

FINAL MINUTES
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
February 2, 2017
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Tim Jensen, Rachel Lorenz, Jonathan Owens, Amanda Booth, Anthony Falzone, Josh Bradt, Sarah Puckett, Sharon Gibbons, Helen Fitantes, Dave Roche, John Steere, Steven Cochrane, Ann Riley, and Nathan Bickart.

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

2. N Richmond— John Steere reported on the county’s Watershed Connections grant proposal to the California Coastal Conservancy. Partners in this project include Urban Tilth, The Watershed Project, and Neighborhood House of North Richmond. Scope of work includes raingardens, green streets, creek restoration, and interpretive panels, with the goal of creating walkable, bike-able safe routes to schools. John asks for letters of support from community groups and agencies, sent to john.steere@pw.cccounty.us. Helen will re-send template for letters of support to the group.

Amanda Booth said that the City of San Pablo is applying for the same grant for creek restoration and trail construction between Church and Vale.

Riley made a motion that the WCSP Council write a letter to the Coastal Conservancy supporting both the county’s and the City of San Pablo’s grant applications. The motion was seconded by Anthony Falzone.

Riley mentioned the fate of previous metal interpretive signs along Wildcat Creek, which were stolen and melted down, and urged that new signs should consider the issue.

Amanda Booth said that the City of San Pablo makes metal-free signs due to similar thefts, and she will send the info to John Steere.

3. SFEP—Josh Bradt reported that the EPA’s Climate Ready Estuaries program has funded mapping of upland transition zones in Richmond, with the potential for moving these zones in response to sea level rise. SFEI will develop mapping methods, which will be brought to communities on the Northern Richmond shoreline to develop a vision plan. Partners on this project are The Watershed Project and Urban Tilth, and it builds off work done by the North Richmond Shoreline Open Space Alliance and Citizens for East Shore Parks. SFEP plans to present the completed project at the North Richmond Shoreline Festival in October 2017, and Josh may be able to present an update to the WCSP Council at our next meeting.

Josh made a motion for the WCSP Council to write a letter to Dianne Feinstein in support of the ongoing existence of the Water Quality Improvement Fund. Anthony Falzone seconded the motion, and will draft the letter for review and submittal by Tim.

4. Urban Tilth— Nathan Bickart reported that Urban Tilth continues to work on SFEP’s transition zone project, as well as at their North Richmond Farm, which is still awaiting final CEQA approval. Last year the farm started a Community Supported Agriculture program, and on MLK Day 350 volunteers planted a fruit tree orchard. Urban Tilth just completed their second year of apprenticeships and are working to involve previous apprentices in current projects, including possibly with the East Bay Regional Park District.

5. SPAWNERS—Helen Fitanides reported that SPAWNERS is continuing to work with 6th graders at Sheldon Elementary, both in the class and at a restoration site on Wilkie Creek (behind De Anza High School). They are also having a talk on Thursday February 23 from 6-8pm: Debbie Viess of the Bay Area Mycological Society will speak on mushrooms in the garden.

6. The Watershed Project—Helen has been coordinating a subcommittee of the Contra Costa Watershed Forum, focusing on creek monitoring. They meet once a month on Fridays, at locations throughout the county. They are working to expand SPAWNERS’ water quality monitoring program into six additional watersheds: Wildcat, Rheem, Pinole, Walnut, Grayson, and Marsh Creek Watersheds. TWP recently submitted grant proposals to fund the project to NFWF - Five Star and Urban Waters and the Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee.

Sharon Gibbons said that TWP has been doing ongoing work on the Richmond Greenway with the Green Collar Corp. They will also be working more at Wanlass Park in San Pablo, doing creek restoration, planting trees, and facilitating community events and outreach in partnership with Earth Team. They are also planning a rain garden next to the community bathroom at Wanlass.

7. Citizens for a Greener El Sobrante— Josh Bradt said that they are working with Jeanine Strickland and other community groups in El Sobrante to create an Urban Greening and Resiliency Plan for El Sobrante. Task force meetings and community workshops are planned for the next several months.

8. City of San Pablo—Students have been recruited for trash pick-up, but there has been an issue regarding bioswales: specifically, whether CalTrans will include them in the “green streets” designation. They have also received a grant from the Department of Natural Resources for work along El Portal (between Fordham and Church) but the project is on hold while they are waiting for the grant agreement from the CDNR. The city also continues to work on stormwater mapping and are working on a bike master plan.

Amanda met with BNSF railway re. trash issues along some of their properties, and they preliminarily agreed to place barriers and/or bollards in some places, including Trenton St. and Brookside at Giant Rd. The BNSF Foundation may be interested in providing funding for a Downtown Streets project, piloted in San Jose and replicated with success elsewhere, which works with the homeless community.

