

**MINUTES**  
**Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council**  
**January 21, 2021**  
**10am – 12pm**

**Attendance:** Ann Riley, Tim Jensen, Adele Ho, Anthony Falzone, Peter Mangarella, Sarah Puckett, Jonathan Owens, Joe Neugebauer, Juliana Gonzalez, Jeanine Strickland, Rich Walkling, Amanda Booth, Jesse Alberto, John Steere, Melinda Harris, Emily Jacinto, Helen Fitanides, Josh Bradt, Patrick Phelan

**1. Introductions** –Tim Jensen began the meeting at 10:06 am.

**2. City of San Pablo**— Amanda Booth reported that the Wildcat Creek Trail Project will be complete in February, and the trail will be opening to the public in March, which will include a video and virtual event. The last thing to go in the ground will be trees in the summer. The Rumrill Complete Streets Project plans are done, and the RFP will be released in February. Construction will start in late summer. They are finalizing their State Parks application for 2600 Moraga Road, which is adjacent to Rheem Creek, and they will come back to the Council’s Rheem Creek Subcommittee if that proposal goes through. The El Portal project is finished and open to the public. They have received funding for a design for a cycle track on Giant Highway between Brookside Ave and Parr Blvd, adjacent to San Pablo Creek and the railroad; this is an area that has seen issues with illegal dumping, and the project would include physical barriers that would prevent further dumping. Their Illegal Dumping Task Force is doing a lot of planning right now, as not much else can be done at the moment due to COVID-19.

Amanda also reported that they may have some extra fill left over from a restoration project, in case anyone needs it.

**3. CUSP**— Ann Riley reported that they will imminently be in contract with Contra Costa County, and will be firing up their property owner assistance program. If you’re aware of anyone in cities or unincorporated areas that need help with managing a creek problem on their property, please contact CUSP. Property visits are on hold for now due to COVID-19, but they hope to resume near the end of February.

**4. Urban Tilth**— Nathan Bickart reported through Helen Fitanides: Urban Tilth's Watershed Restoration Crew has been focusing on 'essential' tasks at Cerrito and Wildcat Creeks over the last few weeks. We also just completed our annual vegetation survey at Lower Wildcat Creek (focusing on the mitigation area immediately downstream of Fred Jackson Bridge). Over the last 4 years we have planted about 415 hand-grown California native riparian plants on site, and last week we counted 391 native plants at our planting sites: a 94.2% survival rate! Some plant species did experience some mortality, but they were replaced by other species that reproduced

and created new individuals on site. Particularly happy plants that increased in number over the study period included mugwort, CA beeplant, soap plant, and yarrow. We also reduced invasive species cover in the study area by about 30%. Happy to share full results (survivorship by species, for example) with anyone interested.

Adele Ho added that the planting was designed under a Coastal Conservancy planning grant that also included the Fred Jackson Way Rain Gardens. It was designed by Resource Design Group, and they will report their success back to the Coastal Conservancy.

Urban Tilth is also working on acquiring the 3 acre North Richmond Farm property from the county, as it will be easier to access funds to build on the property if they have ownership. The process includes the county offering it to other public agencies, but if it's not desired by others, Urban Tilth has a capital campaign that would cover the cost of the property.

They are also applying to the Statewide Park Program for gap funding for their rain gardens and educational components, including their watershed classroom and outdoor classrooms. They are requesting a letter of support from the Council for this application.

John Steere moved that the Council approve the letter of support for Urban Tilth.

Juliana Gonzalez seconded the motion. The motion passed.

**5. SPAWNERS**— Helen Fitandes reported that their core team of volunteers continues to maintain their restoration sites and plant native plants. Last month a crew hired by county maintenance cut back some plants to the ground in SPAWNERS' native plant demonstration garden behind the El Sobrante Library; in a subsequent meeting with the library and the county a new line of communication was opened up such that the county will contact SPAWNERS before doing any maintenance behind the library in the future, and will also print more official signage to mark the boundaries of the SPAWNERS garden. Lastly, they had a very successful virtual talk in November, and are planning one for February.

