

MINUTES
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
May 25, 2017
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Ben Wallace, Nathan Bickart, Rich Walkling, Sharon Korotkin, Martha Berthelsen, Tim Jensen, Amanda Booth, Anthony Falzone, John Steere, Jeanine Strickland, Josh Bradt, Helen Fitanides, William Musgrove, Jeff Inglis (for Sherry Stanley), Ann Riley, Sarah Puckett, Adele Ho, and Helen Fitanides

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

2. CUSP—Josh Bradt reported that CUSP hasn't had paid staff for about 2 years, but they are now starting a grant-funded project on Codornices Creek in Berkeley and they hope to increase their capacity. The project site is upstream of San Pablo Ave, around Kains Ave.

Shoreline and transition zone mapping is still underway, and to that end last weekend TWP organized a bus tour of the area, including Dotson Family Marsh, for community members. While turnout was low for the tour, TWP recruited picnickers for the lunch portion and got some good feedback on their community survey.

Additionally, there is a stakeholder advisory group that will meet on Thursday June 22 from 10am-12:30pm at SFEI. Josh will send a Save the Date for Helen to send the group.

3. Urban Tilth— Nathan Bickart reported that over the winter a secondary channel formed on Wildcat Creek between Verde Elementary and 3rd St, with flowing water as late as April. It was caused by a tree fall, and they saw tree shearing in other places as well. The group expressed interest in touring the site; Nathan will provide a couple of dates and Helen will put it to the group.

Nathan also mentioned that the plants that they placed in the fall are doing well, and have not been too overwhelmed by sedimentation. They will be starting another apprenticeship program in the fall around food and community gardening; send interested teens or young adults to Nathan.

Urban Tilth also started a couple of partnerships: one with RDG, who'll work with the county to develop a plan for rain gardens along Fred Jackson Way, and another with American Rivers and the San Francisco Public Utility Commission to adapt national guidelines for green infrastructure maintenance to the Bay Area.

4. SPAWNERS—Helen Fitandides reported that The Watershed Project/SPAWNERS was just awarded \$20,000 from the Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee to expand their water quality monitoring program to additional watersheds, including Wildcat, Walnut, Marsh, and Grayson Creeks. They will be hiring several interns to do monthly monitoring for a 1-year term; the position pays \$1,500 for the year. College students, recent grads, or exceptional high school students can apply by contacting Helen (helen@thewatershedproject.org).

5. The Watershed Project— Martha Berthelsen reported that the Richmond shoreline tour was heartening in that there was a lot of interest in keeping the shoreline natural.

Jeanine Strickland presented on the El Sobrante Urban Greening Visioning plan, which The Watershed Project led in collaboration with SPAWNERS, C4AGES, and Contra Costa County. The goal was to enhance livability and sustainability in El Sobrante by building community relationships and doing outreach to find out what the community wants. A site analysis was performed, bringing together previous plans and holding site walks. The following needs were identified: watershed stewardship, connectivity for active transportation to connect between adjacent cities while also improving within El Sobrante, and park access and equity.

In the last 6 months they collaborated with UC Berkeley Engineering students to do extensive outreach and community involvement, reaching over 100 community members to collect their ideas and perspectives. An online survey for residents and business owners helped with this process. The following local priorities were identified: a greener downtown; having nature nearby; and walkability, safety and economic vitality. There were also universal concerns about maintenance and funding.

With a roads/walkability project recently completed on San Pablo Dam Road, there will likely not be interest in tearing any of it up to add rain gardens or other green infrastructure features. Therefore, projects on private property are the most realistic for this area. The Appian Green Streets project (which will tear up some of Appian Way) is still seeking funding, so we have a better chance of including some of our top projects in that area. 20 projects were identified in total, bringing together complete streets and green infrastructure; green interventions for parking lots and alleys; and environmental art and interpretive elements. There should also be a focus on green corridor connectivity and park equity. Important to most of these projects was how to promote community stewardship and give assistance and incentives for creek-side neighbors.

