

MINUTES
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
Mar. 22, 2018
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Tim Jensen, Michelle Cordis, Martha Berthelsen, Helen Fitanides, Peter Mangarella, Sarah Puckett, John Steere, Amanda Booth, Ann Riley, Josh Bradt, Rich Walkling, Patrick Phelan, Adele Ho, Sandy Mendler, Ronalyn Nonato

1. Introductions –Tim Jensen began the meeting at 10:11am.

Resilient by Design – Sandy Mendler from Resilient by Design’s Home Team spoke about the long range, macro-level thinking that the group is doing. They support our projects in the WC-SP watersheds, and they want to help build the restoration economy in Richmond, including local jobs. How can their investments strengthen local community and relationships? They are also curious to hear our perspective on whether horizontal levees are the best strategy over the long term, and if so, where they should be placed. Their timeline is between now and April 19, which is the last meeting of the Community Advisory Board and when potential projects will be proposed.

Riley responded that a horizontal levee is likely something to study/research rather than recommend at this point. Existing wetlands will be an issue, which has been and continues to be studied by ESA Associates. Wildcat Creek marsh is not the commonly found sediment limited situation found in many marshes around the bay. This marsh will have greater capacity to adjust with bay level rise because of the unusually large sediment supply that makes it way from the marsh from Wildcat Canyon. The deposition rates and estimates of bay rise need to be balanced against each other to come up with a long term marsh management plan.

2. CUSP—Josh Bradt reported that they are re-starting their creek-side management plan for landowners. They are in discussions with the county for a 2-year contract, and hope to partner with the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District on this as well. They are also working with the City of Berkeley on a small restoration project on Codornices Creek at Kaines Ave. With these new projects on board, keep a look out for a CUSP job announcement in April/May.

Riley mentioned that Watershed Day at the Capitol is on April 25 in Sacramento. They will be focusing on supporting the new water bond slated for the fall ballot, which includes \$100M for Bay Coastal Conservancy, \$70M for river parkway/urban streams restoration, \$10M for re-starting the Dept. of Conservation Watershed Coordinator Program, \$300M to the Water Board for stormwater projects. 600,000 signatures in support of this bond were submitted to the secretary of state this month.

3. Urban Tilth— Adele Ho reported that the Fred Jackson Way rain gardens plans have been submitted, and are on their way through the county CEQA process. At the North Richmond Farm site they have been building the soil with an orchard planted Jan. 2017 and a cover crop planted during the fall. They are currently growing veggies in raised beds, and will be adding irrigation in the next few months.

Adele also reported that the Contra Costa Clean Water Program staff and several permittees recently attended a meeting of the Water Board concerning jurisdiction where the 70% trash reduction goals were not met. One question moving forward is whether permittees will in the next permit still be able to claim credit for creek and shoreline trash cleanups, as they can't get everything with trash capture devices. The WCSP Council may want to in the future support these credits, as there is a lot of trash removed by these activities, there are also significant associated public education benefits, and if a jurisdiction does not get credit toward permit compliance for an activity it is likely to be dropped.

Amanda Booth said that in San Pablo, volunteers at cleanups collect approximately the same amount of trash as do trash capture devices. The Partnership Assisting the Transition from Homelessness (PATH) is working to map and track trash, and outreach to these communities. Trash capture devices will not work for 30% of San Pablo, for a variety of reasons.

John Steere reported that for the past 5 months the county has been working on a Direct Discharge Plan, and will receive 15% credit for that. They are doing outreach to the homeless to provide services and to deputize those willing to pick up trash in their neighborhood. It is the same "street teams" approach that has been effective in San Jose and San Rafael.

4. SPAWNERS—Martha Berthelsen reported that due to a fire at the El Sobrante Library, SPAWNERS has moved an upcoming talk on nesting birds to the San Pablo Library's Wildcat Creek Meeting Room, and Earth Day event to the Elks Lodge in El Sobrante. They are maintaining the native plants in their recently finished demo garden, and noticed that the county has been using Roundup or a similar pesticide to deal with weeds in an adjacent section of garden. Tim Jensen and Michelle Cordis said that they would bring it up with the appropriate county contact.

5. The Watershed Project—Helen Fitanides reported that she will be creating a handout on the accomplishments of local groups in West Contra Costa County for Watershed Day at the Capitol; please send me your group's achievements in the last year by March 28 (next Wednesday).

