

MINUTES
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
Nov. 16, 2017
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Ann Riley, Bruce Beyaert, Will Moore, Nathan Bickart, Courtney Moore, Luis Rodriguez, Dominique Rachal, Josephine Duran, Luis Rodriguez, Robert Weathersby, Kaderra Anderson, Marisol Medina, Yajaira Alvarez, Sarah Puckett, Ken Cook, Peter Mangarella, A.J. Iroko, Tim Jensen, Ben Wallace, Rich Walkling, Anneke Swinehart, Josh Bradt

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

2. CUSP—Ann Riley thanked everyone for supporting the park bond act (SB5); it will be on the Spring 2018 ballot, but funding for creek projects was cut in half. There is a new park bond slated for the Fall 2018 ballot that includes \$170 Million for urban creek projects, and also has funding for greening and stormwater projects. The bond was put together by the Natural Heritage Institute, who will collect signatures to get it on the ballot. Riley made a motion that the Council provide a letter of support for the park bond. The motion was seconded by Sarah Puckett. The motion passed.

3. Urban Tilth— Nathan Bickart introduced his crew of youth who have been working with Urban Tilth. He also reported that they have been busy at the North Richmond Farm with first year cover cropping to fix nitrogen in the soil. They have workdays on 4th Saturdays.

Courtney Moore reported that the team has worked in the Lower Wildcat Creek Watershed in North Richmond, removing invasive plants like ivy, clearing log jams, planting natives like dogwood and ninebark, and picking up trash. They have also been working in the Upper Wildcat Creek Watershed in Tilden Park, building bioswales and wattles.

Robert Weathersby said that in the lower watershed, the team has been learning about creeks, plant identification, riparian habitat, and flood plains.

Kaderra Anderson said that in the upper watershed, they have been learning about biodiversity, stewardship, Richmond history, flood prevention, and plant diseases.

4. SPAWNERS—Helen Fitanides reported that SPAWNERS has a new website, thanks to the Rose Foundation's Grassroots Training Institute which provided \$10,000 in capacity building funding. They've been working with Sheldon 6th graders and 8th/9th grade students from Orinda Academy at our restoration sites. They also have a garden

celebration coming up on Dec. 16; there will be food, crafts, and you can plant a CA native plant.

5.The Watershed Project—Helen reported that they've been busy collecting stormwater samples and running them in a lab at Contra Costa College for copper, chromium, and surfactants. They are also on the lookout for ways to help pay registration fees for the interns to attend River Rally 2018 in Tahoe (April 29-May 2).

6.SFEP—Josh Bradt reported that the NR Shoreline Visioning Plan is almost ready to be released. There is a draft 2-pager that includes priority projects moving forward. He hopes that the Council will consider adopting the plan, and forming a sub-group to take on shoreline issues.

The Resilient by Design Challenge has been going on for the last month with tours and meetings in the Bay Area. The North Richmond shoreline is a possible study area. They are having conversations on whether we're prepared for climate change, both on a community and ecology level. The Research Advisory Committee will be matching groups with sites in December. East Palo Alto, Marin City, San Rafael Bay, and East Oakland/Hayward have been popular with participants.

7.City of San Pablo—Amanda Booth was not present but provided an update via Helen. Plaza San Pablo- The design/permitting process as started for the Wildcat Creek Restoration and Greenway Trial project. The City is still working on getting all of the Grant agreements in place but the City is moving forward with the project while that is occurring.

El Portal Urban Greening- The El Portal Greening Project will be releasing the RFP for design shortly, the City is expecting to be done with this project by the end of 2018.

City of San Pablo was successful in the bid for a CNRA Urban Greening grant for \$3.9 million dollars for the Rumrill Complete Streets project. This project is almost fully funded now the City has \$10.4 of the \$12 million needed for the project. The City is planning on applying for one more grant in January to hopefully fill that last gap. The project is currently undergoing CEQA and this is expected to be completed in January and design is expected to start in April/May of 2018.

Downtown Streets Team (DST)- The City of San Pablo is working with the County, City of Richmond, BNSF Railroad and PG&E to try and implement a DST program in the San Pablo/Richmond/North Richmond area. DST works with homeless in the area on public beautification projects (trash removal/graffiti removal etc.). San Pablo would be using this program for trash removal along waterways (mainly Wildcat Creek, Kennedy Plaza, and along Giant Road). This is likely to be a long process for implementation because

we are working with so many organizations. If anyone is aware of any grant or other funding mechanisms for programs like this, please let Amanda know.

8. City of Richmond—Patrick Phelan wasn't present, but Josh said that the Trust for Public Land had a ribbon cutting and training for their Climate Smart Cities - Richmond GIS planning module, which has layers for demographic, health, and geophysical data. In addition, the city is going for a Prop 1 grant through the State Coastal Conservancy to work on Rheem Creek in the Rollingwood area. Helen said that they are also interested in applying for the NFWF Five Star and Urban Waters grant. Rich Walkling said that Richmond recently received \$4.2 million for the Greening the Yellow Brick Road project, and \$3.1 million for the Richmond Wellness Trail, in partnership with The Watershed Project.

