

## What Is That Floating Down the Creek?

by Sandy Goldman  
2007

Dense-flowered cordgrass (*Spartina densiflora*), an invasive nonnative plant, was until recently found in great profusion in tidal marshes along Corte Madera Creek. With funding from the Coastal Conservancy and technical support from the Invasive Spartina Project (ISP), our crews have reduced it considerably, but it is still common. This summer, fall, and winter we will be at work again, spraying and digging.

Because this plant is such a serious pest, the Marin Agricultural Commissioner is taking the lead in making sure that all that remains be either dug up or sprayed in 2007.

We will continue to look for seedlings and sprouts along Corte Madera Creek, removing them where they persist. But there is more to do. The seeds from invasive cordgrasses spread readily, floating by themselves or embedded in wrack. These seeds can survive a year in the cold, wet, saline conditions of San Francisco Bay.

To identify hot spots where seed might drift, the ISP has begun a "drift card" study, designed to mimic the dispersal patterns of cordgrass seed by releasing buoyant inscribed cards at selected locations within the estuary and recording where the cards are found. This will help the ISP to better understand where *Spartina* might crop up in the future and where to concentrate future monitoring work.

Cards were dropped into the open water at Creekside Park during outgoing tides at three different times this spring. Many of the cards stayed within the Corte Madera Creek watershed, being found at locations stretching from upstream at College of Marin down to the Larkspur Ferry Terminal and San Quentin. But a number of the cards have traveled much further.

Public volunteers reported finding these cards at Albany beach by Golden Gate Fields, along the Tiburon shoreline, on North Baker Beach on the outer coast just south of the Golden Gate Bridge, and on Ocean Beach at Sloat Avenue by the San Francisco Zoo.

This should be a reminder to us that much more than just the tidal marshes and channels of Corte Madera Creek are threatened by non-native cordgrasses.

### THANK YOU FOR PICKING UP THIS CARD!

*You can help protect San Francisco Bay habitat by helping us learn about the bay's currents.*

#### PLEASE MAKE NOTE OF WHERE YOU FOUND THIS DRIFT CARD!

This "Drift Card" was released by the California Coastal Conservancy's Invasive *Spartina* Project to learn about the possible spread of cordgrass (*Spartina*) seed from areas overrun with this invasive marsh plant.

These plants can create mosquito-breeding areas, clog flood control channels, and destroy marsh habitat for endangered species.

**Please help --- tell us where you found this card.**

Fill out our quick online form at [www.spartina.org](http://www.spartina.org) . If you do not have Internet access, please call (510) 548-2461



Card # **A-1**



*Bright yellow buoyant cards, each with a unique number, were released in Corte Madera Creek to discover where currents would take them.*

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