Jonathan Owens said that funds from the East Bay Regional Park District's Measure WW fund might go towards some of the work on BNSF's projects.

On the topic of finding grant opportunities, Riley said that the Natural Resources Agency has a list of grant opportunities. Josh mentioned the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture's website as well. Sarah Puckett aims to create a funding spreadsheet to keep track of WCSP projects.

9. North Richmond Green Team—John Steere reported that Carla Orozco of the Neighborhood House of North Richmond is no longer there, and that the community based outreach and cleaning program is on hold. In addition, the truck that was to be used for trash pickups is personally registered and not able to be used for county activities.

Amanda mentioned that perhaps a bulky item trash pickup could be used in place of using the truck.

10. Earth Team—Although no one from Earth Team was present, Amanda Booth mentioned Earth Team's work planting trees in Wanlass Park, and their upcoming applicants from Richmond High that will be working on trash assessments and outreach.

John Steere said that Earth Team is partnering with The Watershed Project on urban forestry projects in anticipation of a merging of the groups, and that Earth Team's upcoming work with Pinole High students may be more focused on creeks and watersheds.

11. Flood Control— Tim Jensen reported that the Pinole Creek fish passage project field trip will be re-scheduled due to rain. Most areas of the county saw the rainfall of a 10-year rain event or less, but January as a whole brought record rainfall. The washout of Alhambra Valley Rd. was declared a disaster, so government funds will be involved in the repairs. The [Flood Control website](#) has also been updated with educational information on saturated watersheds and a new instructional video about the 7/5/3 method of predicting flooding.

Jonathan Owens said that the flow gauge in Wildcat Creek showed that we had three 3-year storms in one month. Base flow is 20 cubic feet per second, and the area has seen some urban flooding and slope failures.

Tim also reported that they have not been able to fund the lower Wildcat Creek project yet, although they continue to look for funding. Riley and Paul Detjens will try to get governmental support for the project through talking to Nancy Skinner. They may also be able to get funds from the county's Finance Committee. The project goes out to bid in two weeks.

12. Trout Unlimited— Steven Cochrane brought up the fish ladder on Wildcat Creek, and David Roche asked the room if it might be functional again if it was cleaned of large woody debris and trash.

Jonathan said that biologically it should be fine, and once the debris is cleaned out the sediment should take care of itself. Riley said that fish have been seen on it. Tim said that several cleanings may be necessary if it plugs up again.

Riley said that funding is needed for another fish ladder. The Army Corps of Engineers is on board and 35% plans are completed.

Sarah mentioned that EBRPD's Measure WW will fund fish ladder projects, but CEQA would need to be completed.

Anthony said that CEQA can be approved for 35% plans, and the process may go quickly. Riley said that CUSP is working to get stream restoration included in the wildlife bond act, and that Trout Unlimited would be great partners.

13. Other roundtable—None.

14. Plaza San Pablo—Amanda Booth reported that the project is out to bid for phases 3 and 4, which include finishing the section between Church and Chatleton and the section by the community health center. The City of San Pablo also purchased another property so that restoration will go all the way from Church to Vale.

15. Financial subcommittee—Anthony Falzone said that he would like to start a regular call at 10am on first Thursdays to discuss WCSP grant opportunities. He and Sarah Puckett will be developing a spreadsheet highlighting potential grants for WCSP Creek projects.

Sarah Puckett asked whether people would prefer Dropbox or Google Drive to access the maps and spreadsheet she and Anthony created; Drive was the winner and Helen will send out the link.

Riley asked whether this information could be put up on the county website. Tim said that The Watershed Project will be incorporating the WCSP Council into their new website, and could include this information.

16. Rheem Creek—Josh Bradt reported the City of Richmond is again interested in Rheem Creek at Fordham St, where cattails over run and there is risk of flooding to the unincorporated residents on the opposite bank.

Tim said that the city has been contacting property owners (who actually own the section of creek behind their house) to ask them to maintain it; it's not working out well. Jonathan mentioned that there is a monitoring station at Fordham St.

17. Field trip(s)—Helen will invite the WCSP Council email list to visit the Wildcat Creek fish ladder when Riley has picked a date. In addition, Tim will re-schedule the field trip to the fish ladder on Pinole Creek. Ideas were also brought up for another field trip in May/June; Jonathan recommended the Davis Park daylighting.

18. New Items— Helen announced that we will be taking a group photo at the next WCSP Council meeting. A reminder will be sent out prior.

NEXT MEETING: April 13, 2017, Maple Hall Art Gallery (need to confirm) — a reminder will be sent out in March.