

# Management program unites farmers, enviros

tives from the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

"The farming community and the environmental community are working together to find solutions," Moun-

ty said.

Farmers in the pilot program grow a wide range of fruit, vegetable, and flower crops; they are large and small,

and they grow organically and conventionally. They share a combination of unusual environmental com-

mitment and market savvy in carving out a niche for their products.

The 10 farmers are Am Rhein's A&A Farms, VB Farms, Live Earth Farm, Gizdich Ranch, Shinta Kawahara Co.,

Frank Caputo & Son, High Ground Organics, Bruce Rider & Sons, Quail

Mountains Herbs and Thomas Farms. Although he sees difficulties in us-

ing the label now in the wholesale chain, Am Rhein believes it could im-

mediately help him market cut flow-

ers directly through the Internet. "We're definitely going to use the la-

bel. It's just one more thing to use and it can't hurt."

Updates on the progress of the Farmers' Clean Water Initiative, an application for farmers who are in-

terested in participating and the extensive evaluation manual are at [www.pvplot.org](http://www.pvplot.org).

questionnaire in the project's farming practices manual to confirm that their farming practices are easy on

the environment.

The manual includes a long list of detailed questions about farm prac-

tices to manage soil erosion, irrigation, nutrients, pesticides and habi-

tats. Their score increases as they move up the ladder in their vigilance

in making their farm environment friendly. When they achieve a pass-

ing score, the project's technical advisory committee reviews their ap-

plication.

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Daniel Mounjioy, NRCS

The program is entirely voluntary and the approach is farmer friendly.

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Daniel Mounjioy, Natural Resources Conservation Service Elkhorn Slough

watershed coordinator.

The advisory committee includes farmers, regulators and representa-

environmental and agricultural

groups.

In exchange for achieving a rigorous standard of environmental

stewardship farmers will be allowed to market their goods using a label

reading: "FIELDS TO OCEAN, COASTAL FARMERS CONSERV-

ING MONTEREY BAY"

Am Rhein is among a group of Pajaro Valley farmers that has become

the first to use the new label announcing it has adopted practices friendly to the

waters of Monterey Bay.

This pilot project involving just 10 farmers and fewer than 200 acres is

intended as the modest beginning of an ambitious effort to involve farm-

ers from throughout Monterey Bay. The strategy is to spread the word to

farmers throughout the region and finally, begin a wider marketing cam-

paign.

"The big challenge is getting enough farmers involved to be able to use this

label on the supermarket level," said Michael Dimock head of Ag Innova-

tions Network. "We're already talking with farmers throughout Monterey County and into San Luis Obispo County."

To use the Fields to Ocean label farmers must complete an extensive

Farmers volunteer to

meet agreed-upon

ecological standards

By Bob Johnson

For the Capital Press

WATSONVILLE — Tom Am Rhein farms strawberries and cut flowers

on a hillside property adjacent to Elkhorn Slough in northernmost Mon-

terey County.

To protect the waters of the slough from agricultural runoff, Am Rhein

has planted grass buffer strips close to the slough. And he's also, with the

financial help of the Land Trust of Monterey County, taken some of the

steepest slopes on the farm out of pro-

duction.

After years of environmental stewardship Am Rhein hopes to benefit

farmers involved to be able to use this label on the supermarket level," said

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