River bottom is top priority

Invasive reed cleared out to aid native species

By Monica Lara
Special to The Star

Clearing the way for native plants and clean-up efforts, an Ojai-based group is doing its part to restore the Ventura River bottom to its natural habitat for public use.

About 15 people from non-profit Concerned Resource Environmental Workers are clearing arundo dorax, a thick, non-native grass, on the 9-acre swath of land situated between the Ventura Beach RV Resort and Highway 33 interchange and the West Main Street and Highway 101 bridges.

With the arundo overgrowth providing an area for homeless encampments, the area needed clearing to allow for the return of native plants and removal of waste from those who had lived on the land.

“We want to eliminate all the arundo,” said Joaquin Echabarría, CREW lead supervisor. “It is a tremendous and highly invasive species, and the people are destroying the area even further. We are trying to restore it to what the river bottom really is.”

CREW was hired by the Ventura Hillside Conservancy, owner of the property as of this month.

The conservancy, a land trust, also owns and manages more than 90 acres of Foster Park Area Preserve between Ventura and Ojai.

The nine acres of Ventura River land was donated to the conservancy for public use.

Joaquin Echabarría, a member of Concerned Resource Environmental Workers, uses a chain saw as he helps clear arundo.