

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council**  
**February 10, 2022**  
**10am – 12pm**

**Attendance:** Tim Jensen, Anne Bremer, Cathy Bleier, Amanda Booth, Graham Laird-Prentice, Joe Neugebauer, Julia Kernitz, Juliana Gonzalez, Liz Dodge, Nathan Bickart, Ann Riley, Roger Wachtler, Sarah Puckett, Satoko Mills, Tim Mollette-Parks, Ben Weise, Peter Mangarella, Patrick Phelan, Rich Walkling, Sarah Puckett, Josh Bradt

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

**2. CUSP report** – Josh Bradt was not present at the beginning of the meeting, but Ann Riley reported that the Streamside Management Program for Landowners (SMPL) program is now on their 80<sup>th</sup> client. They are working with Contra Costa County Flood Control to facilitate the removal of a debris dam on Wilke Creek. A property owner near Bayview School on Rheem Creek wants to organize their neighborhood to participate in weeding or planting projects. Is anyone working in that neighborhood?

Amanda Booth added that the resident wants to do something on school property, and getting the district involved is challenging. Juliana Gonzalez shared that The Watershed Project has a school greening and restoration plan for Bayview Elementary, and they can provide more information offline.

Tim Jensen asked if CUSP has heard anything about Watershed Day at the capitol?

Josh Bradt said yes, it will be Friday, May 20, 2022. See <https://www.watershednetwork.org> for details.

**3. Urban Tilth report** – Nathan Bickart reported that Urban Tilth hosted their Watershed Basins of Relations training program, with some adjustments for COVID safety, and they hired a few trainees into permanent roles with Urban Tilth’s restoration field crew. They’re working in lower Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks in North Richmond and upper Wildcat Canyon Park in partnership with East Bay Regional Park District, and they finished up a mitigation contract with Contra Costa County for native planting and invasive plant removal in lower Wildcat Creek in North Richmond. They are starting to do some in-person community events, including a Zumba event on the shoreline on February 19<sup>th</sup>. They had a successful Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event on the Greenway and the North Richmond Farm. As Adele Ho reported during the last meeting, Urban Tilth has concerns about warehouse development in North Richmond, specifically one that would shade out part of their growing area at the farm.

Tim Jensen asked if Urban Tilth would be able to share the status of the Contra Costa County grant-funded bioswale project?

Nathan Bickart said that there is some optimism that the project will happen this summer, with planting in fall 2022.

Tim Jensen said he is aware that some delays have been overcome and legal documents are in place and scheduled to be approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 1.

**4. SPAWNERS report** – Lauren Iverson was not present, but Juliana Gonzalez reported that SPAWNERS is moving forward with maintenance at their main sites, including the outdoor school on Castro Creek, where they hope to bring students this year. They are also doing more video projects and continuing to host public meetings.

Anne Bremer reported that SPAWNERS will hold their annual Earth Day event on April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 1-3pm at the El Sobrante Library. If you would like to participate, reach out to Lauren at [lauren.iverson@thewatershedproject.org](mailto:lauren.iverson@thewatershedproject.org).

**5. The Watershed Project report** – Juliana Gonzalez reported that the contract for the North Richmond Watershed Connections project has been signed and approved by the Board of Supervisors. The Watershed Project will be doing planning in the summer and installation in late 2022 or early 2023 depending on the length of the contract (the state hasn't extended it past December at this point). They are working with a landscape architect (Jeanine Strickland) who wants to do a thesis on tree planting in North Richmond as a model that can extend to other communities. They have already installed 15 Hope Gardens (drought-tolerant sidewalk gardens) in North Richmond in prior years and have started planning for the installation of 5 more this year.

The Watershed Project is conducting outreach and education (a story booklet) for the Wildcat Creek Fish Passage project and will also plan interpretation elements. They are currently teaching at Richmond High School about green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, with field trips to local sites (Booker T. Anderson Community Park and the Richmond Greenway). The North Richmond Tap Water Quality testing program has been launched, and will end this summer. The program is part of a regional effort funded by the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program. They are also advancing several other projects as part of the IRWM effort: the Wildcat Creek fish ladder, the North Richmond horizontal levee, North Richmond Green Streets, Rheem Creek Rollingwood reach restoration, and the North Richmond pump station. The latter is the only project that has not advanced at all—The Watershed Project has funding allocated to move the project forward.

