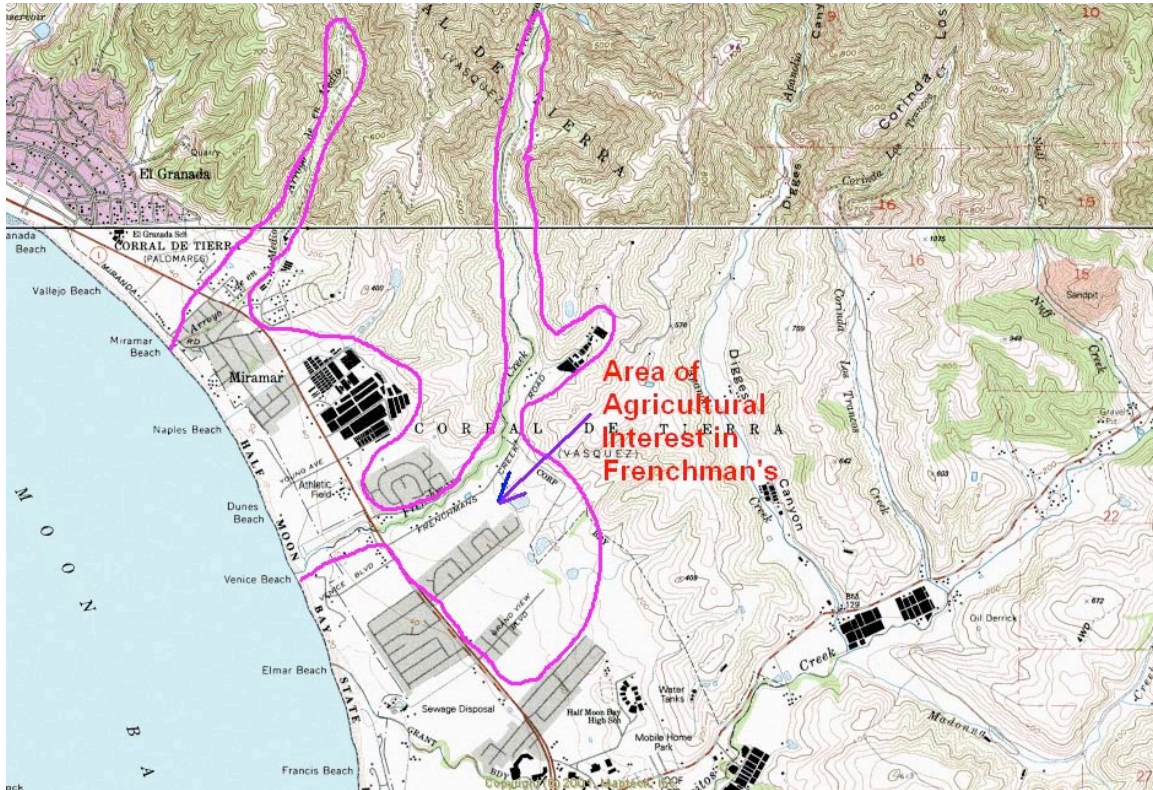


# Frenchman's Creek Watershed Working Group San Mateo County

## Annual Watershed Report

January 1, 2004 – December 31, 2004



Watershed-Level Summary Statistics	
Name of Watershed	Frenchman's Creek
Square miles of land the watershed drains	6
Total acreage of watershed	4079
Total agricultural acreage in watershed	260
Rangeland acres	-
Row crop acres / greenhouses	260
Percent watershed land use in ag production	6%
Number of ag operations in watershed	8
Number of ag operations in Program	7
<b>Percent participation (by operation)</b>	<b>87%</b>
Acres of ag in program	250
<b>Percent participation (by acreage)</b>	<b>96%</b>
# of operations through short course	2
# of operations with completed farm plan	2

**Note; Source of watershed acreage is UC Ag Extension Service report dated Jan 1956. Agricultural acreage shown is based on an estimate of this year's production.**

### **Location of Watershed:**

The Frenchman's Creek Watershed is located in the central portion of coastal San Mateo County approximately 18 miles south of San Francisco. The watershed is comprised of Frenchman's Creek and its tributary Locke's Creek. This "watershed" for purposes of the Watershed Group, includes the Arroyo de en Medio, a stand alone drainage/creek which lies to the North of the Frenchman's drainage. The Frenchman's Creek empties into the Pacific Ocean at Venice State Beach (part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary). The creek flows through unincorporated areas in the upper watershed and through incorporated City of Half Moon Bay in the lower reaches.

