

SPOTTSWOODE

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Spottswode Spearheads Important Napa Valley Creek Restoration

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ST. HELENA, CALIFORNIA The Spottswode Estate Vineyard & Winery is excited to report that the effort to restore Spring Creek, a plan initiated by Spottswode seven years ago, has proven highly successful and is an inspiring example of how communities can work together to restore and sustain ecological balance. Spring Creek courses down from the mountains above St. Helena and flows through this wine country community before intersecting with Sulfur Creek and continuing on to the Napa River and San Francisco Bay. Beth Novak Milliken, president of Spottswode, explains that her commitment to restoring the creek that borders her family's pre-Prohibition winegrowing estate came about while working on local projects dedicated to understanding, protecting and sustaining the important resources of this land.

“Spottswode has always been passionate about the environment—we’ve been farming organically since 1985 and integrate environmentally sensitive practices into all aspects of our grape production and land management—culminating in our organic certification in 1990. When my family first moved here in 1972, few homes existed on the other side of Spring Creek. In the mid 1970s, a subdivision was built with homes fronting the south side of the creek. Each land owner did as he or she pleased in incorporating the creek into their backyard landscape. As a result, creek flows were altered, its channel deepened, banks were lost to erosion, and many large oak trees were undermined and put at risk. In addition, a great deal of non-native vegetation—namely vinca and Himalayan blackberry—had taken over, choking its banks.”

In 2000, Beth asked Evan Engber of Bioengineering Associates, well known for his pioneering work in river and stream restoration, to study Spring Creek and draft a restoration plan. Thus Spottswode began the long process of developing partnerships with various governmental agencies, as well as neighbors, whose support and involvement were crucial to the success of such an undertaking.

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A Family Wine Estate



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This spring, the progress is tangible. Areas of the creek banks and bed that were at risk have been shored up using environmentally-friendly techniques such as woven willow walls or rocks strategically placed under large tree roots. Rock weirs have been placed in the bottom of the creek to increase channel diversity and encourage sediment to collect and reestablish the bed. In addition, non-native plants have been replaced by native plantings.

Pleased to show off the work in progress, Evan Engber comments, “Spottswoode should be proud of their efforts toward spearheading this project, and the neighbors and organizations with whom they worked should all be commended. This project will certainly serve as a model for other communities that are concerned with their natural environment.”

Beth adds, “Being involved in restoring this urban creek has been extremely gratifying, as it has given us the opportunity to further our stewardship of the land by playing an integral role in balancing our natural resources with residential and agricultural uses. The future of Spring Creek—and we hope other urban creeks—is indeed bright!”

ABOUT SPOTTSWOODE

Spottswoode is a family-owned estate and winery located in the heart of St. Helena. Certified by the California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) since 1990, the Novak family is committed to honoring the legacy of its pre-prohibition era estate through careful preservation of the land and its historic buildings.