

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council**  
**April 7, 2022**  
**10am – 12pm**

**Attendance:** Anne Bremer, Mark Boucher, Peter Mangarella, Ann Riley, John Steere, Lauren Iverson, Nathan Bickart, Peter Meyer, Roger Wachtler, Sarah Dicken, Satoko Mills, Michele Mancuso, Cathy Bleier, Juliana Gonzalez

**1. Introductions** – Mark Boucher began the meeting at 10:07 am.

**2. CUSP report** – Ann Riley reported that Sarah Dicken has been organizing the neighborhood around Bayview School for cleanup and restoration work in Rheem Creek. They are moving forward with an encroachment permit from the County to do planting along the creek channel, with plants donated from the Watershed Nursery. They would like to organize a Friends of Rheem Creek group, and the effort would dovetail nicely with the upstream restoration project in the Rollingwood neighborhood. Riley asked if anyone in the group has a contact at the school district to coordinate with.

Juliana Gonzalez shared that, years ago, The Watershed Project was involved with planning a project at that site, along with Golden Gate Audubon. She has the grant submittal that was approved by the school architect at the time, but since it has been so long, the project will need to be reviewed again by the district and all stakeholders. It is not clear whether anyone currently at Golden Gate Audubon has knowledge of the project—Lisa Owens, who transitioned from The Watershed Project to Golden Gate Audubon, transitioned the project to another staff member, who subsequently left.

Amanda Booth shared that the school has not seemed particularly excited to do anything on the site in question, but she hasn't been involved directly. She added that the San Pablo City Council recently approved the Safe Routes to Schools Plan, which includes the potential for improvements to create a more formal entrance to the school along the hillside. The project is not currently funded, but the EPA may be a potential interested funder. She was not sure who to contact, but the school principals may know.

Sarah Puckett asked whether the potential for a trail connecting the field to Wanlass Park is included in the Safe Routes to Schools Plan. Amanda Booth replied that it is included in a different plan, and needs funding. She added that Wanlass Park is owned by the Flood Control District, but the City would be required to do maintenance and operations. An encroachment permit from the Flood Control District would be required.

In terms of a schedule for the planting along the creek channel, Amanda Booth mentioned that creek work is generally not allowed after October 15 due to creek flows.

**3. Urban Tilth report** – Nathan Bickart reported that they are getting ready for an Earth Day event in North Richmond, co-hosted with The Watershed Project and Golden Gate Audubon will be in attendance as well. Their watershed restoration field crew is doing spring mowing at Albany Hill to address invasive grasses before they seed.

Nathan expressed continued concern about the warehouse developments in North Richmond, particularly the Panattoni Development that would shade out the farm. Nathan reported that there may be some progress in getting them to reconsider the height of that building. There are five similarly sized (125,000 square feet) developments within three blocks of the farm. Urban Tilth and the community are concerned about air quality and traffic impacts, and expressed that development of riparian corridors in a low-lying floodplain may be of concern to the Watershed Council. Urban Tilth is advocating for a more holistic approach to the approval process for new developments, which would evaluate the impacts of these buildings on the community and watershed collectively rather than individually.

Amanda Booth shared that the AB 617 Community Meetings that are happening in Richmond, North Richmond, and San Pablo may be a point of synergy for the effort, as those meetings are looking at air quality impacts and making recommendations to the County and cities. Interested parties may email the Air District staff and they can be added to the invite list. Visit the following links for more information:

<https://www.baaqmd.gov/co>

<https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/community-air-protection-program/communities/richmond-north-richmond-san-pablo>

Amanda added that the CEQA process is a great way to look at cumulative impacts of development. The process can be difficult to navigate, but it's a prime time to ask questions and get community input.

Ann Riley asked whether it would be helpful for some of the Council members to meet with John Gioia to discuss concerns, or if the Council could provide a letter of support from various agencies.

Nathan Bickart responded that he is involved and supportive. The moratorium on these new developments has been extended through October, but what happens after that time is unclear. There are questions about what can be done long-term. Nathan offered to check with Urban Tilth staff who are more directly involved with the advocacy effort and see what type of support is needed from the Council.