For the North Richmond Living Levee project, 27 community members have volunteered to participate in training and advisory groups for the design of the levee. They will start meeting next week and continue to meet for the remainder of the project to inform design decisions.

**6. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed (City of Richmond)** – Rich Walkling reported that the project team just finished a pre-application meeting and will have permits submitted by the end of the month. They have secured \$1.6 million in funding for the final design and implementation from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Urban Flood Protection grant program. Implementation is anticipated for 2023.

Sarah Puckett reported that American Rivers had received a Coastal Conservancy Climate Ready grant to do the project planning with the City of Richmond, Restoration Design Group, and The Watershed Project. This grant ends at the end of February, after which point the project will transition to the CNRA implementation grant.

**7. Brook Road Fish Passage, Restoration, and Bridge Project (East Bay Regional Park District)** – Scott Stoller was not present.

**8. Sediment Management in Jewel Lake (East Bay Regional Park District)** – Scott Stoller was not present.

**9. San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) report** – Josh Bradt reported that the public comment period for the Estuary Blueprint update has closed and they are now finalizing language, identifying/confirming task leads and collaborators, and responding directly to public comments.

**10. West County Wastewater update** – Joe Neugebauer reported that West County Wastewater (WCW) added a zone to their aeration basins that helps with nutrient removal, reduces ammonia in effluent, and allows them to recycle more water (from 60-70% recycled up to about 90%). They are breaking ground this month on a co-generation facility to create energy from the biogas from the anaerobic digesters. They are now processing biosolids in a way that creates a Class A land application product for compost, rather than being sent to the landfill.

Their pollution prevention program focuses on fats, oils, grease, and wipes. One of the biggest causes of sanitary sewer overflows is wipes, and these overflows go to creeks and the bay. Many wipes are also made with microplastics that don't get cleaned in the treatment plant, if they make it that far. California AB 818 will require all manufacturers, starting in July, to clearly state "do not flush" on wipes that are not proven to disperse, and there are requirements to ensure visibility of this message. The Pipes Act is national bipartisan legislation that will require the Environmental Protection Agency to codify flushability standards for wipes—if they don't disperse, they can't be marketed as "flushable." While WCW is pleased with the new legislation, the reality is that people will still flush wipes, and they are working locally to educate people not to flush wipes, even if they're labeled "flushable," using targeted video ads on Facebook and Instagram. In the future, they hope for legislation that will ban the manufacture and sale of any product that does not disperse.

**11. North Richmond Shoreline Adaptation Project** – Tim Mollette-Parks reported that several partners are involved in the project: Mithun is the lead design consultant, Environmental Science Associates (ESA) is the prime engineering partner, The Watershed Project is the lead on community engagement, and NHA Advisors focusing on potential funding mechanisms for future work. West County Wastewater is the grant administrator of funding from the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Measure AA funds.

There are two project scopes: The first is the concept study zone, a 5-mile length of shoreline from Castro Cove and the Chevron refinery at the south to Giant Marsh at the north. Parcel control is fragmented along the shoreline, so the team is aiming to build partnerships for a collaborative response and to develop future projects for grant applications. The goal is to design for multiple benefits, including sea-level rise adaptation, shoreline access, and community amenities. The second scope is a pilot project, which will be advanced to 30% drawings in this phase. This project is a horizontal (living) levee to protect the West County Wastewater facility and provide better trail connectivity with the Wildcat Creek trail staging area. This pilot area is a first step toward implementing solutions for the rest of the shoreline. The project team is continuing to coordinate with the North Richmond Horizontal Levee Working Group, which has been meeting regularly since 2019. It was first convened by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership and is now hosted by West County Wastewater. Mithun is having one-on-one meetings with property owners throughout the range of the shoreline to develop a framework plan.

