

MEETING SUMMARY
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
September 16, 2021
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Tim Jensen, Anne Bremer, Anthony Falzone, Jesse Alberto, Jim McGrath, Joe Neugebauer, Joe Smithonic, Juliana Gonzalez, Karineh Samkian, Katie Hart, Nicholas Maderas, Patrick Phelan, Peter Mangarella, Ann Riley, Sarah Puckett, Satoko Mills, Scott Stoller, Gus Amirzehni, Lauren Iverson, Paul Detjens

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

2. CUSP report –Ann Riley reported that, as they continue to meet with property owners adjacent to creeks in Contra Costa County, they are interested in the hydrology, as some property owners point out high water marks. She requested the latest hydrology from the Vale Street gauge, as the latest reading available is from 2016, and 2018-2019 were flood years. Does the County have the latest hydrology?

Tim Jensen offered to follow up, and asked whether the Streamside Management Program for Landowners has been getting requests over the summer. Ann Riley reported that they have been conducting a steady stream of site visits in response to requests. She shared the phone number for property owner assistance: 510-932-2370.

3. Urban Tilth report – Nathan Bickart reported through Anne Bremer that in August, their Watershed Restoration Field Crew finished up their 3-year Wildcat Creek mitigation project, restoring a native riparian plant community along Wildcat Creek just downstream of Fred Jackson Way. Understory coverage by invasive species within the mitigation area was reduced from 89% to 57% and native species coverage increased from 5% to 23% over the 3-year period. One of the most exciting developments was seeing their native plantings reproduce and expand their range beyond the planted areas. Thanks to all those who helped support this transformative project! Even though the mitigation project is ending, Urban Tilth will continue to steward Lower Wildcat Creek in the future, and hope to do more on San Pablo Creek too, as it's right next to the North Richmond Farm.

They've just started their annual Basins of Relations Watershed Restoration training program, which will introduce a new generation of Richmond/San Pablo residents to ecological restoration and environmental justice. Come say hi if you see them out on the Creek!

4. SPAWNERS report – Lauren Iverson reported that they have resumed third Saturday public workdays at Wilkie Creek, as of the last two months. This month, they will be removing ivy. They are also hosting monthly workdays at the El Sobrante Library, which are still private at this time, but they hope to open up to other participants soon.

They hosted a walk at the shoreline with Marilyn Lata last month, and they will be hosting a talk with members from the Horizontal Levee project team next week. They will be tabling at the El Sobrante Library on Saturday September 18 from 2-4pm for Coastal Cleanup Day.

5. The Watershed Project report – Juliana Gonzalez reported that this Saturday (September 18) is Coastal Cleanup Day. The Watershed Project will continue to serve as County Coordinator for Contra Costa County, and will be hosting a smaller in-person event than in past years. Locations for partner-hosted cleanups around the county, as well as do-it-yourself cleanup options, are available online at thewatershedproject.org/coastal-cleanup-2021.

Several big projects coming to life in West Contra Costa County include the North Richmond Shoreline Living Levee project, which had a kickoff meeting in August and site visit in September. The lead agency is Mithun with Environmental Science Associates (ESA), and The Watershed Project will help with community engagement. The design phase is expected to be completed by next spring. The Watershed Project is partnering with the Contra Costa County Public Works Department and Urban Tilth for the North Richmond Watershed Connections project. The Watershed Project's component is planting street trees and implementing an interpretive walking trail. They hope to get into contract after the County Board of Supervisors meeting in October. The Watershed Project is a partner on two additional projects, and partners will share updates later in the agenda: the Wildcat Creek Fish Passage and Community Based Ecological Solutions in the Rheem Creek Watershed.

Satoko Mills continues to do creek water quality monitoring around the county, with support from an intern. The Watershed Project received a grant from the Rose Foundation to replace a meter that had been stolen. The data is uploaded to an online database at <https://app.thewatershedproject.org/>. The Watershed Project has started their in-school programming for the 2021-2022 school year and they hope to have strong partnerships at Richmond High School and Verde Elementary School again this year.

The Watershed Project will receive a Leadership in Sustainability Award at Sustainable Contra Costa's 13th Annual Sustainability Awards Celebration on September 22 at 7pm. Registration information is available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/13th-annual-sustainability-awards-celebration-registration-163934186565>

Tim Jensen: Which creeks is The Watershed Project monitoring?

Satoko Mills: Walnut Creek, Grayson Creek, Alhambra Creek, San Pablo Creek, Rheem Creek, Wildcat Creek, San Ramon Creek, Marsh Creek, and Pinole Creek. Juliana added that a map of sites is available at the website link above.