Juliana Gonzalez shared that there have been other efforts in the area involving zoning, which may present opportunities for additional thought partners and advocates. There is the Urban Greening Master Plan, which is geared toward public health in North Richmond, and the North Richmond Shoreline Adaptation Project, which includes discussion of the zoning plan for the shoreline, how it will be impacted by sea level rise, and what kind of development makes sense.

John Steere added that the Clean Water Act, which specifies that there should be no missed opportunities for green infrastructure, also relates to this issue. He suggested reaching out to Jody London and others who are involved in the Contra Costa 2040 vision.

**4. SPAWNERS report** – Lauren Iverson reported that for Earth Day, they are partnering with the Green Team in El Sobrante to do a creek cleanup event and tabling at the El Sobrante library on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. For more information, see the downloadable flyer:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sFt22-m3AoqAu5Vgbs4yo7N4IOMAFubw/view?usp=sharing>

They are also hosing their Bringing Back the Natives Tour. For more information, visit  
<https://www.bringingbackthenatives.net/registration>

**5. The Watershed Project report** – Juliana Gonzalez reported that they are facilitating a few events for Earth Day in North Richmond. They are partnering with Contra Costa Health Services (Luz Gomez is the lead) to work on their stenciling project from Verde Elementary School to the Shields-Reid Center. The stencil project is a good opportunity to start building the interpretive elements for the North Richmond Watershed Connections project, and they will hire a design firm later for some of the more formal design elements. In a design charrette, the children in the after school program selected water as the main storytelling element (as opposed to bricks or footprints), and they will be hosting events on April 22 (preparation) and April 23 (painting) to paint the basic elements. They will follow up with an artist to complete additional elements of the “long mural” (7 blocks long). On April 23, they will also be hosting a Wildcat Creek cleanup near the fish ladder, in partnership with Trout Unlimited and Urban Tilth.

The fish ladder project will be in full swing this summer, with community meetings and initial designs completed by the end of the summer. Anne Bremer has also been working with Tribal partners from the Confederated Villages of Lisjan, who will be consulting on two storybooks about fisheries and the shoreline. They also plan to produce videos. They have hired a new full-time Community Engagement Manager, Naama Raz-Yaseef, to help with these projects.

They will be conducting several community science projects: trash assessments in Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks after Earth Day, a BMI survey in Wildcat Creek in partnership with Salesian College Prep, and oyster monitoring at Point Pinole with volunteers. They will also be adding a data point on Rheem Creek in the Rollingwood neighborhood to monitor monthly water quality data before and after the restoration project.

The North Richmond Water Needs Assessment ends June 30, and they are advancing five projects that were identified as community priorities: tap water quality, the horizontal levee, the Wildcat Creek Trail, the North Richmond Pump Station (which has already been upgraded), and the Rheem Creek Rollingwood restoration. The community engagement process for the horizontal levee project has been very successful. They have had five meetings so far that have included learning sessions and three community working groups: one to think about initial designs, one to develop and implement a community survey, and one to ensure the project

provides multiple benefits to the community. 25-28 people, including presenters, have attended each meeting.

They are running environmental education programs at Downer Elementary and Montalvin Elementary, and recently completed a program at Richmond High School. Everyone has been excited to go on field trips again!

Peter Mangarella added that The Watershed Project and Trout Unlimited have met with a teacher at Salesian College Prep, and they will be giving an in-class presentation and field trip to the fish ladder.

Anne Bremer added that Salesian College Prep students will also be helping to plant a Hope Garden in North Richmond tomorrow (April 8).

Amanda Booth shared that she is excited about Salesian's involvement with the Wildcat Creek Restoration and Greenway Trail project, and they have been doing weekly cleanups at the site. It shows what restoration projects can do to foster community involvement.

Cathy Bleier added that Golden Gate Audubon also did their Christmas bird count with Salesian.

**6. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed (City of Richmond)** – Rich Walkling reported that they have submitted permit applications. The Fish & Wildlife permit is still waiting for payment, which will come when the next grant (from the California Natural Resources Agency) begins. The City of Richmond has completed negotiations for that grant and they just need to go through the City's approval process. They anticipate getting under contract in May sometime, with construction in 2023.

