

MINUTES
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
May 21, 2020
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Tim Jensen, Ann Riley, Rich Walkling, Joe Neugebauer, Peter Mangarella, Josh Bradt, Patrick Phelan, Jessie Alberto, Anne Bremer, Amanda Booth, Anthony Falzone, Juliana Gonzalez, John Steere, Helen Fitantes, Adele Ho, and Paula White

1. Introductions –Tim Jensen began the meeting at 10:05 am.

2. CUSP—Josh Bradt reported that they submitted a revised contract proposal to the county to extend the Streamside Management Program for Landowners (SMPL). Ann Riley reported that they were accepted to present on SMPL at the Salmonid Restoration Federation conference, which has been postponed to October. They are also part of a coalition to pass a bill supporting the Watershed Coordinator Program, which is likely now sidelined due to Covid-19. Watershed Day at the Capitol was also cancelled this year.

3. Urban Tilth—Adele Ho reported that the county’s review of the final plans for the Fred Jackson Way Rain Gardens has been delayed. Tim Jensen reported that the Watershed Stewardship team has been working on a section of Wildcat Creek, and they are starting communications with Flood Control early this year to make sure that goats don’t get into that section again.

4. SPAWNERS— Helen Fitantes reported that core volunteers have been doing some socially distanced weeding of their projects during this time, but that all else is on hold.

5. The Watershed Project—Juliana Gonzalez reported that they were fortunate to get a Paycheck Protection Program loan and remain open during this time, and they have been pivoting to online activities for education and community science, as well as offline activities like garden starter kits. They will continue their plugged and unplugged programming in the coming months. The Water Needs Assessment is now almost complete thanks to a mailer effort in recent weeks. They are hopeful that in June they will be able to return to the creeks and complete the trash assessments for the county. They have been an active participant in the Rheem Creek process and have come up with an alternative method of outreach via a children’s book about Rheem Creek. They have also been adding to their YouTube channel, which has videos on rainwater harvesting, home gardening, community science projects, and education.

6. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed— Rich Walkling reported that they recently completed their flooding assessment of the project area.

The significant problem is sediment deposition in the channel, and a new competent channel will need to be constructed. Design strategies will be forthcoming. Rich also showed photos of flooding from this and prior years and reported that The Watershed Project's outreach to Rollingwood neighbors found that there have been significant and frequent floods over the years. Their current grant extends through 65% design, which will get community input.

Anne Bremer reported that it is thought that the sediment accumulated in discrete events rather than continually, so there is hope that the channel will not continue to refill after it has been cleared.

7. SFEP— Josh Bradt reported that they are administering the Disadvantaged Community and Tribal Involvement Program and are working on developing a tap water quality testing program in the communities in which this program is active. Mistrust of tap water has been a common thread in these communities.

8. North Richmond Horizontal Levee Working Group update— Josh reported that the working group has met 5 times thus far and will meet again in June. The San Francisco Bay Regional Authority approved a grant for preliminary studies on the levee project. If folks are interested in coordinating a meeting about the Richmond Parkway overpass issue, please contact Josh. Patrick Phelan and Juliana Gonzalez expressed interest in participating. Josh also mentioned that there is a series of webinars picking up where Resilient By Design left off, and the June 9th webinar will focus on Richmond.

9. West County Wastewater update— Joe Neugebauer reported that they are excited to continue to work with Josh on the horizontal levee project. This project will also be a focus in the Transforming Shorelines Collaborative. They will be slowly starting to ramp up their capital improvement projects in June, although most staff are working from home and will continue to do so. They are under contract with the City of San Pablo to do stormwater inspections this fiscal year as well; however, the project has been significantly delayed due to the shelter in place.

10. City of San Pablo—Amanda Booth reported that the Wildcat Creek Trail project construction is underway. The parking lot is finished and just needs to be planted. They are currently working with Fish and Wildlife to trim the trees. After June 15 they will be starting on the in-creek work. They expect to finish in the fall.

100% design has been submitted for the Rumrill Complete Streets Project, they should receive final funding in the fall, when they will release the construction bid, expecting to start in the winter.

The new City Hall building is almost complete, and they expect to move offices there in June. They have been working almost entirely online and that will continue to some extent.

Their Alternative Compliance Project launched this month to improve water quality in certain areas. Two pilot projects were also proposed, one in San Pablo and one in Richmond, and they are requesting a support letter for this project. The San Pablo

project is on Sutter Avenue and 14th Street, where they will be working to reduce flooding and a backwater condition by redirecting stormwater and adding bioswales in the vicinity.

