

MEETING SUMMARY
Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council
May 9, 2023
10am – 12pm

Attendance: Tim Jensen, Paula White, Joe Neugebauer, Anthony Falzone, Peter Mangarella, Amanda Booth, Shay Hart, Itzel Gomez, Tania Pulido, Nathan Bickart, John Steere, Anne Bremirez

Via zoom: Chris Lim, Cathy Bleier, Solwazi Allah, Michele Mancuso, Rich Walkling, Naama Raz-Yaseef, Jim McCarty, Roger Wachtler

1. Introductions – Tim Jensen began the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

2. CUSP report – Ann Riley was not present to provide a report.

3. Urban Tilth report – Solwazi Allah reported that the Earth Day cleanup event at Wildcat Creek was amazing, thanks to everyone’s support. During the North Richmond Earth Day event, 15-20 native plants grown by the Watershed crew and a bunch of edible starts from the North Richmond farm were given out.

Currently Urban Tilth is working with the City of Albany on mowing grasses and ongoing erosion control work to stabilize banks. Plant propagation for the Rheem Creek project is getting started. Nathan Bickart added that construction at the farm is scheduled to begin later this summer, on the structures close to San Pablo Creek.

4. SPAWNERS report – Anne Bremirez provided an update. There is a new SPAWNERS coordinator, Mitch Olinger. He has a background in fisheries biology and just started last week. They had a very well attended event at the San Pablo Library on Earth Day.

5. The Watershed Project (TWP) report – Anne Bremirez reported that TWP had a very successful Earth Day. Activities included a cleanup with Urban Tilth of Wildcat Creek, planting of two habitat Gardens (Hope Gardens), and kicking off the Urban Nature trail loop. Naama added that there is an app called PocketSights to provide interpretation of points along the Urban Nature Loop. Members of TWP’s Green Collar Corps (GCC) Youth intern program and UC Berkeley students have been working on content. It is intended to be used while walking the loop using smartphones but you can also preview the route on a desktop computer [here](#).

We are planning a celebration for all participants in TWP’s water quality monitoring program. Date is likely June 22.

The Green Collar Corps (GCC) has been inventorying trees in North Richmond in preparation for tree planting work to begin this fall.

6. Golden Gate Audubon Society (GGAS) report – Cathy Bleier reported that they are partnering with the Richmond Outdoor Coalition to give some classes at Nystrom and Verde Elementary Schools and are also planning nature walks for middle and high school students. The program would provide training for teachers as well.

They will be participating in Crockett’s Shoreline festival in May. The Richmond initiatives committee is interested in working on cleanups near Meeker Slough and partnering with The Watershed Project and others. They are interested in starting partnered bird walks, targeting specific partners such as Friends of Pinole Creek and SPAWNERS. Regarding the North Richmond Living Levee Project, they have a committee available to provide letters and would like to show a presentation to the WCSP, will collaborate with Naama from The Watershed Project. Considering some joint events with Rich City Rides, biking and birding.

7. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed (City of Richmond) report– Bid set documents have been submitted to the City of Richmond. Richmond has a backlog of 60 projects, are hopeful that construction can begin in fall but may have to be pushed back to next spring.

8. East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD) – No one from the Park District was available to provide a report.

Tim Jensen commented that Supervisor John Gioia participated in a bike ride along the Wildcat Creek trail that goes under Richmond Parkway and it was impassable. It is a priority to make this trail accessible—it is maintained by the Park District.

Peter Mangarella reported that the Brook Road crossing project is moving forward, but the Jewel Lake project is not progressing, despite letters sent. The project would remove the dam spillway. There is a lot of community interest in restoring and maintaining the pond.

9. West County Wastewater (WCW) report – Joe Neugebauer reported that the North Richmond Living Levee (NRLL) project dovetails with the Richmond Parkway crossing, and the NRLL project is moving ahead. They are wrapping up Phase I--goal to reach 30% design phase by August. Additional funding being sought to move design forward. They applied to Office of Planning and Research (OPR) for an Adaptation Planning Grant. The grant would fund future phases of the collaborative shoreline plan that includes a 5 mile portion of the shoreline and create a governance structure that is inclusive of community members and other stakeholders. Will be informed by mid-May if funding was granted for the collaborative planning process. Partners were thanked for helping with the OPR grant submission.

WCW hosted an Earth Day trash cleanup event on April 30 in collaboration with **EBRPD** at Alvarado Park. The event was successful and they plan to reprise it in future years.

On May 18 100 people from the Regional Water Quality Control Board will be touring the wastewater facility and the new clean and green project improvements that are underway.

These new upgrades will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90%. They will be discussing the NRLL project and use of wastewater in collaboration with EBMUD. These improvements were funded by loans.

On June 17 they will be tabling at the Juneteenth event in Nichol Park.

10. City of San Pablo report – Amanda Booth reported on the Rumrill bioswales project, grinding and paving are underway now, will be finished by late summer, closing out in the fall.

The Sutter Green Infrastructure project has a one-year delay due to PG&E approval process being delayed.

Wildcat Creek trail monitoring season is beginning in June, extra erosion occurred due to heavy rains and some repairs may be needed.

Trash load reduction goals—contracting with a specific group to design measures to meet the 2025 zero trash target including additional trash capture devices and ordinances targeting businesses, homeless services, and residential outreach to reduce trash in addition to providing neighborhood pickups in targeted areas. Spending about 10% of the city's budget on this issue.

2600 Moraga Park Project received funding from CNRA Got about half of the requested funding, will use matching funds from the city. Design phase through 2024, and construction likely in 2025. Will want to partner with those working on the Rheem Creek project. The site includes a burnt down school that will be transformed into a park.

Erosion on private property has been worse this year. Informing people about SIMPL program to repair damage to their property.

Rheem Creek flooding was very significant this year, would like to work on vegetation removal through the concreted portion to improve flood capacity. Tim Jensen offered to work with the City on this.

There is a job opening for an Engineering Tech Dvision position.

May 18-- work day at the library

EPA released bipartisan infrastructure bill (BIL) funding, the City may apply. Need additional applicants.

11. City of Richmond report – Mary Phelps was not present to provide a report.

12. Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) report – Chris Lim reported the RCD went on a field trip with Prospect Sierra 2nd graders, and fly fishermen went along. Countywide

Earth Day events included a cleanup in Rodeo and in Supervisor Glover's district. Friends of Pinole Creek hosted a cleanup and bird walk event with GGAS.

May 20 is the Crockett Shoreline festival.

13. Contra Costa County Watershed Program report – John Steere reported that Contra Costa County has been assessing green infrastructure assets. Goodrick Avenue in North Richmond has been identified as a great location for a green streets project that would connect to the Bay Trail at Dotson Marsh on the North as well as Parr Blvd on the southeast.

Also proposing a North Richmond Green Streets corridor that would connect Rumrill to Market Ave in the City of San Pablo.

Fred Jackson Way in North Richmond has the largest green infrastructure project in the county.

North Richmond Watershed Connections Project--Mentioned the leadership provided by The Watershed Project to design a community-based model to identify street tree planting areas and residents willing to maintain the trees. The model would include a maintenance model for 40 years. The county will be developing a street tree plan to ensure survival in perpetuity.

On Earth Day there was a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Urban Nature Loop beginning at Verde School and moving down Giaramita to the Shields-Reid Center. This is a great example of how nature can provide a community connector, especially in a disadvantaged community. PocketSights app will provide storytelling along the route. The NRWC project received an award from Greenbelt Alliance for nature-based climate adaptation solutions. A video will be filmed in North Richmond featuring many of the partners who worked on the project including Urban Tilth, The Watershed Project and others.

Amanda Booth asked about Air District (BAAQMD) plans to improve air quality and how those goals could dovetail with tree planting efforts, especially from a funding perspective. This is a recurring funding source.

Naama brought up the presence of dead trees in North Richmond along Wildcat Creek, will likely see them on the walk. These include trees that were planted and didn't survive. Should keep in mind which species are appropriate for the county's tree list. Cathy added that there are many dead trees throughout Richmond—this is a big problem.

Tim Jensen added that dead trees can be beneficial in a riparian setting. There is a flowchart used to evaluate these situations.

14. Flood Control report – Tim Jensen reported that the FCD applied for a Watershed Opportunities grant from the EPA's water quality improvement fund. The San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) will be the main applicant and will be in charge of the grant writing and management. Now in the information gathering phase. This will be an improvement plan for

the entire Wildcat Creek watershed. Many things fit under this umbrella, such as sediment management.

Both Wildcat and San Pablo creeks were designed by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). San Pablo creek was designed to have sediment flow through, but Wildcat was designed to trap sediment in the flood control basin. Now we're interested in having the sediment go all the way to the marsh, since sediment accretion there is desirable. Having an overall watershed plan is another possibility. The grant term can be 4-7 years, and can include both planning and some implementation.

Naama added that The Watershed Project is meeting collaboratively with different partners including EBRPD and WCW who are interested in the Wildcat Creek watershed. It is helpful to meet with a wide range of people to get many different perspectives that help inform a comprehensive plan.

There are some concerns about high water levels in lower Wildcat Creek this past winter. We didn't have a 100 year flood, yet water levels were still quite high. A topographic survey will be taken and modeled in the computer to understand what was causing high flows.

Amanda offered a letter of support for the EPA grant.

15. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee report (Trout Unlimited) – Peter Mangarella reported that the Department of Water Resources (DWR) is in agreement with the design and the project is moving past the 65% design phase. Anthony Falzone from FlowWest commented that a few tweaks will be added including installation of bollards to trap trash before it enters the fish ladder, and some depth and velocity modeling tweaks to the bottom of the fish passage device. The fish ladder will be redesigned to have a series of step pools and rock weirs, instead of a baffle system. One question is determining the optimum slope. There will be two distinct slopes, one for the upper portion, another for the remainder that will allow water to enter overflow structures during high flows. The project is pausing after hitting this major milestone of DWR approval. Positive feedback was received from ACOE, RWQCB. An implementation grant was applied for by the County Flood Control District (Gus Amirzendi). There is a lot of support and momentum for the project.

Naama added that The Watershed Project had a successful Earth Day event doing outreach for this project. This connected directly to the creek cleanup during which 900 pounds of trash were removed. Both Supervisor Gioia and the Mayor of Richmond were at the Earth Day event. TWP wrote a storybook about the fish passage project that has been read to Verde students and families. There will be additional design charettes including community members to get more feedback on the design.

Amanda asked if the design was taking into account upstream impacts, namely a storm drain pipe filling up with sediment annually in City of San Pablo. She requested seeing the design plans during a future meeting.

Anthony commented that the current plan is to remove some of the rip rap upstream, lowering elevation and reducing sediment upstream of the Rumrill bridge.

Naama suggested this information is available on a recording of a [webinar](#) on Youtube. The fish passage discussion starts at minute 4:00 and ends at minute 21:00.

16. Earth Team Report – Itzel Gomez reported that they have been working with Richmond High School students to do litter assessments along 23rd St close to old town San Pablo near Wildcat Creek. They have also done water quality assessments.

At Pinole Valley High School they're also doing cleanups along Pinole Creek. Earth Team works in the Marsh Creek Watershed as well.

Joe Neugebauer asked if she could share the 23rd street water quality monitoring results.

17. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports— Tania Pulido invited everyone to Verde Elementary School's Learning Celebration on May 31, 3-6 pm. Verde School Principal Eric Verprauskaus is leaving the school after 9 years. This will be his last event. Tabling partners are welcome.

Tim Jensen invited everyone to attend the site visit of Wildcat Creek today beginning at 1 pm. Meeting at Wildcat Creek near Verde Elementary School. Plans are flexible, could include a tour of fish ladder, but will include a walk west along the trail to Fred Jackson Way to hear about the rain gardens and possibly a drive to the Wildcat Marsh Staging Area.

Contra Costa County has supported this group for many years. Is there an interest in having a rotating chair? It would give others an opportunity to act as chair.

It was suggested that the duties of a chairperson be discussed at the next meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:35 am.

18. NEXT MEETING: Tuesday September 12, most likely virtual

Amanda Booth mentioned that meeting facilities are available in San Pablo. Joe Neugebauer offered their space also at the WCW facility.

Future meeting dates: November 14 or December 12.