Sarah Puckett reported that the Coastal Conservancy grant ended in March.

Anne Bremer shared that The Watershed Project and the City of Richmond will be tabling at the Contra Costa College Earth Day event on April 22, and will have materials about the Rheem Creek project, including the storybook.

**7. Sediment Management in Jewel Lake (East Bay Regional Park District)** – Scott Stoller reported via email that there will be a very important, upcoming Public Workshop #2 on Thursday, April 21 from 6:30 to 8pm on Zoom. This will be the last opportunity for public input and it is very important that interested public show up and voice their opinion and fill out the public opinion poll. Council members are invited to pass along the invitation to their networks:

More info and register: [www.ebparks.org/JewelLakeStudy](http://www.ebparks.org/JewelLakeStudy)  
Register for workshop: <https://ebparks.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0ucO-hqDkiEtaonTxbQYhB9BR1fmVGT1ID>

The project team is refining the analysis and continued outreach. Activities since last update include:

- Visit to a similar diversion structure on Los Trancos Creek near Stanford campus gave the District a good sense of what this piece of infrastructure would look like and what it takes to maintain and operate.
- Discuss with Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Presented to the District's Board Executive Committee

They have narrowed the project down to two options (previously referred to as options 3 and 4):

REMOVE DAM & LAKE, RESTORE WILDCAT CREEK:

- Retain and expand riparian boardwalk
- Remove the dam and spillway
- Restore Wildcat Creek as a naturalized ecosystem
- Reliable fish habitat and fish passage
- Interpretive opportunities and elements
- New bridges and creek overlook opportunities

MODIFY LAKE, CREATE FISH PASSAGE CHANNEL

- Retain and expand riparian boardwalk
- Build new infrastructure to manage sediment and flows in Wildcat Creek
- Modify Jewel Lake to create bypass channel
- Fish passage channel reliant on maintenance & bypass operation
- Interpretive opportunities and elements
- Preserves open water habitat

**8. San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) report** – Josh Bradt was not present to give a report.

**9. West County Wastewater update** – Joe Neugebauer was not present, but Juliana Gonzalez reported that the Horizontal Levee Stakeholder Group will be meeting on Thursday, April 28 from 11am-12:30pm on Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86161277356?pwd=bWVOamRDeUtTRXVGZG05Y1JENFFudz09>

Cathy Bleier added that she will share an Important Bird Area Report for the resources library for the horizontal levee project.

**10. City of San Pablo report** – Amanda Booth reported that the Rumrill project is under construction—they are building bioswales, which is causing some traffic delays. They submitted an urban greening application for the park project at 2600 Moraga, right next to Rheem Creek. In the near future, the City will begin to loop people in on the San Pablo Bridge project (at San Pablo Ave and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street), and will reach out to the Council with future updates. A new stormwater permit is coming out, and staff will be busy with applications. The City was

successful in securing a CalTrans Clean California grant for litter pickup in San Pablo, and that program will be starting late summer or early fall.

Juliana Gonzalez added that The Watershed Project is working with Alta and Geosyntec on the Sutter Avenue Green Streets project, and the first community meeting is scheduled for April 21.

Amanda Booth reported that the City will be hosting an Earth Day Wildcat Creek cleanup on April 23, and offered to share the flyer for the event.

**11. City of Richmond report** – Patrick Phelan reported via email that a three-day design charrette for the Richmond Greenway Gap Study will be happening next week.

**12. County Watershed Program report** – John Steere reported that the North Richmond Watershed Connections project is well underway on Fred Jackson Way. 17 street trees should be planted by May, and Urban Tilth will be planting a rain garden in the fall/winter (Adele Ho is the project coordinator). Contracts with The Watershed Project and Urban Tilth have been signed, and the agreement with the Coastal Conservancy has been extended by one year to December 2023. The Watershed Project's component of the project includes interpretive features and an adopt-a-tree program.

