

MINUTES
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
December 9, 2020
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Julia Kernitz, Kent Wegener, Chris Lim, Colleen Noland, Amanda Booth, Peter Mangarella, Jeanine Strickland, Rich Walkling, Melissa Farinha, Patrick Phelan, Adele Ho, Tim Jensen, John Steere, Sarah Puckett, Andrew Chambers, Helen Fitanides, Melinda Harris, Sherry Stanley

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

2. City of San Pablo— Amanda Booth reported that the Wildcat and Vale trail project is still missing some plants that were delayed, as well as some bricklaying that’s also delayed. They expect to be done early next year. They are in the process of filming a video highlighting the City’s partnership with the Council that really made this project happen. The Council will host a tour of the project in the spring.

The Rumrill Complete Streets project is going to bid later this month, and will go to construction in the summer. This will be a year-plus long construction project on a very busy street; avoid if possible!

The El Portal project is basically complete; bike lanes are open, bioswales are working well, and the sign is up. The traffic circles are the only thing left to be installed.

They plan to submit an application to Prop 68 in March for the park project at 2600 Moraga, including adjacent creek. Formerly a school, it will be renovated into a park and likely include a trail.

3. CUSP— Josh Bradt was not present.

4. Urban Tilth— Nathan Bickart reported through Helen Fitanides: Urban Tilth's Watershed Stewardship Crew is chugging along at our three main sites: Wildcat Creek in North Richmond, Alvarado Park / Wildcat Canyon, and Cerrito Creek on the Richmond/Albany/El Cerrito border; we're also growing lots of native plants in our little greenhouse. We were able to install about 300 homegrown native riparian plants this fall; now we just have to pray for some rain. We're hoping to re-start hosting community engagement and volunteer events in the New Year (COVID-permitting). Perhaps Adele is able to give some updates on the North Richmond Farm... hoping to get started with some more infrastructure work (including starting construction on the Fred Jackson Way rain gardens) in late 2021.

Adele Ho reported that they are hoping to start on the construction of the rain gardens in spring 2021, finishing within the year. The farm continues to expand in terms of crop grows, and their CSA serves 440 families in the area. They are also applying for a Prop 68 grant, and will ask for a letter of support at our next meeting; the funding would support the Fred Jackson Way project as well as construction of several facilities and educational elements related to farming and the history of the area. Lastly, the Watershed Stewardship crew was looking at working with the City of Hercules, but were told that a contractor's license would be required. Does anyone have experience with this issue? If so, please contact Nathan at nathan@urbantilth.org.

5. SPAWNERS— Juliana Gonzalez reported through Helen Fitanides: They held their first virtual talk in November with 35 attendees. Doug Vaughan talked about his experiences monitoring wood duck nest boxes at the San Pablo Reservoir, as they are looking for volunteers to take over that monitoring. The talk can be viewed online on their YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/nxR7Ejqvd8A>. Please contact Doug at gdougvaughan@gmail.com if you're interested in volunteering.

6. The Watershed Project— Helen Fitanides reported that the Water Needs Assessment has an extension to develop and design projects. Projects must go through this process in order to be considered for future funding through the IRWM process. Up to 150K in funding will be available, including for consultants. Please contact Anne Bremer for more information: anne@thewatershedproject.org.

COVID-19 restrictions have postponed tree planting and hope garden planting to January, as well as delayed the Walkable Watersheds project. Tree planting and interpretative signage for that project should also start in January. Oyster monitoring has also been pushed back. Their Environmental Education team will be teaching at Verde and Montalvin Elementary in the New Year. Lastly, a mobility grant will help assess the needs to public transportation for residents to go to parks.

7. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed— Rich Walkling reported that the 65% plans are nearly complete, and they are waiting on community feedback by mail on the planting designs. This month they also submitted a grant application to the Department of Water Resources to fund the final design.

Patrick Phelan reported that this is the second implementation grant they've gone after, and thank the Council for their support. The other item they are working on is a storybook to be sent out to residents along with the survey.

8. Rheem Creek Restoration Project Opportunities Presentation— Sarah Puckett presented on Community-Based Ecological Solutions in the Rheem Creek Watershed, including restoration planning for the Rollingwood reach, some conceptual restoration designs for the upper watershed, and a Restoration Opportunities Analysis (ROA) for the watershed as a whole. She sought Council approval on the ROA and on adding these

projects to the Council project map, as well as asked for Council input on any missing project opportunities.

17 restoration projects and 8 programs (such as this Council, land acquisition projects, and nearby living shorelines) were identified during this process. They also determined that most of the sediment, which has been such a problem for the creek, came from a one-time event at the cemetery, and once removed it shouldn't re-sediment. If you want to learn more about restoration opportunities in the Rheem Creek Watershed please contact Sarah at sarahbeamish@hotmail.com.

Rich Walkling moved that the Council approve the addition of these projects to the Council project map. John Steere seconded the motion. The motion passed.

9. SFEP— Josh Bradt was not present.

10. North Richmond Horizontal Levee Working Group—Josh Bradt wasn't present. Sherry Stanley reported that they are working on their charter.

11. West County Wastewater District—Joe Neugebauer reported through Helen Fitanides:

We had a sanitary sewer overflow in the North Richmond area last week. Most of the sewage was recovered in the storm drain system and at the N. Richmond stormwater pump station at Gertrude and Richmond Pkwy. Water quality testing was performed after the cleanup and the results are still pending.

We have transitioned from anaerobic digestion of solids to having a contractor dewater and stabilize our solids on site and transport them for land application in Sacramento County. This is a more beneficial use than alternative daily cover at landfills. (our past practice for many years)

We will be rolling out a social media campaign about proper disposal of fats, oils and grease (FOG) and wipes at the start of 2021. These are our leading causes of sanitary sewer overflows. Look for our ads on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube!

12. Cleaner Contra Costa Presentation—Coleen Noland presented on the Cleaner Contra Costa Challenge, which helps households monitor their carbon footprint and take sustainable actions to reduce their impact. Side benefits include saving water and energy, and saving money on utility bills. Transportation, electricity, heating, food, and waste contribute to 40% of emissions in the US, and since these are things we do every day, we can have a big impact when we change our behaviors. They have over 70 actions sorted by cost, time, and difficulty level, canceling your paper junk mail to replacing your lawn with drought tolerant plants. Since they program began in April 2019, they have 853 households participating, and have completed over 1,000 actions, saving over \$86,000, 134,000 gallons of water, and 189 tons of CO2.

For more information, please contact Colleen at colleen@sustainablecoco.org.

13. City of Richmond— Patrick Phelan reported that they held a kickoff meeting for their Rumrill/13th St. Corridor Project. There is currently no funding for green infrastructure or stormwater improvements, but they are open to ideas for funding sources. They have two complete streets projects that will begin construction next year: The Richmond Wellness Trail and the Yellow Brick Road Projects. Their Castro Ranch Road paving project went out to bid; this will be for resurfacing the entire street within city limits, as well as adding small stormwater and pedestrian improvements. Design is ready to go on their Via Verde culvert project, but they are still in negotiations with the water board over mitigation for an added culvert. Construction should begin next year. They are also hoping to install another trash capture device; they have installed three so far with funding from Caltrans.

Lastly, plants in the bioswale along Cutting Blvd need maintenance. They have reached out to The Watersheds Nursery regarding a rehabilitation project, and hope to revisit the issue in the New Year when the COVID-19 surge has lessened. They are also open to advice from others on how to rehab their bioswale plants.

14. County Watershed Program— John Steere reported that the North Richmond Watershed Connections Project is currently reviewing contracts for the rainwater garden and green streets components of the Fred Jackson Way project. They hope to have contracts ready in January.

A graduate student in the Environmental Planning department at UC Berkeley, Sadie Wilson, will be conducting a feasibility assessment for a green benefits district for North Richmond. This would be a potential pilot project for North Richmond and other unincorporated communities. It is meant to be a toolbox for appropriate design, including tradeoffs and district options.

15. Flood Control— Tim Jensen reported that the creek channels are probably in the best shape they have ever been in, thanks to hard work from the district to bring them up to FEMA standards. They will also be collaborating with the Horizontal Levee committee to prepare for sea level rise in these channels.

Regarding the sewer spill that Joe reported on, Contra Costa County and the City of Richmond worked together to fix the pumps before the start of the rainy season this year. Several pump engines were failing, and at one point only one out of the four total pumps were functioning. At the start of the rainy season all the pumps were running, and only the roofing project remains to be completed.

Patrick said that he would like to work with the City of San Pablo and the county to combine all their stormwater information so that it is easier to access. Tim said that Mark Boucher would be a good contact for that, and he will connect them.

Melissa Farinha mentioned that Prop 1 funds from the Regional Water Quality Control Board are specific to stormwater capture and treatment facilities, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife can provide a letter of support for Council projects. More information on the grant can be found here:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/swgp/prop1/

16. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee— Peter Mangarella reported that the proposal for the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Urban Streams Restoration grant looks like it may get fully funded. They had a good call with the Army Corps of Engineers, Flood Control District, and DWR to explain the restriction at the site, and DWR is open to reviewing the 65% designs. TWP has also applied to the California Fish Passage Forum for 65K to help with the design review process. They expect to hear back in spring.

17. Financial Subcommittee—

Sarah Puckett reported that this subcommittee meets every other month to discuss upcoming grant proposals and coordinate applications. You can view their project and grant list here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1lmGyQss1gC5iZcsMmYSnoDvjsD-ubKIXTlz7PcnJrTU/edit?usp=sharing>

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

18. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports—

Chris Lim reported that the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District is on the verge of adopting a spot on the Richmond Greenway. Also, their EcoStewards program is up and running and they've added four new people. In the mold of the California Conservation Corps, they are primarily working on DWR projects but hope to offer one day each week helping other local projects. This would likely be a fee-for-service model. Contact Chris if you think you might have an appropriate project for the EcoStewards. Lastly, they have funding from the California Coastal Conservancy to write a regional wildfire priority plan involving both Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. There will be opportunities to engage with the project in the coming year.

Jeanine Strickland reported that she is currently in a graduate program at Oregon State University. She is interested in writing a grant to support an urban tree canopy assessment for the Wildcat and San Pablo Creek Watersheds, with the goal of quantifying ecosystem services for the area. If you are interested in discussing, or your organization would be willing to be the lead applicant, please contact her at jeanine@thewatershedproject.org.

19. NEXT MEETING: Thursday January 21 from 10am-noon.