



Environmental News

Just a few topics
In this exciting installment

- More BMP's!
- More NAEPC!
- More RTOC!
- More Trainings Attended!

Best Management Practices

I know you're asking yourself, what's with all the sand bags and black silt fencing around the reservation? Well as you know we put the fencing and bags down to help control sediment flow and erosion to the land. The reason why it's still here is because of the ongoing construction happening in our area. The pan handle, which is now Reservation Rd, is an ongoing work site, and with bare land showing around the reservation there is a need to maintain the BMP's at these sites.

In the beginning of the grant cycle JEA performs a routine inspection on the condition of the existing BMP's. From the inspection we replace or add to old construction sites and add what is needed around new land disturbance. If they need to be replaced we simply call Land Stewards for a new order of bags, fencing, and straw waddle, then get to work!



NAEPC Updates

The first quarter of the new grant year found the NAEPC meetings covering the same issues it had been...strategic planning! Of course it all comes down to budget. The number of NAEPC tribes continues to increase, while the money from the EPA shrinks. How do we combat that? In order to keep current staff and activities it appears we will need to do mucho fund raising in the next year! Fun for us aaaaa! A committee has been formed and we are looking forward, hoping to maintain our level of service to tribes...If you know any rich people, tell them to keep us in mind when making charitable contributions.

Stay Informed!

Be sure to read your tribal newsletter and check back often for updates on the JEA's web page. This is the best way to keep informed on the activities of the JEA. The web page can be found at jamulindianvillage.com! There you can find the newsletter as well as pictures and links to other exciting sites! The pictures in this newsletter are just a few that you may encounter by visiting our site!





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Water Quality Conference

A first of its kind, the national tribal water quality conference was held in Santa Fe, NM November 14-17, 2011. The great part about this conference is that there was a beginners track and two tracks for more advanced tribes. The bad part was that the tracks were often not titled correctly. Watershed based plans, developing trends, and education and outreach were just a few of the many breakout sessions.

The EPA is pushing tribes to move toward watershed based plans since it involves looking at more than just one small area. In order to do so you need the involvement of neighboring stakeholders (landowners), which may always be an issue with us in Jamul. One idea that was discussed that sounded good was to team up with other tribes in the watershed. Things we didn't know about these plans are: there are 9 elements to a plan; you must have an implementation plan in place; you must have water quality standards in place.

There was one session in the beginner track that had 'integrating field data & lab data for analysis/developing trends' in the title that looked quite promising, but ended up being quite a bore. Most of it was on 106 requirements and basic data summary. Live and learn I suppose.

The education and outreach was the most stimulating session of all! One of the hardest grant tasks is coming up with new and interesting ideas to help educate tribal members. A few of the ideas obtained for earth day/fair were: Incorporate language so members are not just learning; put an environmental message on the shirts given away; put paper towels, toilet paper and kleenex in water to see which dissolves; find a local store to provide discount if plastic bags are exchanged.



RTOC

The Regional Tribal Operations Committee meeting was held at Pala October 17 & 18, 2011. There is a new format and reps no longer read their entire list of issues, instead calling them in to the co-chair before the meeting. This leaves more time for topics that affect the whole region. This quarters big topics were the new GAP guidebook as well as the new Waters of the US delineation rules.

The GAP guidebook describes how the GAP grants should be handled in the future. The major issues were that a limited number of tribes consulted, tribes should be moving toward regulatory capabilities and that uses of funding may be severely restricted. Problem with that is a lot of tribes use that funding to keep their environmental offices open. It pays for rent, utilities and outreach. This could severely restrict our use of GAP funds.

The second day was the full RTOC with both tribes and the EPA present. The highlight presentation on that day was on the proposed changes in interpreting what Waters of the US are. The EPA and Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) have jurisdiction over waters of the US, like the stream running through Jamul. They are expanding the definitions in the Clean Water Act because of recent court cases, and this will possibly affect the 87 acres should we put that in trust.

It is great to have a body like the RTOC when issues such as these arise. It is always better to have more heads working together than apart. Can't wait to see what comes up at the next RTOC...





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19th Annual EPA Conference Hosted by Pala Band

This year the Pala Band of Mission Indians hosted the 19th annual EPA conference at their Hotel and Casino October 19th through the 21st. This was the 4th conference that Jamul Environment Agency has participated in. This year's theme was focusing on Tribal Programs: Past, Present, and Future. Tribes have come a long way in their environmental programs working with other local and federal agencies to preserve, protect, and sustain our water, air and land for the future generations.

If you've been to one you've been to them all. As always a hand bag full of goodies was given to everyone. In the bag was a pen, flash drive, water bottle, a T-shirt, and the agenda for the week. Again we always start each conference off with opening ceremonies and flying of the flags. In these conferences EPA holds about 6 sessions at 1 time on different topics, throughout the day, for about an hour or so per session. Tribes can learn about other Tribes successes & failures in projects that we may find ourselves doing later on.

My first session came after a great lunch at one of Pala's restaurant. These next sessions would divide all the Tribes by state, so we could meet California's secretary of EPA, Matthew Rodriquez. This being Mr. Rodriquez first couple of months in office, he really could only give a brief history of his work in the environmental area and an outlook for the future & how he plans to help Tribes. He also discussed his recent trip to one of the California Tribes, his first time ever. Tribes are on the forefront of environmental and water issues, and many Tribes can learn from one another.

Thursday the 20th was the 2nd day of the conference with an 8:30am start and keynote speaker Felicia Marcus, Western Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council. Although I missed the presentation I am sure it went well. The next stop was the individual breakout sessions. This is where you choose which session you want to go to. I chose a session on using ArcGis for Tribal Non-point Source Pollution Management and Clean Water Act section 106 Reporting Requirements just to refresh my memory on the subjects. Both were great learning breakout sessions.

PFC/Bioassessment Training

For a little over a year now the JEA has been training/learning, with the Socal Tribal Stream Team (TST), to conduct bioassessment in our stream, as well as other streams around the county. At a training held December 5-9, 2011, a new way to analyze stream condition was thrown at us, Proper Functioning Condition (PFC).

PFC was the first two days of the training and it involves looking at hydrology, vegetation, soil and landform. There is a questionnaire to help you determine status of stream and riparian area, but in order to answer some of the questions you need to have some history as well. Has the soil changed? Have you seen an increase in plant life on the banks? Is the stream getting wider? All this helps you decide if your system is functioning properly, if it is at-risk, or if it is not functioning.

The last three days were spent on bioassessment. We are already familiar with this method, but the team needed to refine its skill set. The first day in the classroom was a review of the types of bugs found in streams, what those bugs tell you and the basics of the field protocol. This was good for the people who are new, but it was the second and third days that the TST really needed. The second day we went out and went over the field sheets and then collected bugs. This answered a lot of questions we had and will hopefully lead to a shortened reference version of the SOP's to use, as its all but impossible looking through the 45 page SOP's provided. We then went to San Diego for the rest of the training to a lab where we could work on sorting and Id'ing the bugs. This was by far the most interesting part, but very hard on the eyes!