

Stewardship Leaders in Agriculture

Pollinator Habitat

SINGING FROGS FARM

PAUL AND ELIZABETH KAISER operate Singing Frogs Farm in Sebastopol, CA, raising sheep, chickens, and a diverse array of organic produce for hundreds of weekly customers on their 8 acre farm, in addition to providing crucial on-farm habitat for local pollinator populations. Paul is the winner of the 2010 Farmer Rancher Award for Pollinator Conservation, presented by the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). The award is part of an international effort to promote awareness about pollinators including birds, bees, bats, butterflies, and beetles that enable reproduction in more than 75 percent of flowering plants, or up to one-third of the nation's food supply.

A MORE BALANCED ECOSYSTEM

The Kaiser's are motivated by a desire to provide year-round pollen and nectar sources and nesting habitat for California's declining native bee populations, helping to maintain their vital ecosystems, mitigating the potentially disastrous effects of colony collapse disorder in honey bees, and improving the natural health, vitality, and capacity of their farm.

"We're making sure to have perennial habitats right in the middle of the farm fields, so we can create more balance in the ecosystem."

-Farmer Paul



ACHIEVEMENTS

Certified as one of the first Bee Friendly Farms in North America.

Established over 2,000 Sonoma County native pollinator-friendly perennial plants on their 8 acre farm which provide high quality pollen and nectar for bees and other beneficial pollinators sequentially for all twelve months of the year.





California agriculture reaps millions of dollars per year in economic value from wild, free-living bee species that serve the critical function of pollinating crops. UC Berkeley 2011 study

PROJECT PARTNERS

Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Stewards, California Wildlife Conservation Board, Sonoma County Fish and Wildlife Commission, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Partners for Sustainable Pollination, Pollinator Partnership, North American Pollinator Protection Campaign

Enhancing Pollinator Habitat on Farmland: Singing Frogs Farm

BEGINNINGS

The Kaiser's farm, Singing Frogs Farm, is one of seven in the Sebastopol, CA area working to enhance on-farm habitat for native bee populations in cooperation with the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District's (RCD) Pollinator Program. The RCD launched the program in 2009 by installing hedgerows on these farms, comprised of over 6,000 plants designed specifically to provide year-round pollen and nectar sources and habitat for California's declining native bee populations. The plants were carefully selected to match site conditions and landowner needs, contributing to a full palette of bloom times, colors, and flower shapes to attract and nourish a variety of pollinators.

PROJECT DETAILS

The Kaiser's local Resource Conservation District, Gold Ridge RCD, helped Paul and Elizabeth design their hedgerows and provided technical assistance on species recommendation and installation and long term management practices. Cost-share funding for the project was provided by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

While EQIP provided funding for plant materials, Singing Frog Farms provided labor and a commitment to the long-term maintenance of their hedgerows. Site preparation took place during the summer, while transplanting was done in fall. Volunteers from the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County, local Scout Troops, the Fruit Guys, and other folks in the local community participated on planting days. Timing, species selection, and heavy mulching made plant establishment possible with natural rainfall alone and very little inputs such as fertilizers. During the first 3 years after the hedgerow was planted, Paul kept a heavy layer of organic mulch around the small plants and hand weeded twice a year. Today the hedgerows require very little maintenance beyond occasional pruning and weeding.

FOSTERING SUCCESS

Continuing to influence pollinator habitat beyond his own farm, Paul acts as the outreach coordinator for the Bee Friendly Farming Certification Program which works to get national and international recognition for Bee Friendly Farming and to build customer awareness and demand for food grown on certified Bee Friendly Farms. In addition, Singing Frogs Farm hosts many in-depth farm tours throughout the year for a wide range of groups including grade schoolers, high schoolers, graduate students in agriculture, local community members, and varied conservation groups such as RCDs, land trusts, and watershed groups.

For more information please contact: