

MINUTES
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
September 26, 2019
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Anthony Falzone, Helen Fitantes, Tim Jensen, Anne Bremer, Dan Kirk, Juliana Gonzalez, John Steere, Ann Riley, Amanda Booth, Michele Mancuso, Rich Walkling, Josh Bradt, Steve Donnelly, Princess Robinson, Melinda Harris

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

2. CUSP—Josh Bradt reported that they have hired a part time director of outreach and education through AmeriCorps.

Ann Riley reported that AB933 (the watershed coordinator program that funded organizing, planning, etc. for watershed groups) has died. It passed the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee before mysteriously getting killed at the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Riley also reported that their Streamside Management Program for Landowners (SMPL), which is available throughout Contra Costa County, has now had 30 private property visits and requests for help keep coming in. They will be holding several training sessions in Concord in November and will advertise to the WCSP Council list.

3. Urban Tilth—Nathan Bickart reported via Helen: We've hired on a new cohort of young adult apprentices to participate in our 'Basins of Relations' Watershed Stewardship Training Program! This team of young adults will develop background knowledge and hands-on skills (with help from many members of the Watershed Council) in ecological restoration and environmental justice, in addition to developing career-oriented leadership skills. They're already hard at work- most recently we've been removing invasive species and planting native riparian plants at Lower Wildcat Creek in North Richmond, and on Coastal Cleanup Day we cleared over 1200 pounds of trash out of the Fred Jackson Way drainage ditches near the North Richmond Farm. This crew of young adults will likely join in on the WCSPs next meeting- see you then!

Nathan also reported that the goats ate their restoration plantings at Lower Wildcat Creek (again). He shared how devastating it will be to sow the young adults in their programming what happened to their months of work.

Tim Jenson shared that he has been in contact with Nathan and the goat herder and will be making a site visit in the coming days. It looks like the loss is not 100% as it was previously, but the damage was extensive.

Riley said that Urban Tilth will be taking on the debris removal in Lower Wildcat Creek this year (which she had partnered with them on in the past).

Princess Robinson reported that she has been working with Doria Robinson to get input from west county community members on the new climate action plan for 2020.

4. SPAWNERS—Helen Fitanides reported that they had another successful summer nature walk series, with walks incorporating benthic macroinvertebrates and forest bathing.

The trash and debris situation at the El Sobrante Library continues to get worse, with several thousand pounds of construction debris under the Appian Way bridge. They will be partnering with Marie Murphy and Sheldon Elementary Schools this year, with in-class lessons paired with field trips to Wilkie Park.

5. The Watershed Project—Juliana Gonzalez reported that they completed another year of trash assessments in the spring, and a big Coastal Cleanup Day event on 9/21 with almost 1,900 people cleaning up the Wildcat, San Pablo and Rheem Creek Watersheds. They are completing their Cal Fire tree-planting project in North Richmond, with 100 native trees adopted by residents and planted in the public right of way. They are currently in phase 1 of a Green Infrastructure planning exercise for the county, doing the urban forestry part.

Helen also reported that they are gearing up for testing their bioswales during the rains this year, as well as test around the county for detergents, which are often associated with pesticides. They also have equipment to run fecal coliform samples and are interested in sampling near homeless encampments; please get in touch with Helen (helen@thewatershedproject.org) if you have suggestions for sites.

The Watershed Project is hiring a lead environmental educator! Please email education@thewatershedproject.org or visit <http://thewatershedproject.org/green-careers/> for more information.

6. Water Needs Assessment update— Anne Bremer reported that The Watershed Project's North Richmond Water Needs Assessment is in the analysis and reporting phase. They worked with 54 NR residents who were interviewed on the topic of water (including sea level rise and stormwater, habitat protection and access to recreation, water supply, and wastewater and recycled water) and were invited to participate in an educational workshop. Some takeaways from the assessment include: 1) there is a lot of concern over tap water safety; and 2) most residents were surprised and concerned to learn how the wastewater treatment plant and the nearby community will be impacted by sea level rise. However, there is reason for hope because there is a very engaged and invested community in North Richmond, and momentum to make changes.

The next steps will be to finalize results and work with stakeholders to respond to the community's priorities with actionable projects, and report back to the community.

Juliana said that the WCSP Council should collaborate to put together a proposal with good projects; perhaps we could do a workshop at an upcoming Council meeting.

7. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed—Rich Walkling reported on this project, which is upstream of Contra Costa College and involves the partnership of American Rivers and the Watershed Project. Door to door surveys have been done throughout the neighborhood, with high response rate in all areas. The standout findings were confirmation that flooding was coming into the streets from the creek, and from there onto people's properties (rather than the creek flooding the properties directly). Also, residents experienced flooding 3-5 times per year. The next step is a topographical survey on creek (headed by American Rivers) in October, and a community workday on October 19 (headed by The Watershed Project).

Anne said that a lot of people called out overgrown vegetation and debris in the creek as the cause of the flooding, and that there was a lot of support for this project. Rich said that the vegetation situation in the creek is even worse than in previous years.

8. SFEP—Josh reported that after 6 years, the San Pablo Avenue Green Stormwater Spine project finally broke ground in Berkeley! The project goes from Harrison to Codornices Creek, and includes 4 curb extension planters. The San Pablo and Richmond sites were dropped from the project (San Pablo because the area was too small to receive credits, and Richmond because a PG&E gas line would need to be relocated).

They are holding first meeting of the Horizontal Levee Working Group at Supervisor John Gioia's office on Monday September 30. They'll be aiming for a conceptual alignment of all groups, and ultimately a grant application for more planning funding. This project will be centered on West County Wastewater District land, with Chevron, Republic Services, and residents being key stakeholders. They have received a Transforming Urban Waters grant which will provide technical support for this project.

They are also putting on the biennial State of the Estuary Conference on October 21 and 22 at the Scottish Rites Center in Oakland; registration is open and conference volunteers get in free.

The Restoration Authority has released the 3rd round request for proposals for Measure AA, with a December deadline.

9. City of San Pablo—Amanda Booth reported on several projects: Wildcat Creek Trail Project – they are hoping to release the RFP for construction in November.

Rumrill Complete Streets – they have been delayed by a PG&E gas main issue, but they expect to release the RFP for construction in 2020.

2600 Moraga Park – they have applied for Prop 1 funds, and will hopefully know if they've made it to the next part of the process in November. This project would include bioretention and underground storage.

El Portal Greening – they released the RFP and got zero bidders; when they approached contractors they already worked with they got a bid that was 40% over the estimated price. The City is working to negotiate with the estimates for a better price. The project is still expected to go into construction later 2019 or early 2020.

Cleaner Contra Costa Challenge – the contest is underway, and teams are forming. The goal is mainly to reduce greenhouse gases, but includes other aspects.

On October 5 they are doing a creek cleanup with Salesian High and Kids for the Bay at Davis Park. They have been establishing a relationship with Salesian High that includes an application to the Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee and potentially adopting a section of Wildcat Creek. Additionally, the students need to do a certain amount of volunteer hours, so they may be interested in some of this group's volunteer events! Send your flyers to Amanda at AmandaB@sanpabloca.gov.

On the subject of trash, Earth Team will be removing litter in San Pablo as part of their trash reduction plan. Also, the City Manager's office will be tackling trash and dumping in the next two years, and they have developed a workgroup and held two workshops. The new Civic Spark fellow will be working on the "No trash in the creeks by 2022" plan.

The City will be applying for Prop 1 funding for either the Sutter/Rumrill drainage issue or an extensive bridge replacement on San Pablo Ave. over San Pablo Creek (they have some Cal Trans funding already but need much more). They are also looking for additional funding for a restoration aspect of the project.