The Frenchman's Creek Watershed is a part of the USGS Cataloging Unit Basin Name; San Francisco Coastal South. The Hydrologic Area Name is San Mateo Coastal. Its Calwater Unit number is 202.210. This watershed is a part of Region 2 of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board.

### **Description of Watershed:**

The Frenchman's Creek watershed (for purposes of this watershed group) includes two distinct drainages, Frenchman's Creek and Arroyo de en Medio. Elevations rise from sea level at the mouth to 1500 feet at the headwaters. The natural plants community types found in the watershed range from coastal strand vegetation near the Pacific Ocean, to Coastal Shrub/Chaparral in the upper watershed. Most of the upland areas of the watershed area are a mosaic of grassland and chaparral typical of the western slope of the Coast Range which includes chamise, coyote brush, manzanita, poison oak and annual Mediterranean grasses. The riparian forest found along the creek corridor is a mix of alders and a variety of willow species. Invasive Eucalyptus, Scotch and French Broom and German Ivy are invader plants seen in the very lower reaches of the creek corridor. The watershed is characterized by steep slopes and canyons in the upper reaches and near level bottomlands. Lands adjacent to the lower reaches have historically been used for agriculture. In recent history, much of the agricultural land in the lower watershed has been converted to urban uses.

The Frenchman's Creek watershed provides habitat for a diverse population of wildlife, including rare, threatened and endangered species such as the red-legged frog, the San Francisco garter snake, snowy plover, the tidewater goby, and the steelhead trout.

The watershed is currently not listed as impaired under Sections 303(D) for impaired water bodies. However, because of human health concerns at the State Beach (mouth of the creek), e coli bacteria is a recognized contaminant in some reaches of the creek.

Precipitation within the watershed areas range from approximately twenty-six inches annually on the coast to 42 inches in the upper reaches. Approximately eighty percent of the total precipitation occurs between November and March.

Ownership of land includes a mosaic of publicly owned land (California State Parks) and privately owned property.

Principal land uses include recreational open space (State Parks - Beach), recreational uses (equestrian rentals), urban areas (City of Half Moon Bay), undisturbed upland slopes and irrigated agriculture.

Agricultural uses are dominated by Floriculture activities, both field flowers and Green House activities.

### **Watershed Working Group**

#### **Administration:**

The Frenchman's Creek Watershed Working Group (WWG) was established in July 2003. At that time, By-Laws were created and adopted and a Mission Statement was agreed upon.

Meetings are held at the production barn of Bello and Bello on Frenchman's Creek Road in Half Moon Bay. Dates and times are announced by notice mailed to all cooperators and all growers in the watershed.

This watershed group meets as needed to address local issues or to be updated on continuing efforts.

Dates of meetings during 2004 and specific topics of discussion follow;

Feb 11, 2004 Update on e coli monitoring and demonstration project potential

Aug 13, 2004 Follow up on e coli, water supply issues and in stream restoration project

Dec 13, 2004 Follow up on water supply issues and discussions with regulatory agencies

### **Participation:**

At this time, a total of 4 cooperators have signed "Notice of Intent" to participate with the working group. This total includes agricultural landowners, managers and operators.

Two of the cooperators have attended the Cooperative Extension Short Course (one in 2001 and one in 2004) and have completed their Farm Plan and Self Assessments.

This year, outreach activities have resulted in participation by a majority of the landowners (absentee) and tenant farmers who own or farm in this watershed area at periodic WWG meetings. It is hoped that their participation will continue. One operation has not yet commenced participation.

