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## *Press Release*

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### **Petaluma Educational Foundation Announces 2008-2009 Impact Grant Recipient: Petaluma Wetlands Alliance Science Program at Shollenberger Park**

#### **Positively Impacting Every Third Grade Class in Petaluma**

Petaluma, Ca: Petaluma Educational Foundation has approved the funding of all 50 Third Grade classrooms in Petaluma to participate in the innovative Petaluma Wetlands Alliance Science Program at Shollenberger Park, Petaluma.

“We are very excited to announce the designation of a general PEF Impact Fund,” said PEF Director, Janet Ramatici. “Recipient of our inaugural 2008-2009 Impact Grant is the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance Science Program at Shollenberger Park.”

City-wide Third Grade classroom visits to the Petaluma River Watershed are designed to bring children closer to nature by docent-guiding them through discovery of plants and animals living in our local wetlands. Out at the park, students participate in a number of activities, including several docent-led walks. There, they will learn about the various habitats where plants and animals live. Students are expected to see a wide variety of birds from migratory waterfowl to shorebirds, using binoculars and viewing scopes. During the three-hour field-trip at the park, students will also learn how to dissect Barn Owl pellets to discover what the owls ate, or study micro-organisms found in the mud and test water salinity.

“Students’ knowledge and stewardship of nature is important to maintain usable habitats for the wildlife of our local wetlands,” said Education Chair of Petaluma Wetlands Association, Sharon Mansfield. “As children learn to enjoy nature they also learn to respect and protect it.”

PWA, a committee of Madrone Audubon, applauds teachers who find the time and energy within their curriculum to participate in the Wetlands exciting programs and this new alliance with PEF will insure that hundreds of local students are able to fully immerse themselves in the natural beauty of the park.

“This is my third year taking Third Grade students on a docent-led tour to Shollenberger Park,” said Valley Vista veteran teacher, John Trott. “It is an excellent way to teach our city’s children the significance of the watershed and our local wetlands. I’m delighted to hear that every Third Grader in Petaluma will have an opportunity to explore this enriching area of natural beauty and environmental importance, thanks to the alliance between PEF and the Wetlands Alliance Science Program at Shollenberger Park.”

Prior to each classroom’s docent-led visit to Shollenberger Park, classroom-trained docent volunteers engage Third Grade students with a multi-media wetlands presentation of flora and fauna, nature’s food pyramid ecosystems, birds, feathers and bills and an informative question-and-answer game about wetlands animals.

Total funding by PEF for this 2008/2009 Impact Grant is \$7,000 (37 classroom participation building to 50 when sufficient docents are available). This figure includes \$500 for native plant materials. Individuals or corporations wishing to contribute to the annual Impact Grant are encouraged to contact PEF for further information on how to donate.

PWA is focusing on recruiting additional docent volunteers to provide maximum Third Grade Class participation within Petaluma schools. “It is not a massive time constraint,” said classroom volunteer docent Sandy O’ Hare, a retired Cinnabar School teacher. “Docents must enjoy the outdoors, walking and working with children.” PWA counts around 35 docents currently trained for the wetlands visits, with volunteers coming from all walks of life: photographers, retired teachers such as O’ Hare, writers, scientists and a former flight attendant. If you, or anyone you know may be interested in becoming a docent, contact PWA at [www.petalumawetlands.org](http://www.petalumawetlands.org).

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*Upcoming Docent-Led Photo Opportunities at Shollenberger: October 23, 30, Nov 6, 7, 13, 20 2008 9am to noon.*

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