They are struggling with trash and illegal dumping, especially since the shelter in place began. In February the Council approved 700K to work on this issue, but it's all on pause now. They have very limited abilities to do trash cleanups right now.

11. City of Richmond— Patrick Phelan reported that their Alternative Compliance Project is on 2nd St in Richmond, which is a proposed bicycle boulevard in Richmond's Bicycle Master Plan, and runs between the Bay Trail and Iron Triangle to the north and Cutting Blvd to the south (which is also part of the Bay Trail), going underneath I-580 in the process. They are proposing a Ferry to Bridge to Greenway Complete Streets Plan. They're in the final round of a Transformative Climate Communities grant, which would include street tree planting and complete streets projects which would include urban greening and stormwater capture.

They may also apply for a grant in June for Rheem Creek implementation funding from the Urban Flooding Protection Grant Program from Prop 68.

Ann Riley moved that the Council support the San Pablo and Richmond Alternative Compliance Projects. John Steere seconded the motion. The motion passed.

12. County Watershed Program— John Steere reported that they are coordinating with a UC Berkeley grad student to create a plan for a Green Benefits District Pilot Program, which will be completed in the fall. The North Richmond Watershed Connections Project (aka Walkable Watersheds) will be underway in late fall, and they have an agreement from the county and Coastal Conservancy. Jeanine Strickland and others helped with the North Richmond Green Streets Corridor Project, finding a work around for crossing 1-80 and connecting to the Bay Trail.

13. Flood Control— Tim Jensen reported that they have been challenged by the homeless situation and illegal dumping throughout the county. Many camps are being left in place and they're seeing more fires and creeks used as restrooms. More coordination needs to be done throughout the county on this issue.

Tim also reported that Verde Elementary has expressed their concerns about people climbing over the fence from the Wildcat Creek Trail and vandalizing their school, so they are in discussion with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) to remove some of the trees and shrubs next to the fence. EBRPD has also had an issue with trees along the Wildcat Creek Trail from Fred Jackson to the Richmond Parkway, which are causing damage to trail.

Jesse Alberto reported that EBRPD is working with the Civic Corps to remove trees (mainly buckeyes and oaks) that were growing onto the path and uplifting the sidewalk, and they are talking about how to replace the asphalt. Regarding the situation at Verde Elementary, they will be trimming to raise up the tree canopy and deciding which trees to remove altogether.

Riley reported that there is controversy about removing some of the trees, particularly the Monterey Pines. However, they are diseased, and limbs are falling off; perhaps they could be replaced by trees that will do better by the creek.

Tim asked for any groups interested in working with the EBRPD on the trees project; Princess Robinson and The Watershed Project were tagged as good supporting actors. Juliana reported that their in-house arborist Paula Urtecho can support the project.

14. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee— Peter Mangarella reported that they have received partial funding from the Department of Water Resources (DWR), excluding the fish ladder portion of the grant (the flooding and outreach portions were funded fully). The reason given was that DWR engineers were concerned about certain aspects of the 65% design, specifically the high percentage of concrete (vs. natural designs).

Anthony Falzone reported that they still hope to receive full funding for the project, and they have been in communication about addressing the funders concerns and have shared the NHC report that was fundamental to the design.

Tim suggested a site tour with the funder, led by Flood Control, once the shelter in place mandate has lifted.

Peter reported that he did a survey to document the I-80 fish passage barrier with the assistance of a TWP intern and submitted it to California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

15. Financial subcommittee— Anthony Falzone reported that EBRPD put out a Request for Proposals looking at the feasibility of different options for managing Jewel Lake. Amanda Booth reported that there is a lot of push from lobbyists for funding to get America back to work, and there is funding there for construction projects.

The Natural Resources Agency has two upcoming application deadlines: July 15 for the [Urban Greening Grant Program](#), and June 15 for the [Urban Flood Protection Program](#).

Juliana reported that The Watershed Project and Intelligent Ecosystems Institute applied for the CalEPA's Environmental Justice Grant.

Next call-in meeting of the Financial Subcommittee: June 18 at 10am.

Link to project and grant list:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ImGyQss1gC5iZcsMmYSnoDvisD-ubKIXTlz7PcnJrTU/edit?usp=sharing>

16. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports— Adele followed up on the issue of the widened gravel trail in Wildcat Regional Park; the trail width has been reduced to 12 feet and they have hydroseeded the edges, but EBRPD never shared the documents on trail width standards.

17. NEXT MEETING: Thursday September 17 from 10am-noon.