Project question: How can sea-level rise protections happen in a nature-based way? A horizontal levee is one mechanism. This is a sloped gradient in front of a shorter levee core that allows marsh migration to happen, and provides improved access on top of the levee core. The living levee could potentially tie into existing creek levees. Other nature-based approaches include gravel or sand beaches.

Project question: What are the community priorities for additional improvements? This could include interpretation, education centers, trails, and more. The project is currently in the heart of the community engagement process, which includes a series of educational workshops and three community workgroups focused on the following topics: design solutions, a community survey, and long-term sustainability of improvements (for example, employment).

The project team is trying to put together a comprehensive database of design and visioning work that has already been conducted around the shoreline. They have pulled together several reports and a summary slide deck, which they can share upon request.

Ann Riley said that the Wildcat Creek action plan (available on The Watershed Project's website) should be included.

Nathan Bickart reported that Urban Tilth did a community survey about priorities/visioning for the Wildcat Creek trail a few years ago that might be useful...a little more inland but may be relevant.

**12. City of San Pablo report** – Amanda Booth reported that the Wildcat Creek Restoration and Greenway Trail project has been closed out and opened to the public. There is a lot of interest from the public to do service projects at the creek. Salesian College Preparatory is now doing weekly workdays at the site, Earth Team is doing cleanups in Davis Park, and the San Pablo Rotary Club is doing additional cleanups along creek corridors. The City is excited that this project is spurring engagement, and may hold a community service event in the spring.

The City applied for a Clean California grant. If awarded, the City will pay residents to host their own litter cleanup days in their neighborhood and creek corridors.

The Rumrill Complete Streets project is officially under construction. They are currently in the process of installing a new storm drain system and digging for new bioswales. Sidewalk work will happen next. There is a lot of traffic control in the project area, and the construction will be moving south along Rumrill over the next year.

The City is about to start design work for the San Pablo Bridge project (at San Pablo Ave and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street), and will likely present possible design options to the Council at a later meeting. The City's grant application for the park at 2600 Moraga Road, which is adjacent to Rheem Creek, was not successful, so they are looking for additional funding sources.

Volunteers have been frustrated with trying to get the taproot out while removing fennel and acacia. Fish & Wildlife recommended an herbicide. Does anyone else have experience with cutting roots and applying herbicides in a creek corridor or with the Water Board requirements?

Tim Jensen said that the Flood Control District has had a consultant (Blankinship & Associates) perform this work for them, since they need to have someone trained and certified.

Joe Neugebauer added that there is an herbicide that's certified for application in an aquatic environment, but since it's glyphosate-based (similar to Roundup), West County Wastewater did not feel comfortable using it.

**13. City of Richmond report** – Patrick Phelan reported that the City will be hosting a cleanup event on Saturday, February 26 on Nevin Ave, east of the BART station between 19<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Streets. They will be picking up trash and tidying up the bioswales. The City is in the process of renewing their MOU with The Watershed Project to host cleanups on Meeker Slough. In collaboration with Kids for the Bay, the City submitted a Clean California grant application for toxic soil mitigation at Gorman Park.

**14. County Watershed Program report** – John Steere was not present, but Tim Jensen reported that the North Richmond Watershed Connections project is moving forward, with Urban Tilth installing bioswales and The Watershed Project will be planting trees next winter. There has been a change of personnel at Supervisor John Gioia's office. Kate Rauch retired, Robert Rogers took over her role, and Tania Pulido took over the North Richmond area.

**15. Flood Control report** – Tim Jensen reported that although there was a lot of rain in October all at once, thankfully no facilities were flooded. The rain was slow and steady in December and January, and then suddenly stopped. The region has still not received average rainfall for the year, so they are hoping for more in the next couple of months. There are no active projects aside from the Wildcat Creek Fish Passage.

In lower Wildcat Creek, they usually need to inspect for debris and log jams after heavy flows. Do we need to do a spring workday this year?

Juliana Gonzalez said that the Watershed Project is planning an Earth Day workday with Urban Tilth and others in the area below the fish ladder, and will need additional support with equipment to remove large debris and tires. Given the amount of trash, the cleanup will take a lot of workdays. The Watershed Project is planning to do a trash assessment in May as well.

