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# 97.9 Flooding topic of conference

by Frank Robertson  
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**GUERNEVILLE** — A special flood conference next week will offer River residents a chance to learn why Russian River floods seem to be getting worse and what might be done about it.

"Flood Management Day" in the Guerneville Veterans Hall next Saturday, April 26, will (Please see *Flooding* page A9)

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give the public an opportunity to learn about the anatomy of the Russian River watershed and explore why flooding occurs with increasing frequency and intensity," said Meg Alexander, one of the day's organizers.

Hydrologists, environmentalists, bureaucrats, flood victims and others will gather at the all-day conference to learn about the River's "basic dynamics" and "listen to stories of hope and explore the creative possibilities for watershed management," said Alexander.

Scheduled guests include environmental attorney Susan Brand-Hawley and 5th District Supervisor Mike Reilly. A keynote speaker is Dr. Phillip Williams, a river hydrologist and president of International Rivers Network. Williams studied the 1995 Russian River

floods and helped author the "Study of the Historic Trends and Conditions of the Russian River" for the state Coastal Conservancy.

More than a dozen panelists are lined up, ranging from Sonoma County Water Agency General Manager Randy Poole to Friends of the Russian River President Joan Vilms.

A key focus of Saturday's event will be the Santa Rosa and Windsor drainage areas affecting the Laguna de Santa Rosa. Nearly 60,000 acres, including those areas drained by Mark West Creek, Windsor Creek, and Santa Rosa Creek, drain into the Laguna's 9,000 acre flood basin. The Laguna's flood-water storage capacity "is being lost to siltation and development at the same time development is increasing storm runoff," said Alexander.

The all-day seminar is sponsored by the Environmental Forum of the Sonoma County Conservation Council. The pro-

gram runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and includes a box lunch. Admission is \$15 and advance reservations are requested by this Saturday, April 19. To make a reservation call Alexander at 431-8767.

Following Saturday's Flood Day forum, a series of four weekly Russian River watershed field trips are scheduled each Wednesday morning starting April 30 and continuing weekly through May 21.

"In these classes you will meet the people who know the river best," says an announcement of the seminars. "Explore the riparian habitat with a biologist who can identify every bird call. Hike a tributary with a fisheries expert involved in its restoration. Visit the Water Agency pumps that pull water from the aquifer for half a million people. You will see the Russian River with new eyes."

The weekly series costs \$50. For information call 578-0595 or 431-8767.