

DRAFT MINUTES
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
April 13, 2017
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Ann Moriarty, Rich Walkling, Jonathan Owens, Heidi Nutters, Will Moore, Kelsey Trippany, Helen Fitanides, John Steere, Patrick Phelan, Ryan Smith, Steven Cochrane, Tim Jensen, Anthony Falzone, Warner Chabot, and Sherry Stanley.

1. Introductions – Tim Jensen began the meeting at 10:09am.

2. CUSP— No one was present.

3. Urban Tilth— No one was present, but John Steere reported that a bioretention facility is in progress at Urban Tilth’s North Richmond farm.

4. SPAWNERS—Helen Fitanides reported that SPAWNERS has been working with The Watershed Project and Citizens for a Greener El Sobrante to build community partnerships and develop a vision plan for urban greening and resiliency in El Sobrante, as well as identify “early win” demonstration projects and establish an action plan for implementation. Examples of potential projects include rain gardens along Appian Way in conjunction with the county’s complete streets project, and rain gardens on private property along San Pablo Dam Road in downtown El Sobrante.

Helen also mentioned that SPAWNERS’ Earth Day event would be occurring on 4/22, 9:30am-noon at the Elks Lodge in El Sobrante. Citizens for a Greener El Sobrante, West County Wastewater District, and the El Sobrante Chamber of Commerce will be tabling, trash cleanups and assessment will be taking place around the community and creeks, and volunteers will be rewarded with lunch.

5. The Watershed Project— Helen reported that there would be an Earth Day event on Wildcat Creek at Verde Elementary School as part of the 7th annual North Richmond Green Festival. Volunteers will assist with a trash assessment on Wildcat Creek, and can check out 15 tablers and 5 speakers at the festival.

John mentioned that The Watershed Project is working on 5th and Giaramita for their clean streets program, including trash pickups and coordinating moving cars for street sweeping.

6. Citizens for a Greener El Sobrante—No one was present, but Citizens for a Greener El Sobrante is involved in the El Sobrante resiliency plan.

Tim mentioned that the recent gas tax raise would be opening doors for green infrastructure in cities and counties. As an example, Contra Costa County Public Works was set to receive about \$19,000,000 this year for road work, but will get an additional \$19,000,000 per year starting in the fall.

7. City of San Pablo—Helen reported that Amanda Booth couldn't attend the meeting today, but she has asked the Watershed Council for a letter of support for the City of San Pablo's Urban Greening grant application.

The California Natural Resources Agency was allocated \$80 million to its Urban Greening Program specifically for green infrastructure projects that reduce GHG emissions and provide multiple benefits. The City of San Pablo's proposed submission for the Urban Greening Grant Program is for additional work for the Rumrill Complete Streets project between Market Avenue and San Pablo Avenue and performing Urban Forestry work between 23rd Street and Rumrill Boulevard. Currently, the City has received funding to include bio-retention facilities along Rumrill from Costa Avenue to Market Avenue, this funding would allow the City to extend these facilities the entire length of Rumrill Blvd.

The additional work on Rumrill Blvd will include:

- Bike paths that are separated by landscape strips (Class 4 cycle tracks) north of Market.
- Where possible these landscape strips with double as green infrastructure (bio-retention facilities).

Under the Community Urban Tree Program:

- The City will be upgrading 1,500 linear feet of the Wildcat Creek Trail to pervious pavement.
- Train students (many from local disadvantage areas) to identify and map all of the public trees in San Pablo between 23rd Street and Rumrill Boulevard, north of Market Street to Brookside Drive. Including all of the trees along Wildcat Creek.
- Students and community members will also be planting ~100 trees in this same area.

Amanda provided a draft letter and a visualization of the project. She would like the letter by 4/25.

Rich Walkling made a motion that the Council provide a letter of support for the City of San Pablo's project. John Steere seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

8. North Richmond Green Team—John reported that the Neighborhood House of North Richmond has been doing afterschool programs every 3 weeks at their habitat restoration project at the senior center, and these programs will continue through fall. They have also been doing periodic cleanups with students on several streets. John

noted that Eren Samano replaced Carla as the representative of Neighborhood House of North Richmond.

9. Earth Team—No one was present.

10. Friends of the Pinole Creek Watershed—Ann Moriarty reported that after their recent successful projects, including the fish passage project under Highway 80, they are ready to envision new things for their group. They are currently working with Bert Mulchaey to involve kids in fish monitoring on Pinole Creek, and on 4/29 there will be a tour of the Pavon Creeks Restoration project near the road washout of Alhambra Valley Road at Castro Ranch Road. Their board is a good cross section of community members, including Carol Arnold, Bert Mulchaey, Bill Voight, and several others.

Tim mentioned that steelhead habitat studies in the Bay Area rank Pinole Creek very high on the list of streams with good habitat and minimal migration barriers. FEMA will fund the re-culverting at the washout, and it will be a concrete culvert with an earthen bottom to be fish friendly.

11. Flood Control— Tim Jensen reported on two projects:

A. Several groups including The Watershed Council, CUSP, Contra Costa Flood Control, Walnut Creek Watershed Council, Save Mount Diablo, Friends of San Ramon Creek, and The Watershed Project went to Watershed Day at the Capitol on March 29. About 45 people attended, and were briefed on current bills at the morning session. In the afternoon, they were able to visit legislators including Jim Frazier, Steve Glazier, Tony Thurman, Catharine Baker, and Bill Dodd. They also invited the legislators to tour projects on their home turf in Contra Costa County.

B. Flood Control has been trying to complete a much-needed levee rehabilitation project in lower Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks. While the levees are not failing, FEMA has changed their requirements, which puts additional homes in the flood plain. The levees have to be raised 1 foot near bridges. They have limited funding from the state and so asked Supervisor John Gioia to help secure \$900,000 from the County General Fund to complete the project. They did get the money, but when the project went out to bid the low bidder was about \$500,000 more than expected. They are now lobbying Tony Thurman and other legislators and it looks like they may be able to get the remaining funding. The project must finish by Oct. 1, 2017.

12. Wildcat fish ladder tour update— Steven Cochrane reported that the East Bay Regional Park District has assessed the fish ladder and the county needs between \$300,000 to \$350,000 to revive it. He suggested that the Council form an ad hoc committee to look for funding for the project. There is funding available from the Army Corps of Engineers but it requires up-front match of \$250,000 now and 25% of the construction cost later.

Tim mentioned that this is a piece of a wider ecosystem restoration project that was requested of the Army Corps by the Flood Control District in 1998, and would cost about \$5,000,000. The up-front match required by the Army Corps is a new requirement that was not expected, and Flood Control does not have adequate funding. Tim agrees that a subcommittee should be formed to tackle funding the Wildcat fish ladder project.

Anthony, Rich, and Steven were identified as interested parties, Tim said that Paul Detjens with Flood Control should be involved, and Helen will send an invitation to the Council email list.

13. Pinole fish passage project tour update—This tour was delayed twice due to rain, and will be rescheduled again soon. Tim mentioned that Ben Wallace, who was supposed to lead the tour, is no longer with the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District. Elissa Robinson or Bert Mulchaey may be able to take his place as tour lead; Helen will contact them.

14. Plaza San Pablo— Rich Walkling reported that the City of San Pablo applied for an urban parkways grant for a trail and restoration along Wildcat Creek above Church Lane, and have a site visit scheduled. This is the first 700 feet of an 1,800-foot project.

15. Rheem Creek subcommittee report—Tim reported that flood control is partnering with the Army Corps of Engineers and East Bay Regional Park District to do tidal marsh restoration at Dotson Marsh, at the mouth of Rheem Creek.

Patrick Phelan reported that there has been a flooding issue in Richmond at the county boundary, in the Rollingwood area. The City of Richmond would like to figure out what to do, who would pay for it, and whose responsibility it is. They have previously tried to work with residents, but the fences at the easement line makes that difficult as the residents don't really have access to the creek. Last week they met with West County Wastewater District and PG&E.

Tim mentioned that there are probably multiple causes for the flooding, including overgrown vegetation, which was targeted in about 2005 by the Urban Creeks Council with a community cleanup day. In terms of permitting for work done by volunteers, Fish and Wildlife wants a courtesy notification on planned work, but have not stood in the way of past work.

Jonathan Owens mentioned that the extensive vegetation had most likely trapped sediment, and it can be a permitting and cost issue to remove it.

Rich said that Josh Bradt and Ann Riley are not present at today's meeting, but will likely be good partners for this project, as they were involved back in the 2005 effort.

Tim said that Chris Lau of County Public Works is the County representative they should contact to set up a meeting and make plans for community outreach and setting a volunteer work day.

Patrick said that the City of Richmond is submitting 2 urban greening grants, one of which is for Rumrill. They would like a letter of support from the Council for the other project, which is for 13th St. Rich made a motion for the Council to provide a letter of support to the City of Richmond; John seconded the motion. The motion passed. Patrick will send a template letter of support to Helen.

Patrick also mentioned some other projects that the City of Richmond is involved in:

- Richmond Wellness Trail on Marina Way South, including swales and street trees.
- EBRPD Dotson Marsh dedication event is on Earth Day.
- A project in the break between the Ohlone and Richmond Greenways is set to start soon.
- A trash capture device is being installed in Richmond.
- There is a new landslide at the Via Verde culvert, which had collapsed and was repaired several years ago

16. Financial subcommittee— Anthony introduced Warner Chabot, Executive Director of the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI), who would speak about an opportunity to collaborate on the EPA’s San Francisco Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund.

Warner said that SFEI serves local through state governments as well as community groups by providing tools to help groups visualize, map, assess and make plans about landscape and aquatic issues. The Wildcat-San Pablo Creek area has significant water quality issues, a significant portion of it is disadvantaged, and it has many engaged partners.

Warner reported that the grant is for creating clean water and healthy shorelines and wetlands, with emphasis on implementation and measurable results. The grant amount is from \$500,000 to \$2,000,000. Projects that apply must be completable in four years (starting September 2017) and must provide at least 50% match (including in-kind). Applications are due May 10. It would be helpful if the applying organization had a past history of successful grants with the EPA (which SFEI does).

SFEI may not take the lead on submitting the grant, but they (along with the San Francisco Estuary Partnership) are helping to organize groups and projects. Only one proposal will be submitted. Green infrastructure and full trash capture devices are projects that would fit in well with this grant. Warner asked the Council to consider which projects from our project list might be a good match for this grant, and asked interested parties to meet with him early next week to discuss. Warner made a

template for groups to submit their projects for consideration; Helen will distribute to the Council email list.

Anthony mentioned that the Council recently sent a letter to Dianne Feinstein supporting this EPA program. He said that the Council should also consider giving a letter of support for this grant application. John clarified that the letter should include any projects from the Council's project list that were included in the grant application. Anthony made a motion to approve the letter, and Jonathan seconded. The motion passed.

Rich provided advice from previous grant applications, stating that the benefits of urban restoration are hard to quantify with dollars, vs. a levee restoration which has measurable financial benefits. He recommended that less costly restoration projects area probably better here.

Warner suggested that a variety of 4-6 projects in the \$200,000 range throughout the watershed, together reducing mercury and PCBs and addressing sea level rise, would be well able to meet the grant's criteria.

John Steere, Josh Bradt, Amanda Booth, Adela Ho, Anthony Falzone, Sarah Puckett, and Warner Chabot were preliminarily identified as parties who should attend this meeting, if possible. Helen will distribute the meeting time and location when they are decided.

Anthony said that the financial subcommittee would meet by phone next month.

17. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports—

John gave an update on the North Richmond Watershed Connections grant application, for which the Council had submitted a letter of support. The project has 3 main parts:

1. Fred Jackson Way rain gardens at Urban Tilth's North Richmond farm
2. First/last mile urban greening on Fred Jackson Way, led by the County's Public Works Department
3. The Watershed Project's clean and green adopt a tree program.

If funded, this could be a potential match for the EPA grant.

Heidi Nutters gave an update on the San Francisco Estuary Partnership's current shoreline visioning project, which includes sea level rise mapping, and parcel analysis for shoreline and upland transition zones. Urban Tilth and The Watershed Project are leading the community engagement process, and residents will give feedback at the Earth Day event. The goal is to propose multiple projects. On May 6 The Watershed Project is organizing a shoreline tour for families. On June 22 there will be a stakeholder meeting at SFEI, including a mapping exercise. In the meantime, they are meeting 1-on-1 with partners regarding potential projects. Eventually, they want to discuss these projects with the Council. Their timeline is to finish this summer and bring to the North

Richmond Shoreline Festival for community feedback. To provide input, contact Heidi at heidi.nutters@sfestuary.org.

18. NEXT MEETING: Thursday May 25th from 10am-noon, with annual “Spring Walk-through” to follow. The plan is to visit Rheem Creek at Fordham Street and at Dotson Marsh. The tour will leave from the City Hall after lunch at the Taqueria across the street.

19. GROUP PHOTO: Photo was postponed until next meeting so that more of our regular members would be included.