**6. The Watershed Project**— Juliana Gonzalez reported that they are happy to have a contract with the county for their work on the county's Municipal Regional Permit, which includes trash cleanups, assessments, education, litter reduction, water quality monitoring and more. First flush (the first rain event of the year) was successful and monitoring will continue, however one of their meters was stolen and they are looking for ways to replace it. If anyone knows of a source for more meters please let us know.

They are moving forward with urban greening in North Richmond/Rollingwood with more Hope Gardens! They will be planting five more trees for a total of 15, which are located in front of private residences. In the next couple of months, they will be doing outreach and planting. They are also working with Jeanine Strickland to do ground-truthing on locations to plant more trees in that area, so projects can be easily developed when the need arises. They are also starting tree care for the first 50 trees

planted under the CalReleaf grant, and planting 50 more with the Walkable Watersheds project.

They are advancing the Green Benefits District for Contra Costa County with John Steere, and have been having conversations with others including the City of Richmond and their new Public Works Director to talk about how these districts work.

The Water Needs Assessment in the Rheem Creek Watershed is moving to new phase. They have funding from the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) to advance 2-3 projects identified in the needs assessment. This funding can cover conceptual design, cost benefit analysis, and the community engagement component. They need agencies to get involved by identifying the projects that you will champion and move forward to funding. This is a required step to get more funding through this process. TWP can hire your consultant to work with on developing the ideas.

They are also developing a video for the grand opening for the Wildcat Creek Trail project, filming community members, stakeholders and city staff. The video will be part of a virtual event for the project opening at the end of February.

The team working on the Rheem Creek project worked with local artists to produce a children's [booklet](#). It includes beautiful illustrations and a land acknowledgement, and they filmed several informational videos as well. This booklet went out with a survey to community members collecting their thoughts on the Rheem Creek project as well as recording their preferences on trees. They are happy with the results, and are analyzing the responses now.

Lastly, they hosted a virtual Walk of Dreams event for Martin Luther King Jr Day that is live through the end of February. Community members can post their dreams for the Richmond Greenway on an online app, and TWP staff will transcribe those dreams onto strips of fabric which will be added to structures in place on the greenway. The structures also include a history of important figures in the greenway.

**7. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed**— Rich Walkling reported that the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) has moved their grant proposal forward for the next round of implementation funding, and they will be having a virtual site tour in April. At the CNRA's urging they have also added a pilot project for green infrastructure implementation upstream of the project, and they've come up with concept design already. The community feedback results that Juliana mentioned will feed into the 65% designs, and they will report back in May.

**8. SFEP**— Josh Bradt reported that they are updating their estuary blueprint (a comprehensive estuary management plan over a 20 year time horizon), which includes actions about multiple types of restoration around the bay. They will be looking at more metrics than just acres of habitat restored; they are considering equity, access to open

space, community participation in restoration, and more metrics that refer to the social dynamic of restoration. They are hoping to start conversations with practitioners about how to re-look at their blueprint and approach on these actions, and Josh has time to talk to folks next Tuesday to Thursday (January 26-28). The blueprint update will be complete a year from now, but they hope to have an idea of these actions in the spring.

**9. North Richmond Horizontal Levee Working Group**—Joe Neugebauer reported that they have secured a grant from the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority for preliminary studies and design on two different options for the levee project – one would be simply a horizontal levee to protect the Wastewater District’s infrastructure, and the second would be a collaborative effort between many stakeholders between San Pablo and Wildcat Creeks. Their preference is for the second option, which would protect more area from sea level rise. They are currently working on a charter for landowners to sign, which would allow access to properties for nonintrusive studies. One that is rolled out, next would be an RFP.

Josh Bradt reported that the stakeholder group meets again next Wednesday, January 27 from 9-10:30am, and it is a gathering of interested parties along the shoreline who are working together for alignment within an 18 month timeframe. The West County Wastewater District has submitted their workplan, and once that’s approved it will go to RFP.

**11. West County Wastewater District**—Joe reported that they have done some rebranding, including a new logo that has a water theme. This also went along with a website redesign, making it more user friendly with information available for the public on who to call if there’s an emergency, as well as pollution prevention.

