The Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District (RCD) is a non-regulatory, not-for-profit entity. The mission of the SCCRCD is to help people protect, conserve and restore natural resources through information, education, and technical assistance programs. The District provides an active program for the conservation of soil, water, plant, and wildlife resources in Santa Cruz County.

For More Information on Large Woody Material
Neil Lassettre’s report: Process Based Management of Large Woody Debris at the Basin Scale, Soquel Creek, California is available at the Soquel Demonstration State Forest for viewing.

Information in this brochure was adapted from the Santa Cruz County Stream Care Guide. Copies can be obtained by calling (831) 454-3154 or visiting www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us.
**Ecological Importance**

**Creates Habitat for Fish**

Large woody material in the creek—fallen logs, stumps, root wads, and large branches—provides an important source of cover, food, and shelter for fish and other stream dwellers. Submerged trees help the river’s current to scour deep holes used by fish for refuge and cover.

Areas of accumulated woody material have been found to support the highest number of juvenile steelhead and coho salmon in local streams.

**Steelhead Trout   Coho Salmon**

**Contributes to Channel Complexity**

Large woody material dissipates streamflow, stores and distributes sediment, and creates channel features, such as pools, riffles, and waterfalls.

A moderate amount of such material can also provide natural protection for streambanks. Fallen trees deflect current away from highly unstable streambanks.

In cases where large woody material is causing rapid bank erosion by redirecting stream flow, or creating a flood hazard on your property, modification or removal of this material may be warranted.

This work requires a consultation with California Department of Fish and Game to ensure it is done properly without harming the stream. The County of Santa Cruz Public Works Department provides assistance with the assessment and modification of large woody material accumulations for flood control purposes.

**Benefits of Woody Material**

- Trap sediment that would otherwise be washed downstream.
- Create pools and overhead cover that act as critical fish habitat.
- Dissipate stream energy that would otherwise potentially cause erosion to the bed and banks of the stream.
- Can create and maintain islands and gravel bars that increase habitat complexity.
- Provide a food source to aquatic insects and trap leaves and other important nutrient sources like salmon carcasses.

When woody material is removed, streams tend to become simpler. They will cut off meanders, have long uniform riffles, begin to down-cut and erode laterally, and will lose much of their biodiversity.