Cathy Bleier and Peter Mangarella offered to involve volunteers from Golden Gate Audubon Society and Trout Unlimited, respectively. Roger Wachtler offered to involve volunteers from the John Muir chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Amanda Booth offered that the City of San Pablo could coordinate on a Davis Park workday, and send some of the strong young volunteers to the fish passage area. CalTrans is interested in doing a big cleanup workday—maybe we'd want to coordinate on a big West County workday/dump day?

Tim Jensen said it would be great to have more than one workday with CalTrans.

Ann Riley requested the hydrology for the October 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> flood event, which looks to be in the 9-10 year flood recurrence interval, but would like this confirmed.

Tim Jensen replied that Flood Control was overwhelmed by the 500-year flood recurrence intervals seen in central Contra Costa County, and therefore didn't pay as much attention to what was happening in other areas. Tim offered to Riley that she email the County's Hydrologist Mark Boucher for more information.

**16. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee report (Trout Unlimited)** – Peter Mangarella reported that a kickoff meeting for the Department of Water Resources grant for the Fish Passage project is scheduled for next week with Gus Amirzehni, the Project Manager from the Flood Control District. The California Fish Passage Forum work is moving forward, too.

Trout Unlimited has been working with Karineh Samkian at the City of San Pablo to come do some presentations for Salesian College Preparatory students. Joe Sullivan from the East Bay Regional Park District is giving a presentation tonight at 7:00 p.m. about fish passage barriers in Wildcat Creek, and Peter will be talking about the lower watershed. Email [info@johnmuintu.org](mailto:info@johnmuintu.org) for more information.

Juliana Gonzalez reported that The Watershed Project has drafted an initial scope of work with the Confederated Villages of Lisjan, the tribal consultants who will help with the Fish Passage project.

**17. Financial Subcommittee meeting report** – Anthony Falzone was not present, but Sarah Puckett reported that Anthony Falzone, Sarah Puckett, Anne Bremer, and John Steere met on January 27 and reflected on the goals of the Financial Subcommittee. They decided it will be

best to meet on an as-needed basis to discuss upcoming grants, rather than having a standing meeting.

American Rivers has been tracking the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and trying to figure out where the funds are getting distributed. It seems like a lot is coming through grant proposals, to be allocated quickly for large-scale projects. If anyone has interest in discussing this further, please reach out to Sarah. They have put together two fact sheets on where the money will be going:

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act federal funding for non-governmental organizations:  
[https://www.tenstrategies.net/files/ugd/3637a6\\_4b3b20fd64c6447b8dc1236afa2e90ed.pdf](https://www.tenstrategies.net/files/ugd/3637a6_4b3b20fd64c6447b8dc1236afa2e90ed.pdf)  
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act federal funding for State and Local government:  
[https://www.tenstrategies.net/files/ugd/3637a6\\_eab8f63f99ed4b74825c636197515dac.pdf](https://www.tenstrategies.net/files/ugd/3637a6_eab8f63f99ed4b74825c636197515dac.pdf)

Additionally, Governor Newsom's 2021 budget included \$1 billion for the Outdoors for All initiative. American Rivers is looking at tracking where the money will go:  
[https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Access-for-all/OutdoorAccess\\_factsheet.pdf](https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Access-for-all/OutdoorAccess_factsheet.pdf)

Tim Jensen reported that he shared the model of how the Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council keeps track of grants with the Walnut Creek Watershed Council (WCWC). The WCWC is interested in tackling habitat restoration and fish passage in Walnut Creek, and recently became a nonprofit so that they can apply for grants. Others are welcome to join the conversation, as this type of work is new to WCWC. Sarah Puckett and Peter Mangarella expressed interest in being involved.

Sarah Puckett reported that American Rivers' California office is going to hire a staff position focused on dam removal.

**Next call-in meeting of the Financial Subcommittee: TBD (as-needed)**

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

Cathy Bleier reported that the Golden Gate Audubon Society held their first ever bird count in Richmond on January 2<sup>nd</sup> with 180 volunteers. They are looking to partner with others on projects related to bird habitat and education and outreach.

**19. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, April 7 from 10 am-noon**