For illustrative graphics and updates regarding the North Richmond watershed connections project please go to: <https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/7661/North-Richmond-Watershed-Connections-Pro>

**13. North Richmond Green Streets Corridor** – John Steere reported that the project includes three segments: Parr Blvd from Fred Jackson Way to the Bay Trail by the West County Wastewater facility; Fred Jackson Way from Chesley Ave to Parr Blvd; and Market Ave from Fred Jackson Way to Rumrill Blvd. The project involves improving bicycle and pedestrian access, green infrastructure, and addressing air quality issues. It is identified in the County Stormwater Resources Plan, Green Infrastructure Plan, and Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan, and connects to the North Richmond Watershed Connections project. Partners include The Watershed Project, Urban Tilth, and the community.

The project addresses the issue of not being able to connect the Wildcat Creek Trail to the Bay Trail without an expensive overpass over Richmond Parkway by providing access to the Bay Trail, Rumrill Green Street, and Wildcat Creek Trail. Features include bulbouts, bioswales, protected bike lanes, and street trees. The conceptual analysis was done by Geosyntec about a year and a half ago.

Long-term funding for maintenance is always a challenge, and one possible solution is a Green Benefit District. Sadie Wilson, now with Greenbelt Alliance, produced a Community Climate Resilience Districts report about this type of model. The Green Benefit District would include funding for capital projects, operations, and maintenance. Another model is to request that new developers participate in P3's (public-private partnerships).

Sarah Puckett asked whether the project has a price tag.

John Steere replied that they do not yet, but may be able to get one from Geosyntec. The next step is to produce design drawings.

Juliana Gonzalez shared that the horizontal levee project team is thinking a lot about connectivity from the Bay Trail to the Wildcat Creek Trail. It would be great to share the existing drawings at community meetings, since that connectivity is where the community will have the most opportunity for input.

John Steere added that Contra Costa County and the City of Richmond are looking at a green street project on Goodrick Ave (north of Richmond Parkway is City right-of-way, south is County jurisdiction).

**14. Flood Control report** – Tim Jensen was not present, but Mark Boucher reported that staff are likely getting ready for spring inspections by removing blockages and addressing vegetation management.

**15. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee report (Trout Unlimited)** – Peter Mangarella reported that the Flood Control District has a contract with the California Department of Water Resources for the fish passage and community engagement project. Gus Amirzehni, Peter Mangarella, and others have biweekly calls with the consultant team. They are conducting initial utility surveys and looking at initial permitting strategies, and have reached out to the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, Army Corps of Engineers, and Department of Water Resources to ensure collaboration from the outset. They are starting to do initial hydrologic modeling.

Regarding East Bay Regional Park District's two remaining options for the Jewel Lake project, Trout Unlimited has strong opinions about which option would be better from the perspective of fish passage, and has drafted a letter to the District, which Peter will share.

Ann Riley added that CUSP will also try to get out a letter, since they are concerned about the maintenance required for option 4. They are not sure whether the Park District has adequately explored options for other open water experiences in the area.

Sarah Puckett added that American Rivers is also interested in supporting option 3, and they will try to get a letter together.

Several Council members asked for a letter from the Watershed Council, and Anne Bremer offered to draft the letter and handle the vote electronically by email, after checking with Tim Jensen on the procedure.

**16. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports**— Cathy Bleier reported that a new Friends of Meeker Slough group has formed, and they are trying to get Greg Hardesty from the City of

Richmond to talk to the group about the larger trash management strategy within the city. Golden Gate Audubon has put the Earth Day Wildcat Creek cleanup on their event calendar, and they will also announce it on the Friends of Meeker Slough website.

Sarah Puckett reported that the Wildlife Conservation Board has a lot of funding available, with very broad priorities and no match requirement. There is no minimum or maximum grant amount, but they are aiming for larger planning and implementation grants. There is a rolling deadline, with a short pre-application available on April 18. They want to start venturing into urban areas and disadvantaged communities. There is also a new deadline for the Department of Water Resources in April.

Mark Boucher reported that Michelle Cordis has transferred to the Design Division, and is no longer with the Flood Control District. Ann Riley asked who the SMPL program should be reporting to now, and Mark suggested checking with Tim Jensen.

Sarah Puckett reported that the Walnut Creek Watershed Council meets the first Thursday every other month, and they had an April meeting that conflicted with this one. The Wildcat San-Pablo Creeks Watershed Council should try to avoid conflicts in the future.

**17. NEXT MEETING: June 9<sup>th</sup>**