once your Riverkeeper brought this illegally imported



Shamrock was allowed by NOAA Fisheries and DF&G to drive this 30 ton loader across the river in two places twice a day, for a total of over 40 crossings. Their permit allows only 10 wet stream crossings per year!



The remains of a riparian forest that stood in the way of Shamrock's mining – awaiting the bulldozer that will run over it as part of "revegetation".

fill to the attention of the Regional Water Quality Board, they issued a Cleanup and Abatement Order to have it removed. Shamrock has removed a portion of the material as of this time. The mature vegetation standing in the way of Shamrock's mining was viciously ripped out with a clamshell bucket and dumped in piles on top of the illegally imported material to cover-up what they didn't remove. Shamrock then, in a bizarre and untested revegetation technique, drove a bulldozer over the vegetation repeatedly. Funny, I never run over plants I bring home from the nursery to "help" them.

The imported soil material and revegetation techniques were never described in the county application and ensuing mitigated Negative Declaration.

What those applications described was mature vegetation to be carefully removed, watered, kept alive and replanted at the edge of the wet channel the same day.

The pictures at right don't seem to show use of the approved reveg technique, do they?

NOAA Fisheries (formerly National Marine Fisheries Service) and Department of Fish and Game apparently met with Shamrock and approved of this atrocity, but no notice or information was forwarded to the Regional Water Quality Board that issues its own permit for mining projects. The public wasn't given any opportunity to comment on this drastic change in mining techniques either.

On the terrace pit mining front, despite hearing repeatedly from the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors that terrace mining will be phased out in 2004, another 5 year permit is being processed for Syar Industries for yet another terrace pit operation. Talk does appear to be cheap.

As of press time FORR is contemplating a Clean Water Act lawsuit against Shamrock for the inevitable release of sediment from their mining that will smother downstream spawning redds of endangered Chinook salmon. A contribution to our matching funds campaign can be specified for support of this important legal battle to protect our river from the degradation of mining.

"All vegetation to be kept alive and transplanted same day by low-flow channel." – Shamrock mining permit Neg Dec, 2001 – NOT DONE!

More vital riparian vegetation bulldozed, and we wonder why river temps are up? Fewer trees = warmer water temps.



Photos: Don McEnhill

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EVENT CALENDAR



RIVER TOURS WITH YOUR RIVERKEEPER!

- Wednesday, October 29, 2003
- Saturday, November 8, 2003

Take a journey on the Russian to hear about current issues, see them firsthand and maybe see a few spawning Chinook Salmon!

FORR Members – *FREE*, Non-Members – \$20. Call 433-1958 or gbtc.aol.com to reserve a space.

DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!!!

December 31, 2003

Last day to send in a tax deductible contribution to FORR/Riverkeeper and have your donation doubled! See Fall 2003 Matching Funds Challenge article.

PREPARE FOR ACTION!

November-December 2003.

Release of Santa Rosa IRWP Final EIR (November 6th), certification hearing & IRWP project selection.

This is your chance to tell Santa Rosa: **We Are Sick of Sewage in the Russian**. FORR will be coordinating protests against the River Discharge (dumping) alternative. Please email: info@russianriverkeeper.org to help your river!

DO THESE LITTLE THINGS FOR THE RIVER

FIX CAR LEAKS!

Inspect under your car for oil or anti-freeze leaks. Use kitty litter to absorb spills or leaks, sweep up and put in garbage, never hose spills into the gutter – it will go right into our creeks.

SCOOP THE PET POOP!

Shovel or bag up pet waste and deposit in the garbage or flush it. This can greatly reduce harmful bacteria levels in creeks.

PROPERLY DISPOSE OF TOXICS!

Take all used motor oil, antifreeze, oil based paints, solvents, thinners, varnishes, pesticides, fertilizers & weed killers to recycling stations or to the next household toxics round-up sponsored by your city or waste hauler.

BE A HOUSE AND GARDEN HERO!

Get a free copy – while supplies last – of “The House and Garden Audit – Protecting Your Family’s Health and Improving the Environment” by Laurel Marcus & Associates. Call Sotoyome RCD at 569-1448.