Finally, the City will be sending letters to all creekside property owners regarding the upcoming rainy season and their responsibility for the creek in their yard. They will include the SMPL brochure in the mailing.

10. Plaza San Pablo— Amanda covered this.

11. City of Richmond—Patrick Phelan reported via Helen that City staff hosted an event for Coastal Cleanup Day at Baxter Creek at the "Greenway Gap Closure Site." It was lightly attended but also engaged the day laborers that hang out there. The site is a bit problematic, it's not a park so there are no facilities to encourage regular citizens to use it (no tables or trash cans, for instance), and there is a homeless encampment on the other side of the freeway with a serious trash situation.

The Rheem Creek project starts the topographical survey on Monday September 30! EBMUD has permitted us to use their vacant lot on Greenwood Dr. for staging and access. The Watershed Project has conducted extensive outreach.

The Hydrodynamic separator at the head of "Meeker Ditch" on Regatta Blvd is complete, will filter trash and sediment out of a very large part of central Richmond. City is looking for more sites to collaborate upon with Caltrans.

Helen shared that large dumped items in Meeker Slough continue to be an issue for removal, as a truck and winch is needed. The Marina Bay community had hoped that they would be removed by now, but Helen has been unable to get traction with the City of Richmond.

Amanda mentioned a program that the City of San Pablo works with that trains war veterans for emergencies, and they need experience operating large equipment. Perhaps it might be a good fit.

12. County Watershed Program—John Steere reported that the Green Infrastructure Plan for the County will be uploaded to the Clean Water website in the coming days. The first demo project will be the North Richmond Connections Project, on which TWP and Urban Tilth are partners. The first phase is a rain garden on Fred Jackson Way, and they hope to be underway in mid-November. Their aim is to do one project per year.

Juliana added that the first mile/last mile portion of the complete streets project will be led by The Watershed Project and is in the works for next year.

John said that the GI Plan has a financing section, including information on the idea of a Green Benefits District, which is already in place in San Francisco.

Amanda said that the City of San Pablo estimated that it will cost about \$7,000 per treated acre per year to maintain their GI projects (estimated replacing soil and plants once in the 20 year expected life of a bioretention facility).

Tim Jensen reported that the county will continue working with The Watershed Project and Contra Costa Resource Conservation District due to staffing shortages, and work to expand their contracts. The county is also in the process of renegotiating their contracts with contractors.

13. Flood Control—Michelle Cordis reported earlier this summer that the Flood Control maintenance crew came upon the gate left open to Wildcat Basin, and therefore decided to change the lock as was recently done at another location on Wildcat Creek. This has deterred unauthorized activity at Wildcat and Richmond Parkway so will hopefully also work at the basin. Unauthorized dumping of construction spoils has been going on there. We may eventually change all FC locks in the area. Of course, this doesn't deter determined individuals who use bolt cutters on the locks. Any feedback on the new EBRPD gate at Wildcat near Verde Elem is also appreciated.

Tim said that they discovered City of Richmond crews were dumping ground up asphalt behind Verde Elementary via a vehicle gate; Flood Control changed the lock so they can no longer do so.

14. Wildcat Creek Fish Ladder Subcommittee—Anthony Falzone reported that Trout Unlimited and Flood Control applied for an Urban Streams Restoration Program grant to restore the fish ladder. It will likely be some months before we hear back.

15. Financial subcommittee—

The City of Orinda did not get the grant for their San Pablo Creek restoration project. The third round of Measure AA funding is out now.

The next call-in meeting of the Financial Subcommittee will be October 17 at 10am.

16. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports—

Overall, they are finding an increasing amount of dumped construction debris in recent years.

Juliana said that an issue in North Richmond is that the tipping fees are very high compared to other fees in the area. Amanda suggested going to the waste board.

Josh said that the North Richmond Shoreline Festival is on October 12 at Point Pinole.

27. NEXT MEETING: Thursday November 21

Note: The Contra Costa Sustainability is meeting at the same time on 3rd Thursdays now.