Environmental Report from Del Norte County

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The Friends of Del Norte (FDN) group has been examining a proposed expansion of the Crescent City Airport which could impact coastal wetlands. Crescent City Airport serves not only Del Norte County but also Curry County in Oregon. Since the Coastal Commission will review and approve the final plan, FDN is confident the wetlands can and will be preserved. The group plans to continue participating as the process moves toward conclusion. FDN volunteers monitor all development in Del Norte County to assure that environmental laws are followed and environmental values preserved as development proceeds.

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For many years concerned Del Norte County residents have been patrolling portions of the Lake Earl Wildlife Area and Tollowa Dunes State Park at night during certain seasons in order to prevent illegal breeching of the coastal lagoon. Because normal functioning of the lagoon submerges portions of their property, some locals have used bulldozers to illegally breach the lagoon.

The same people who patrol the lagoon to prevent illegal breeching have led numerous restoration days in the area. In March locals joined with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish & Game in planting 1,000 ***Viola adunca*** plants. This native violet serves as the host plant for the caterpillar of the Oregon Silverspot – a species listed as threatened pursuant to the federal ESA.

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Remember the big storms that dumped rain on the Northcoast for consecutive days in mid-March? The storm muddied creeks up and down the Northcoast. One resident of Del Norte County did not think the chocolate brown waters flowing into the Klamath River and Pacific Ocean out of Wilson, Terwar and Hunter Creeks in Southern Del Norte was natural. So this person filed a water pollution compliant with the North Coast Water Quality Control Board.

When citizens complain alleging water pollution the state is duty bound to investigate. In this case the investigation revealed that roads owned an operated by Green Diamond Resources (formerly Simpson Timber) had failed and were delivering sediment directly into the creeks. The timber company has agreed to fix the problems. The inspection also found problems on state park lands which will now also be fixed.

Research has determined that dirt and gravel roads are the #1 cause of sediment degradation in Northcoast streams. Since the North Coast Water Board does not require road inspection and repair after big storms, citizen complaints are critical in order to get road-related sediment problems fixed. Any California citizen can file a complaint with Cal EPA for water pollution. Here's the link to the on-line complaint form: http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/database/CalEPA_Complaint/index.cfm

If more everyday citizens filed complaints when they see unnatural water pollution, water quality in our waterbodies would likely improve dramatically. So when you see water pollution, please file a complaint!