Martha reported that the Unity Park project is finally nearing completion. It has involved many partners and much community input. The next step is to hold a community meeting to address the remaining issues, including bathrooms access. They are looking to activate the space, and bring in more activities.

6. SFEP—Josh Bradt reported on the finalized North Richmond Shoreline Vision Plan, which brought together community input with transition zone analysis. Lack of shoreline access and economic opportunities were identified as priorities. The San Francisco Estuary Institute created extensive maps for the project, and Resilient by Design’s Home Team is using the Plan for their work. The Watershed Project will lead a partnership with SFEP and the Integrated Regional Water Management’s Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program; more on this as it gets going.

7. City of San Pablo— Amanda Booth reported that the Rumrill Complete Streets project completed CEQA and NEPA and is out for design, and Caltrans may be looking to build additional bioswales. They will not be submitting the Wildcat Creek Trail project for the second round of Urban Greening funding, as the City already has funding from the California Natural Resources Agency (see item 8 below). However, they will be applying for Measure WW funding. Maps from the county’s Stormwater Resource Plan indicate that Sutter (adjacent to Rumrill) is a good place for street greening and green infrastructure, and the City will likely be looking for future funding for that project.

8. El Portal Greening Project update —Ronaly Nonato reported that they have received \$560K from the California Natural Resources Agency for bioretention swales along the South side of El Portal, between Church and Fordham. There will also be rain gardens and interpretive signs, and designs may involve the bike lane as a buffer. The project is in the design phase, and they are having a public meeting here at the San Pablo Library on April 17.

9. Plaza San Pablo—Rich Walkling reported that a public meeting was held last week, and they received unconditional support for the project. They will have an evening meeting this summer to walk the site. They’re moving toward completing 60% designs by May, and they hope to begin construction in 2019.

10. City of Richmond—Patrick Phelan reported that the City is working on a new stormdrain master plan and stormwater infrastructure plan. At a homeless hotspot along the railroad tracks in the iron triangle, the railroad company came through and took out everything from trash to vegetation, including some older trees. The City has installed two hydrodynamic separators, and they are looking for funding to install another one upstream of Meeker Slough, which is still seeing a lot of trash build-up.

The MiraFlores housing project/Baxter Creek restoration is underway. The stormdrain project is out to bid, and Groundwork Richmond considering moving their headquarters to this site. Close to Unity Park is DirtWorld, a BMX mountain biking-skills park. The Greenway Gap Closure Project is underway, but seeing a lot of weeds, and the construction made the homeless situation worse. Martha Berthelsen agreed to take a look at the weed situation.

Last, the section of Wildcat Creek between the railroad tracks in Richmond is open for restoration work; the City has no plans for it..

11. County Watershed Program—John Steere reported that the County is seeking to break the North Richmond Watershed Connections project into two phases with phase 1 beginning in the fall of 2018, which will include Urban Tilth's rain garden and The Watershed Project's Street trees. Phase 2 will begin the year following and will consist of urban greening on Fred Jackson Way. This is to accommodate the differing CEQA processes and deadlines for the projects.

12. Flood Control— Michelle Cordis reported that Trails for Richmond Action Committee met with the West County Wastewater District and are working toward an agreement for a trail on their property, part of TRAC's larger Bay Trail effort. The City of Oakland will take willow branches from Wildcat Creek (and from a site in Antioch and another privately owned site for a total of 20,000 willow poles) for their Oak Knoll project. And lastly, there have been issues with stolen cars ending up in the Wildcat Creek basin; at least one came through a bollard near Verde Elementary via the EBRPD trail.

13. Wildcat Creek Fish Ladder Subcommittee—Peter Mangarella reported that the Subcommittee met last week to discuss a one-year maintenance and monitoring plan. It would entail cleaning the fish ladder in Summer 2018 and 2019, as well as doing maintenance through the winter and taking water quality, velocity, and depth measurements. They will report back on their findings, and discuss the best next steps. Fish and Wildlife would be involved in the whole process. This would take place outside the Army Corps of Engineers' purview. The Flood Control District and local community groups will collaborate on the effort.

14. Financial subcommittee—The next call-in meeting of the financial subcommittee will be April 25 at 10am.

15. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports—none.

16. NEXT MEETING will be on May 24, with the Spring Walkthrough to follow. We will start at the San Pablo Library, and then head to El Portal.