PRUNUSKE CHATHAM, INC.

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS RESTORING A WATERSHED (STRAW), 1998 TO PRESENT

Client: The Bay Institute *Contact: Laurette Rogers, 415-878-2929*

Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW), a project of the Bay Institute, brings K-12 students, community members, and technical experts together for ecological restoration projects. It grew out of the The California Freshwater Shrimp Club, which was founded by a group of fourth and fifth grade students at Brookside School in San Anselmo in 1992.

PCI helped connect the Shrimp Club to ranchers who needed creek restoration for the Shrimp Club's first projects. Since then, PCI has provided restoration design and oversight to both the Shrimp Club and STRAW. PCI has worked with the Marin and Sonoma County Resource Conservation Districts, many funding agencies and foundations, and rural landowners to develop projects where students from schools throughout the two counties could complete or significantly contribute to erosion control and revegetation projects.

Initially PCI also provided tools, materials, and supervision for student work days as well as maintenance during the plant-establishment period. As the STRAW staff and funding grew, the STRAW team was able to take over handling all student logistics. PCI developed and trained STRAW staff in a comprehensive maintenance program that has resulted in a consistently high plant survival rate. PCI continues to provide palettes of native, site-specific plants; find nursery sources; lay out planting and other site work in the field in preparation for work days; and design erosion control for STRAW restoration projects. When work days include complex plantings or biotechnical techniques such as brush mattresses or willow walls, PCI staff help supervise the student installation.

PCI has worked with STRAW on many projects in the coastal watersheds of Marin and Sonoma Counties. Recent coastal projects that PCI has designed for STRAW include a series of biotechnical erosion control features on Point Reyes National Seashore. Techniques included using native willows in willow walls and brush checkdams to slow gully erosion, planting coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) container-grown and purple needle grass (*Nassella pulchra*) plugs, seeding with meadow barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*) and purple needle grass, and transplanting rushes (*Juncus patens*). At a site on the eastern shore of Tomales Bay, PCI recently collected soil samples and had them analyzed to develop a soil amendment strategy. PCI then worked with the landowner to select native shrubs and herbaceous plants for the site. Under PCI supervision, STRAW staff and students, as well as U.S. Coast Guard volunteers, removed invasive species, amended the soil, and installed the plants.

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