Anthony Falzone: How was the logger stolen, and are there any lessons learned from that experience?

Juliana Gonzalez: Staff were monitoring the bioswale at the Richmond Greenway at 16th Street, and they left the logger about a block away from them. The lesson learned is never to do monitoring alone, always have another team member there.

6. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed (City of Richmond) – Patrick Phelan reported that they are wrapping up the planning and design phase, which was funded by a California Coastal Conservancy grant. They have just finished a request for proposals to select a consultant for bioassessments needed to apply for permits. They have been awarded nearly \$1.6 million from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to implement project construction! Patrick thanked the Council for their support, especially project partners Anne Bremer, Juliana Gonzalez, Sarah Puckett, Rich Walkling, and Michelle Cordis. The CNRA application included planning and design of upstream green infrastructure; this portion of the proposal was not funded. They hope to go to construction in summer 2023, and the project needs to be wrapped up by spring 2024.

7. Brook Road Fish Passage, Restoration, and Bridge Project (East Bay Regional Park District) – Scott Stoller reported that they are working with Restoration Design Group to design a small fish passage project and new bridge over Wildcat Creek, just downstream of Lake Anza, and including some handicap accessible parking spots in the parking lot. They are currently in the 30% design stage, and looking to wrap up the design sometime next year. They need to look for implementation funding.

8. Sediment Management in Jewel Lake (East Bay Regional Park District)–Scott Stoller reported that they are approximately midway in the feasibility study to reassess the long-term vision for this area of the park. Balance Hydrologics is the consultant, and Restoration Design Group is helping with the public access components.

Scott presented on four alternatives:

- Concept 1: The “do nothing” alternative. Allow lake to transition to a wet meadow.
- Concept 2: Similar to how the lake has historically been managed over the last several decades (dredge the lake periodically, and construct a fishway). This provides the benefit of fish passage for rainbow trout, but lake dredging would need to continue.
- Concept 3: Remove the dam, restore Wildcat Creek channel (recreating a sense of the past). This concept includes the lowest slope for fish passage, and sediment continuity through the system. Public access amenities (trails and bridge) would be added to make up for the loss of the lake as a recreational asset to the community.

- Concept 4: Modify the dam and lake, construct bypass channel to route the majority of flows down Wildcat Creek. This concept balances the needs of recreational enjoyment, and habitat preservation and enhancement.

There will be an opportunity for the public to provide input at a meeting on October 20—Scott will share the flyer via Anne Bremer. They anticipate wrapping up the study early next year, and recommending a preferred concept to the Board at that time, so the Board can authorize the development of design plans.

Link to keep up-to-date on project: <https://www.ebparks.org/JewelLakeStudy>

Public Workshop information: Public Workshop #1 will present the site history, four developed conceptual plans aimed at meeting the project goals, and other work to-date for the Jewel Lake Study. There will be an organized forum for interested public to ask questions and gain clarity around the process, the conceptual plans, and the study overall.

Topic: Jewel Lake Public Workshop #1

Time: Oct 20, 2021 06:30 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ebparks.zoom.us/j/83970764794?pwd=bVgzTzh6d0QxeXRJVmZsc3QwbG12QT09>

Meeting ID: 839 7076 4794

Passcode: 723901

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,83970764794# US (San Jose)

9. SFEP report – Josh Bradt was not present, but Ann Riley reported that she and Juliana Gonzalez have been joining Josh in the working group for the Estuary Blueprint update. Comments should be emailed to Josh at jbradt@bayareametro.gov.

Juliana Gonzalez added that comments must be submitted by the end of the month.

10. North Richmond Horizontal Levee Working Group update (West County Wastewater) –*This agenda item will be removed and consolidated with West County Wastewater’s update in future meetings.*

Joe Neugebauer reported that they were awarded a grant for the preliminary design of two concepts/phases: Phase 1 is the 30% design of a horizontal levee between Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks (bordering the West County Wastewater property). Phase 2 is more of a regional project that would protect most of North Richmond, from the Chevron refinery to Dotson Family Marsh. The project team, which includes Mithun, The Watershed Project, and Environmental Science Associates, did a site walk a couple of weeks ago.

The project team will give a presentation with SPAWNERS at the El Sobrante library at 7pm on September 29 to educate the public on sea level rise impacts and the purpose of a horizontal levee. Joe reported that a North Richmond Horizontal Levee Working Group meeting for stakeholders will likely be scheduled for October 4 or 5, since it's been about six months since the last one. Anyone interested in attending this meeting should contact Joe at jneugebauer@wcwd.org.