In terms of funding such projects, options include adopt-a-spot programs, business improvement districts, and leveraging multi-benefit projects. Next steps include finding support for creek-side neighbors, discussing ideas with private property owners, and focusing on group integration and collaboration.

6. Citizens for a Greener El Sobrante— Sharon Korotkin reported that Sunday May 21 was their 2nd annual trash cleanup in the San Pablo Reservoir, in collaboration with the East Bay Municipal Utility District. The project is called Upstream Action: Live Litter Free.

Josh asked about trash hotspots on San Pablo Creek and the reservoir. Sharon mentioned an island of litter in the reservoir, and trash accumulation on the far-shore. Helen brought up the County hot spot sites at Appian Way and Fred Jackson Way. Martha also mentioned a site on Castro Creek across from Olinda Elementary School. Amanda said that downstream of I-80 is bad, and also at Fordham.

7. City of San Pablo— Amanda Booth said that the Rumrill Complete Streets project is in the CEQA/NEPA phase. In addition, the City is in final stages to receiving \$1 million in Measure J funding for phase 2 of this project, and \$1.2 million for the Plaza San Pablo Trail project. Plaza San Pablo is now in phases 3 and 4. The City may be going for Measure WW funds to finish the Wildcat Creek Trail and Restoration project; they also applied for an Urban Parkways grant, and they had a positive site visit. They've also applied to the Coastal Conservancy for this same project.

Storm drain mapping and modeling of creeks is in progress, and they are in the process of addressing flooding issues at Chesley Ave and Randy Lane. Tree planting at Wanlass Park is completed for the year, after close to 100 volunteers planted about 50 trees. This effort was spearheaded by Earth Team and The Watershed Project.

8. City of Richmond— Patrick Phelan was not present but reported through Helen:

- We submitted 4 (four!) applications to the Urban Greening grant – for the Yellow Brick Rd, for the Richmond Wellness Trail, for a pocket park and other work on the eastern end of the Richmond Greenway, and for a bike/ped/stormwater/tree planting project on the I-80 Bikeway on Key Blvd. The last project was a joint application with El Cerrito and compiled and submitted by ABAG & SFEP.
- City submitted an application to EPA for hydro dynamic separators on several storm lines leading to Meeker Tidal Creek/Slough
- Richmond-Ohlone Greenway Gap Closure project has begun construction. Creek restoration work is underway with clearing, grading, and tearing out of concrete channel.
- No change on Rheem Creek issues.

John Steere also mentioned that the City of Richmond is investigating incorporating the unincorporated area of North Richmond. They are doing a budget study. It is unsure how private and public green infrastructure would be incorporated.

County Watershed Program – John Steere reported that they're waiting to hear back about the grant for the watershed connections project in North Richmond. There is ongoing cleaning and outreach led by The Watershed Project via their adopt-a-block

method. It's been difficult to get the cleanings done within the community, but important – the county spends half a million on cleanups annually.

The county will also be starting a program similar to Oakland's Adopt-A-Spot, where people can sign up to steward a block, park, storm drain, etc. They want it to be broader than just green infrastructure. This could be a gateway to help nonprofits develop the capacity to take on more of these projects.

John also hopes that the county will take on a mapping project like those done by Janet Sours, who presented a few months ago at the Contra Costa Watershed Forum. They are looking into options for funding and collaborations. The goal is that it would be like a Contra Costa Watershed Atlas, online for agencies, nonprofits, and the county to use.

9. North Richmond Green Team—No one was present. John reported that they continue to do maintenance of their habitat gardens.

10. Earth Team— No one was present.

11. Flood Control—Tim reported that the Wildcat-San Pablo levee project is looking good. They are receiving \$900K from a general fund + \$600K from the Department of Water Resources. In addition, California was declared a national disaster due to the storms this winter, and so they are now pursuing FEMA money. They have 3 bids, and are moving towards starting construction in August, and finishing by October.

