FRIENDS OF
CORTE MADERA CREEK
WATERSHED
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Policy on Playing Fields in the Corte Madera Creek Watershed
adopted September 18, 2008
amended September 21, 2017

When building new, remodeling existing or maintaining playing fields, watershed ecosystem issues must be addressed, including floodplain functions, water quality, adequate fresh water flows in the creeks and wetland areas and wildlife habitat. To this end, Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed recommends that all playing fields:

1. Address floodplain functions and be part of the solution in minimizing flood impacts. Playing field modifications should be designed to reduce peak flood flows and maximize infiltration of rainwater. In no case should modifications to a field contribute more to peak flood flows or otherwise increase surface runoff.

2. Minimize impacts to water quality by using little to no fertilizers or pesticides. If fertilizers or pesticides must be used, they should be organic. Also, irrigation should be strictly minimized to help prevent the runoff of any fertilizers or pesticides, organic or otherwise.

3. Synthetic turf should not be used in the Corte Madera Creek watershed. Artificial fields typically result in faster rain runoff into creeks, reduced groundwater replenishment, create ecological dead zones, increase local air temperature, and preclude the use of the field as an ephemeral detention basin. Additionally, the rubber crumb infill between the artificial grass blades produces a leachate of unknown hazard to water quality, as well as becoming loose with wear, often spreading well beyond the field. Cork and coconut fiber infill are environmentally preferable. Synthetic turf must be replaced every 10 years and is typically not recycled. Reverting to natural turf is very costly, because the substrate must be re-engineered.

4. Irrigated areas should be limited to those necessary for a particular activity. For instance, for a baseball field, only the infield and outfield should be irrigated, for a football or soccer field, only the field itself should be irrigated. Areas adjacent to the playing fields should not be irrigated if not necessary for the activity.

5. Irrigation technologies that adjust watering periods according to daily weather conditions, and turf that survives with the minimum water requirements, should be used wherever possible.

6. Reclaimed water that meets government health standards and requirements for use on playing field should be used wherever possible.

7. Playing fields should not harm adjacent creeks and wetlands and their associated vegetation. Wherever possible, playing field projects should incorporate the enhancement or restoration of natural systems, including historic creeks and wetlands. All drainage associated with playing fields should be above ground and designed and vegetated in a way to improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat.