

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council**  
**June 9, 2022**  
**10am – 12pm**

**Attendance:** Anne Bremer, Tim Jensen, John Steere, Anthony Falzone, Naama Raz-Yaseef, Nathan Bickart, Cathy Bleier, Julia Kernitz, Patrick Phelan

**1. Introductions** – Tim Jensen began the meeting at 10:16 am.

**2. CUSP report** – Tim Jensen reported that CUSP usually has a contingent at Watershed Day at the capitol, which was on May 20<sup>th</sup>. John Steere reported that Ann Riley was interested in expanding on the CORE Creeks Team to address issues that Martinez is having in Alhambra Creek. The CORE Creeks Team engages unhoused folks living in and around waterways in frequent cleanups of their encampments and adjacent areas.

Cathy Bleier asked whether there is a similar program addressing homelessness in Richmond. Anne Bremer shared that Daniel Barth with Safe Organized Spaces (SOS) works in Richmond, and that The Watershed Project recently partnered with SOS on a trash assessment in Wildcat Creek.

Tim Jensen reported that the County is going to extend the contract for the Streamside Management Program for Landowners (SMPL) for three more years. They are hoping for more in-person workshops and field trips as pandemic conditions ease. Julia Kernitz offered to host field trips at Alvarado Park.

**3. Urban Tilth report** – Nathan Bickart reported that their watershed field crew are working at Alvarado and Point Pinole parks restoring monarch butterfly habitat sites. The rain garden project along Fred Jackson Way is scheduled to start construction in the fall. John Steere added that a contract has been awarded for that project, which ended up going \$100,000 over budget, due to the high costs of construction. Construction on the farm is scheduled to start this summer.

Petitions are circulating regarding the warehouse developments in North Richmond. There is the possibility that Panattoni Development may not go through with the purchase of the property immediately adjacent to the farm, and that Urban Tilth may get involved with purchasing that property. John Steere suggested looking into setbacks during early discussions. Tim Jensen added that the Board of Supervisors put a temporary hold on new developments, to allow some of these discussions to happen before it gets too far.

Tim Jensen asked how the produce box program is going, and Nathan Bickart reported that the community supported agriculture (CSA) program provides produce for around 400-500 families per week. Some of the produce is from the Urban Tilth farm and some is from other partner

farms. There are multiple tiers of participation, from families who receive partially or fully subsidized produce to families who can afford to pay more and support the subsidized boxes.

**4. SPAWNERS report** – Anne Bremer reported that SPAWNERS recently conducted their hotspot trash assessments, including the San Pablo Creek site behind the library. Across multiple sites, less trash was found in the creek channels this year than in previous years, which may be due to the large storm event in October that swept longstanding debris out of the channels.

Cathy Bleier asked what the hotspot trash assessment program is. John Steere explained that it's a requirement of the County Clean Water Program's Municipal Regional Permit (MRP). A trash assessment is a cleanup that includes tracking the quantity and type of trash through a tally. The County contracts with The Watershed Project (including SPAWNERS) and the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District to complete the trash assessments annually. The Water Board's MRP requirements will be changing, and they are removing the credit for trash assessments, on the logic that full trash capture devices eliminate the need for cleanups; however, trash capture devices do not resolve wind-blown trash, illegal dumping, or trash resulting from encampments in and around waterways. John added that SPAWNERS has been creative in getting people to adopt spots along creeks and conduct cleanups on their own.

Cathy Bleier shared that Friends of Meeker Slough is trying to coordinate with the City of Richmond to remove larger debris from the slough, and Anne Bremer shared that The Watershed Project is renewing their Memorandum of Understanding with the City to conduct volunteer cleanups at the slough.

**5. The Watershed Project report** – Anne Bremer reported that The Watershed Project (TWP) is having a party to celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on June 30<sup>th</sup> from 4-9pm at Rigger's Loft, on the bay in Richmond. Tickets are on sale for \$35 until Tuesday 6/14, and \$50 afterward. Several attendees shared that they had already purchased tickets.

TWP is wrapping up their hotspot trash assessments, with the final one scheduled for Friday 6/10 on Wildcat Creek near Verde K-8 School. They are also wrapping up tap water quality testing in North Richmond this month. Results show that, for the most part, the tap water is good quality and residents have expressed increased confidence in their tap water. Community workgroups continue to meet for the North Richmond Shoreline Adaptation project, and community members are currently administering a survey that they developed with assistance from the project team.

TWP's education team has wrapped up K-12 education programs for the 2021-2022 school year, and they are preparing for the 2022-2023 school year. The City of Richmond received an Outdoor Equity Grant for after school and summer youth programming, and TWP will be supporting them by leading field trips.

Upcoming projects include the North Richmond Watershed Connections project, which includes additional sidewalk stenciling along Giaramita Street between Verde School and the Shields-Reid Community Center, and the Wildcat Creek Fish Passage project. Anne reported that TWP staff conducted a site visit to the fish ladder with Tribal partners from the Confederated Villages of Lisjan on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**6. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed (City of Richmond)** – Patrick Phelan reported that “Community Based Ecological Solutions in the Rheem Creek Watershed” was the name of the planning project, funded by the Coastal Conservancy, which just wrapped up. The City is currently working on the contract for the CNRA-funded implementation project, “Flood Risk Reduction in the Rheem Creek Watershed.”

Rich Walkling reported via email that the Richmond City Council will likely approve the scopes for American Rivers, The Watershed Project, RDG, and other partners in July after which the group will re-engage with the community to complete the design and aim for construction in the summer of 2023. The City has submitted permit applications to the RWQCB and US Army Corps and has received comments back which RDG will respond to as the first task in the final phase of work. The City has prepared an application for the CDFW Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement and will submit that with the required fees once the final phase of the project is under contract.

**7. Sediment Management in Jewel Lake (East Bay Regional Park District)** – Anne Bremer reported that the WCSP Council submitted a letter of comment supporting Alternative 3, which would remove the Jewel Lake Dam and restore the creek to its original alignment. No one in attendance had heard that the District had made a decision. The Council will request an update from District staff once a decision has been reached.

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

**9. West County Wastewater update** – Joe Neugebauer was not present to provide a report, but led a site visit to the future living levee project site during the afternoon site walk.

**10. City of San Pablo report** – Karineh Samkien reported via email that they have started monitoring the Wildcat Creek Tail behind City Hall, and trained maintenance staff about the site. They are in the process of printing a natives/invasives booklet which Karineh offered to share upon request. They will start their creek maintenance on City properties this summer and send letters to creekside property owners to also check their creek and remove trash, etc.

**11. City of Richmond report** – Patrick Phelan reported that the Via Verde culvert replacement project is wrapping up, and that there is a mitigation project on Rheem Creek downstream of the flood reduction project referenced in item 6. The City approved a small grant-funded contract with Safe Organized Spaces (SOS) Richmond to provide maintenance on the Richmond

Greenway. A large unsheltered community living behind Target was abated last week, and there are still people living in Baxter Creek on the other side of the freeway.

There have been several challenges associated with the latest trash capture project, located near the intersection of Carlson Blvd and Bayview Ave, near I-580. The outfall has three large box culverts, and a junction box where Baxter Creek and the storm facility connection. The City plans to put a diversion wall to keep the creek separate from stormwater pipes, and put the trash capture device in the stormwater side. They just engaged the County's CORE team to engage the unsheltered people living there. The project needs to be done by April or May of next year, and it's going to be challenging to work around the rainy season. The project is funded by CalTrans.

**12. County Watershed Program report** – John Steere reported that the North Richmond Watershed Connections route has been changed from 5<sup>th</sup> Street to Giaramita Street, in order to align with the County Health Department's Safe Route to School, which extends from Verde School to Shields-Reid Community Center, where the students walk to their after school program. The County Health Department, The Watershed Project, and local artists hosted a kickoff event on Earth Day, where volunteers participated in a sidewalk stenciling project. The rain garden plantings along Fred Jackson Way will be done in late June or early July. The contract for the linear rain garden was awarded to Urban Tilth, and this project will be the first example of a nonprofit-maintained rain garden in Contra Costa County. The Watershed Project's portion of the project includes the Safe Routes to Schools stenciling, amenities and interpretive features along the route, and planting street trees in the neighborhood below Wildcat Creek. Neighbors adopt trees and water them.

The County is working with Geosyntec to identify additional opportunities for low-impact development (LID). CalTrans doesn't have enough areas in their jurisdiction to build green infrastructure, so they work with other agencies to build LID within their jurisdiction as mitigation. Some examples are green street projects, which include both stormwater management features and improved bicycle and pedestrian access.

**13. Flood Control report** – Tim Jensen reported that maintenance crews are busy trying to abate weeds by the fire district deadline, which is earlier this year due to the drought. The goats normally used for this purpose are currently overtaxed, so they weren't able to use them this year. Cathy Bleier added that it's possible that costs for using goats increased because of a new law requiring increased payments to herders.

Tim reported that the County is conducting routine standard abatements on San Pablo Creek, and has an agreement with Urban Tilth to do training in San Pablo Creek. The County is also doing maintenance and inspections on Wildcat Creek. The sediment basin downstream of the fish ladder is full, and it's challenging to find funding to maintain it. Coordination between County maintenance crews and volunteers from partners such as Urban Tilth, The Watershed Project, and Golden Gate Audubon, help to increase effectiveness of cleanup efforts.

The fish passage grant from the Department of Water Resources Urban Streams Restoration Program is moving forward in design. The City of San Pablo removes sediment at the site upstream of the railroad, and the County made an agreement with them that allows them to pile their sediment at the staging area next to Wildcat Creek.

Cathy Bleier added that the stretch of Wildcat Creek between the fish ladder and the bay has been added to Golden Gate Audubon's annual Christmas bird count.

**14. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee report (Trout Unlimited)** – Peter Mangarella reported via email that the consultant team has released a draft sedimentation report, which is under review by the Flood Control District and Trout Unlimited. The consultant team is continuing to conduct initial studies including hydrologic modeling, utility surveys, and initial permitting. An kickoff design meeting with the Department of Water Resources and California Department of Fish and Wildlife is scheduled for June 21<sup>st</sup>. The Watershed Project has begun community engagement around the project. Anne Bremer added that The Watershed Project conducted a classroom visit and onsite cleanup with Salesian College Preparatory students, in partnership with Trout Unlimited, and have begun discussions with Tribal partners about a storybook about the creek and other interpretive features and amenities.

**15. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports**— Tim Jensen reported that several agencies are looking at connectivity and gaps along the Bay Trail, including West County Wastewater, East Bay Regional Park District, Contra Costa County Public Works, and Supervisor Gioia's office. Joe Neugebauer is arranging a meeting with various stakeholders to discuss these gaps and the role of each agency in addressing them.

Patrick Phelan reported that a dead whale was found in the Waterline Neighborhood (a new neighborhood near Brickyard Cove).

Nathan Bickart reported that Dr. Henry Clark passed away about a week ago. He was a long-time environmental justice advocate, part of the West County Toxics Coalition, and a member of the North Richmond Municipal Advisory Committee.

Julia Kernitz reported that Wildcat Canyon Regional Park is developing additional volunteer programs and looking for additional partners and connections in the watershed.

**16. NEXT MEETING: Sept 8<sup>th</sup> 10am-noon**