12. Pinole fish passage project tour update— Helen reported that the field trip is scheduled for June 7th from 10am-noon. Boots or waders will be necessary if people wish to enter the channel. RSVP to Helen (helen@thewatershedproject.org).

13. Wildcat Creek Fish Ladder Subcommittee report—Sarah Puckett reported that American Rivers is taking the lead on the project. They (with other members of the subcommittee) met with the Coastal Conservancy, who said that the proposal wasn't strong enough to move forward at this time but to try in the fall. One reason is that CEQA has to be in process when projects apply, and completed before projects are awarded. The project also needs clarification as to the method – either the 1135 process (through the Army Corps of Engineers) or via the 408 process, which involves less Corps participation. The Coastal Conservancy seemed to prefer the 408 method more, as they have had issues with the Corps in the past.

The current Wildcat Fish Ladder Subcommittee includes members from American Rivers, Flow West, Trout Unlimited, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District, and the county.

Riley said that the fish ladder and sediment basin portions of the project will be about \$1.2 million.

Ben Wallace said that they should focus on 1) getting CEQA done (for an estimated \$20K) and 2) decide on strategy (either 1135 or 408) before applying in the fall.

Riley said that county participation on CEQA is important, and they have talked about including \$100K in a grant application to cover the county's time on 408 process. Alameda County Flood Control completed the 408 process for the BART weir, along with the Pinole Creek fish passage project as well. It looks like the Rheem Creek project will also go the same way.

Ben said that it took the Pinole project 2 years to get through the 408 process, but that there were complicating factors.

Anthony Falzone brought up the cost-share aspect; the RCD may be able to help with the funding. The Coastal Conservancy said that the project would be competitive for implementation, but not planning (they do not have as much money there), so CEQA needs to get done.

Tim said that Flood Control may be able to help front the money as well.

Sarah said that the next step is to watch for the RFP, and meet again in June to discuss the Corps process, funding stream, and CEQA. Measure WW is also a potential funding source for this project; applications are not due until February 28, 2018, but CEQA must be completed by then. However, they can include match as far back as January 1, 2015 for this grant. Fish ladder, urban setting, and disadvantaged communities are high priority.

Riley mentioned that CUSP will be partnering with the Water Board and Americorps to do a cross section of the flood plain, and it might be a good opportunity for Urban Tilth's apprentices to be involved.

14. Rheem Creek subcommittee report— Riley reported that Becky Tuden from the East Bay Regional Park District is strongly in favor of this project, and will be meeting with Paul Detjens and the Army Corps of Engineers to discuss the 1135 Corps process. As of now they know that they would have to pay \$100K up front for a feasibility report, but are unsure if CEQA, a design plan, or an MOU would come out of it. EBRPD may be able to help with funding for the 408 process instead.

Tim mentioned that deauthorization was an option, which was done on lower Walnut Creek. Rheem Creek downstream of Giant Hwy should be fine, and not a flood risk.

Riley said that they had initially thought that the 408 process would just be associated with the parcel at Dotson Family Marsh, but then realized that they could go upstream as well (to the parcel downstream of Giant Hwy). This would keep their options open.

15. Financial subcommittee— Anthony said that the discussion around applying to the EPA SF Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund fell apart mainly due to lack of match. As of now the Wildcat fish ladder project is their number one priority, along with Rheem Creek.

Sarah mentioned that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has an RFP coming out any day now. Also, she found out through the EPA proposal process that Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks were not listed as salmon creeks, although it may be easy to add them (this would be important for the CDFW grant).

16. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports— Adele Ho mentioned that there will be a bike ride to Dotson Marsh on June 25th from 10am-3pm. They are meeting at 1500 McDonald Ave. in Richmond. Adele will send a flyer to Helen, who can share with the group.

17. NEXT MEETING: Thursday September 21, 10am-noon.

18. GROUP PHOTO