### **Watershed Projects:**

1. The WWG is currently working in cooperation with the National Marine Fisheries Service seeking ways to increase summer flows in the Frenchman's Creek. To that end, the WWG has taken a strong stand encouraging the agencies involved with sewer treatment on the coast to look into tertiary treatment of the sewer effluent as a possible substitute source of irrigation water in this watershed.
2. The WWG is actively participating with San Mateo Co. Dept. of Environmental Health on an ongoing effort to monitor and remediate sources of e coli contamination in the watershed.
3. This WWG has worked with Calif. Dept of Fish and Game, NOAA Fisheries and the San Mateo Co. RCD on in stream fish migration barrier removal projects over the past year.

### **Conservation Practices currently in use:**

1. cover crops are utilized by field flower growers this past winter.
2. Green house operations utilize drip irrigation and tail water recycling to reduce runoff and conserve water
3. Riparian corridors are left intact

All of the cooperators are regularly inspected by the County Ag Commissioner's office for proper storage and application of chemical products (pesticides or herbicides).

### **Summary of Accomplishments**

- This year, a two year monitoring effort by San Mateo County Environmental Health (conducted after agreement and full participation by the WWG) was completed. The intention of the study was to identify areas of persistent high coliform contamination, with the idea that sources could then be identified and remediated. After the two years of study, no persistent source of high coliform counts was found in the reach of stream utilized by agriculture. High numbers of coliform colonies was noted in the lower portions of Frenchman's Creek, near the State Beach. Results of this two year effort seems to demonstrate that agricultural activities are not a source of this contamination.

### **Summary of Annual Goals which had been set in 2003 and activities accomplished during 2004 to achieve those goals:**

- Outreach to agricultural land owners, operators and managers in watershed to achieve 100% participation.
  - *Continued outreach has resulted in nearly all of the absentee landowners and tenant farmers participation with this WWG. Additional outreach is needed to achieve 100% participation.*
- Participate in Cooperative Extension Short Course on Agricultural Non Point Source Pollution.
  - *A scheduled Short Course in Half Moon Bay was delayed until year 2005 or 2006*

- Assist individual cooperators in development of “Self Assessments” for Agricultural Non Point Source Pollution and “Farm Action Plans”.
  - *Ongoing*
- Report to San Mateo Co. Farm Bureau number of cooperators, area covered by cooperators, number of “Self Assessments” and “Farm Action Plans”
  - *Annually*
- Seek funding to assist in the implementation of beneficial conservation practices
  - *Ongoing*
- Continue to work cooperatively with the ongoing “e coli” project underway in the watershed
  1. *Over the past two years, San Mateo Co. conducted weekly coliform/e coli monitoring through out the watershed on sites facilitated by the WWG. This weekly monitoring program has been completed. No persistent coliform problems were identified in the reach of agricultural interest. The WWG will continue to work with the County on premeditating noted sources.*
- Conduct Base Line water quality monitoring in Frenchman’s Creek
  - *Planned to commence year 2005 in cooperation with NRCS*

#### **Watershed-Specific Challenges**

- Portions of the Frenchman’s Creek WWG lie within the City limits of Half Moon Bay in highly urbanized areas. Conversion of agricultural lands to other land uses is a challenge for the WWG.
- Water supply for irrigation will continue to be a big challenge. Participation in water conservation practices, investigation into recycled water and use of tertiary treated water will offer challenges and opportunities.
- Follow up on the recently completed coliform studies will be a continuing challenge for this watershed.

#### **Water Quality Data Report (summary)**

- San Mateo County Environmental Health Dept. – Coliform and e coli monitoring.
  1. Results; Frenchman’s Creek is highly impacted by coliform bacteria at the State Beach area. The beach is posted as “unsafe” due to bacteria. Monitoring sites were established from the State Beach to the headwaters (above all human activity). Results were reviewed each week, looking for persistent high numbers of colonies. After two years, the locations of those “high” numbers was identified as being limited to the “lower reaches” of the stream (downstream of Highway 1). *No persistent coliform problems were identified in the reach of agricultural interest.*