9. County Watershed Program—Tim Jensen reported that John Steere is scheduled to be back at work in January. He introduced A.J. Iroko, who works in the county watershed program with Cece. He's working to get a handle on contracts, including those with the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District and The Watershed Project, and on getting the watershed calendars out. He'll also be working on education, outreach, and events.

10. Flood Control—Tim reported that the Wildcat-San Pablo levee remediation project has been completed. Mitigation work is ongoing for another year or so, with Urban Tilth's help. They had been approved to spend \$900,000 from the county's general fund, but were in talks with FEMA to provide that instead. There was a last minute issue because the project was already underway and FEMA didn't want to fund a project already underway; they are in talks.

11. Pinole fish passage project tour update—Will Moore reported that the Oct. 1 tour had 23 participants and several hosts, including Ben Wallace, Burt Mulchaey, Igor Skaredoff, and Helen Fitanides. They toured both the Pinole Creek and Wildcat Creek fish passage projects.

12. Wildcat Creek Fish Ladder Subcommittee report—Ben Wallace reported that CEQA needs to be completed before applying for grants. There has been discussion within Trout Unlimited about whether the site could be maintained rather than re-built. Burt said that we might be underestimating what steelhead can handle, so the fish ladder may be more functional than we think (and better than what was there originally). In addition, there are many other barriers in the watershed. Ben calculated that \$9,000 per year for maintenance over 50 years is still less than the cost of rebuilding the ladder, which would have a 50-year lifespan.

Tim: Flood Control will not maintain the ladder as it was never functional; in addition, they don't have the money to do it. The county never accepted the fish ladder from the Army Corps of Engineers, as the basic design was flawed and didn't take into account woody debris and trash. However, it should be maintained regardless of a

rebuild. The 1135 process started in the late 90s; at that time the Army Corps wanted to consider it an ecosystem restoration project rather than a design flaw. The original building started in 1989.

Riley: Even if the ladder was cleared, a bigger sediment basin is needed, as well as an efficient channel downstream that connects to the ladder.

Peter Mangarella: Sediment is a big issue in the Wildcat Creek Watershed, and without solving that, any fish ladder won't work. It would be a good idea to talk to Laurel Collins (the author of the report).

Tim: The East Bay Regional Park District is addressing Jewel Lake sedimentation, and that may help downstream sedimentation.

Riley: There are steelhead in a pool opposite Verde school; also in shopping carts at 3rd St. Occasionally they find a fish caught in the fish ladder.

Tim: This project was stopped because the Army Corps process changed, making partners pay up front. However, we recently found out that the change is not in the official language, and the Watershed Resources Development Act may be able to address this issue and reverse it for disadvantaged communities.

13. Rheem Creek subcommittee report—Tim reported that the East Bay Regional Park District may have put this project on the back burner.

14. Financial subcommittee—Sarah – overview of subcommittee; grants, strategy/coordination. WW in Feb; NFWF 5-Star Jan 31, SCC Prop 1 Feb. The next call-in meeting of the financial subcommittee will be **Dec. 21 at 10am.**

15. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports—

Bruce Beyaert from the Trails for Richmond Action Committee said that there are 34 miles of Bay Trail completed in Richmond ... the most of any city in the nine-county Bay Area, including a new trail linking the Dotson Family Marsh staging area to the core of Point Pinole Regional Shoreline, which now has about 6 miles of Bay Trail. The City of Richmond has grant funds to close the Bay Trail gap along Goodrick Ave connecting the Dotson Family Marsh staging area with the Richmond Parkway. TRAC hopes that the County Flood Control District will close the Bay Trail gap on the southern levee of San Pablo Creek to connect the Parkway Bay Trail with the Landfill Loop Trail. The Bay Area Transit Authority is out to bid on the Bay Trail across the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge, set to complete next year.

Will Moore from Grizzly Peak Fly Fishers said that they are having a holiday party on Dec. 13 which is open to Council members. They are also volunteering to help

SPAWNERS this weekend. The group has helped to put cold water aquariums in 29 classrooms to grow trout.

Peter Mangarella from Trout Unlimited said that there is a move to create a Bay Area wide fish education program for youth.

Sarah Puckett from American Rivers reported that there were more than 500 projects submitted to the Stormwater Resource Plan. The county has hired interns to help move the process forward. There will be a draft out in Fall of 2018.

16. NEXT MEETING: Thursday Jan 25.

17. West County Wastewater District—Ken Cook reported that the West County Wastewater Treatment plant is looking into both a horizontal levee project and environmental education center.

They have proposed architectural designs for the education center. Interactive physical and digital displays are being considered. They hope to include information from multiple environmental groups. There is access via trail, and parking on site. 5th-8th grade classes currently take tours through plant, with an emphasis on watersheds and how the treatment process works, and now people will be able to learn about this process in the educational center as well. There will be more progress on planning after a January meeting.

There is already a classroom on-site, and a larger one is planned. These rooms are available for us by small local groups, probably for no fee.