Ann Riley suggested the Sanitary District acquire the historic wetland monitoring records of Phillip Williams Associates for marshes along the Richmond shoreline going back to the 1980s and 1990s. Phil Williams of Phillip Williams Associates (now retired) recommended certain areas for horizontal levees and areas to avoid so that fluvial processes from creeks are not cut off from marsh wetlands. Also, there is a proposed Lower Rheem Creek wetland restoration plan authored by Roger Leventhal that should be considered for Dotson marsh area plans involving horizontal levees. Phillip Williams Associates (PWA) and Environmental Science Associates (ESA) were merged as a company (PWA-ESA). Now it is called ESA. So hopefully the PWA library is accessible.

11. West County Wastewater update – Joe Neugebauer reported that an energy and sustainability upgrade project was approved, to construct a facility that will create Class A biosolids that can be land applied. They also received a grant from the California Office of Emergency Services for power outage preparedness and resilience (assessment of pump stations and equipment such as standby generators). For monitoring sanitary sewer overflows, should all creek watersheds be identified individually, or identified all together as the San Pablo Bay Watershed?

Tim Jensen responded that they always look at individual creek watersheds, but West County Wastewater doesn't need to do it that way.

12. City of San Pablo report – Karineh Samkian reported that the Wildcat Creek Restoration and Greenway Trail project is complete, but not yet accepted due to some outstanding punch list items. Once it's accepted, they will have a one year maintenance period for plant establishment. The Rumrill Complete Streets project was given notice to proceed as of August 16, and they anticipate breaking ground soon.

They are looking to issue a design contract in October or November of this year for the replacement of the bridge at San Pablo Ave and 23rd St over San Pablo Creek. They plan to realign the bridge, make the intersection safer and more bicycle/pedestrian friendly, and do some work in the creek.

The City will be hosting a Walk & Bike Broadway event with demonstration projects on Friday, September 24th from 8am-6pm at the intersection of Broadway Ave and 14th Street. They anticipate the largest turnout between about 2-5pm, and invite anyone interested to attend.

13. City of Richmond report – Patrick Phelan reported that the Via Verde Culvert Project is under construction. Information about the project has been shared in the weekly City Manager Report, as well as the Richmond Public Works Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/RichmondPWD>. The City is partnering with Groundwork Richmond for their annual cleanup of Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline for Coastal Cleanup Day on September 18.

14. County Watershed Program report –John Steere reported through Tim Jensen that a contract was awarded to Ghilotti Bros. in June and construction is underway on Fred Jackson Way for the North Richmond Watershed Connections Project. They are widening the street, adding in curb gutter sidewalks and bioswales, and planting trees. They are getting close to contracting with The Watershed Project and Urban Tilth for their components of the project.

15. Flood Control report –Gus Amirzehni reported that the Flood Control Capital Improvement Plan is undergoing an update. They are currently accepting public comment on the Plan and will hold a public hearing on November 8, with expected acceptance by the Board of Supervisors in December. The Plan includes 29 projects throughout the County, including several in the Wildcat and San Pablo Creek Watersheds. The draft plan can be found online at www.contracosta.ca.gov/5736/Capital-Improvement-Program. Written comments should be provided to Gus by October 29 at gus.amirzehni@pw.cccounty.us.

Tim Jensen reported that he intends to schedule a walk-through of Wildcat Creek project sites in the spring.

16. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee report (Trout Unlimited) –Anthony Falzone reported that they are waiting for board approval, which is expected next month. The project will include a community outreach component in partnership with The Watershed Project, permitting, and design (advancing the current 65% design plans to 100% design plans).

Ann Riley: Were the Department of Water Resource’s concerns with the 65% design resolved?

Anthony Falzone: The Department of Water Resources still has a few questions, and the project team is continuing to work with them to explore different options, but the Department of Water Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers are on board.

Peter Mangarella added that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Water Resources Control Board are also interested in the design, and they are hoping to develop a collaborative process to develop a design that everyone will be supportive of.

Juliana Gonzalez offered to post a copy of the 65% design and basis of design report on the Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council website:

<https://www.wcspcouncil.org/subcommittees/wildcat-fish-ladder-subcommittee/>.

17. Financial Subcommittee meeting report – Anthony Falzone reported that the Financial Subcommittee met about a month ago, and added some additional projects to the [tracking spreadsheet](#).

Anne Bremer reported that the spreadsheet is shared online at

<https://www.wcspcouncil.org/subcommittees/financial-subcommittee/>

Next call-in meeting of the Financial Subcommittee: Thursday, October 28 at 10am

18. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports— None

19. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, November 18 from 10am-noon