At their last board meeting they approved a proposed public outreach campaign on fats, oils and grease and so-called “flushable” wipes. They will be using their Facebook and YouTube platforms, including publishing some ads on how to properly dispose of these items. They also approved suspending the fee that they typically charge restaurants for fats, oils and grease inspections. Restaurants have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic, and can’t afford this extra cost. Luckily the District has some unencumbered property tax revenue to cover this cost for a year.

During a recent inspection of their anaerobic digester, they realized that they needed to be completely replaced. In the meantime they have been working with a contractor on site and are now producing a product that can be used to amend soils rather than be sent to a landfill. It is temporary, but they are evaluating options for the future and figuring out a permanent solution.

**12. City of Richmond**—Patrick Phelan reported that they just heard back from the California Natural Resources Agency, and their proposal for Flood Risk Reduction in the Rheem Creek Watershed has been selected to move forward to the next round. They

will have a virtual site visit in April. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Active Transit Working Group presented a sustainable streets master plan combining complete streets transportation with green streets stormwater infrastructure. Lastly, they are looking at another large trash capture device project with CalTrans, but finding a good location has been challenging.

**14. County Watershed Program**— John Steere reported that the North Richmond Watershed Connections project is approximately one month out from a contract with Urban Tilth for rainwater elements, and a few months out from a contract with The Watershed Project for tree planting. They are doing a Green Benefits District feasibility study, and are renaming it a Community Climate Resiliency District to address the climate change resilience component. They have a conference call with the study author today, and the study will be complete by mid-summer. Their Core Creeks Team has been working to address direct discharge for their permit requirements. Approximately 3,000 gallons trash was collected from the area near the Pick and Pull by their team. They are also exploring a possible partnership with SOS Richmond to engage unhoused persons at another level.

**15. Flood Control**— Tim Jensen reported that the site at 500 Pittsburg, adjacent to Wildcat Creek and the Richmond Parkway, recently got their levee closure project in place to satisfy the Army Corps of Engineers. They raised the whole site using fill, and then filled in the gap between that site and the transfer station, connecting it to the Flood Control levee project. Flood Control also ensured that the developer set aside a 40 foot strip for a future pedestrian walking bridge over Richmond Parkway. The land is an easement to the county. Riley and Sarah both said they are encouraging EBRPD to pursue funding the pedestrian bridge project.

The Three Creeks project in the Marsh Creek Watershed reached a huge milestone this week, completing channel widening and moving into the planting phase, and coordination meetings are moving from the earthwork contractor to the tree contractor for the next phase. They will release a video to celebrate this step rather than a ribbon-cutting event. The project includes many natural features and will require less maintenance than similar flood control channels. The trees will be planted by the end of March.

The Lower Walnut Creek project also reached a milestone and went out to bid on January 12, and construction will start this summer. This is a huge wetland and tidal marsh restoration project.

Adele wants to put something together for a future conference of the American Public Works Association (APWA) on how these types of restoration projects are properly maintained. She'd like to include people from the Council and others who have hands on experience.

Ann Riley and The Watershed Project have resources that are designed to help with the maintenance of such projects and may be good resources.

**16. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee**— Peter Mangarella reported that they are still in communication with the Department of Water Resources regarding their grant application, which was approved one year ago. They still do not have a signed agreement. They have been working with the Army Corps and DWR engineers on design review, and had a good meeting in October. They also applied to the CA Fish Passage Forum last summer and hope to hear back soon. In addition, Riley and Joe Sullivan directed some potential environmental mitigations funds from the Water Board to the fish ladder project, which could be used for construction once designs have been approved.

Anthony Falzone agreed that the meeting in October was very positive and encouraging, and he's hopeful that DWR will move the project forward. It sounds like there has been some reassignment of staff within DWR to track COVID-19, which may be contributing to the delay.

**17. Financial Subcommittee**— Anthony Falzone reported that Sarah Puckett has continued to update the [grants document](#). One upcoming deadline is for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Prop 1 grant that is due in February, which might be a good candidate for the Fish Passage Project.

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

**18. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports**—

Rich asked that a new item be added to future agendas regarding sediment management in Wildcat Canyon. Balance Hydrologics will be working on management options for Jewel Lake, and Resource Design Group will be helping with the public access elements of the project.

**19. NEXT MEETING: Thursday March. 25<sup>th</sup> at 10am.**