

Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council

September 12, 2023

10am – 12pm

Attendance: Tim Jensen, Paula White, Sarah Puckett, Cathy Bleier, Emma Koeze, Jim McCarty, Lucas Barrera, Scott Stoller, Rich Walkling, Chris Lim, Solwazi Allah, Naama Raz-Yaseef, Juliana Gonzalez, Chris Brookens, Anthony Falzone, Scott Stoller, John Steere

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

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

3. Urban Tilth report – Solwazi Allah reported that the Basins of Relations fall program has started, 8 people are involved in the program to learn about watersheds and native plants. There will be a Coastal Cleanup event at Pt. Molate Beach Park from 9 am -noon. Greywater installations will begin next year, manager hired to lead the effort. Trial installations at staff homes before rolling out to the public. Goal is to provide greywater irrigation services to the community.

4. SPAWNERS report – Juliana reported on their behalf that they will be participating in the El Sobrante Stroll and at a Coastal Cleanup Day event at the El Sobrante Library on September 23.

5. The Watershed Project (TWP) report – Juliana Gonzalez reported that Coastal Cleanup Day is coming up, and many sites around the county area participating. Paula White is coordinating the event for the county, reach out to her if you need supplies. TWP will be hosting an event at Shimada with Supvr John Gioia. We are excited to be doing more cleanups with SOS Richmond. Thinking of expanding our partnership with them to include other work in the North Richmond Area. We will be planting trees in North Richmond to finish the North Richmond Watershed Connections project. We will be presenting an Urban Greening Master Plan to the Sustainability Commission to protect heritage trees. Site visit with the xxx visiting the Urban Tilth site. In October we will host a guided tour of the Urban Nature Loop walk through North Richmond, available through the pocket site app and on TWP's website. Rheem Creek project construction will begin soon to prevent future flooding. TWP's Youth interns in partnership with Urban Tilth will be planting along the riparian corridor. Beginning a collaboration with Verde Elementary at multiple grade levels 2-7. We will be launching a storybook about Wildcat Creek and the Fish Passage, Kiyana and the Wildcat Creek. There is an online flipbook version of the book that has Chochenyo words pronounced by a native speaker.

We are collaborating with partners on the North Richmond Shoreline Adaption Project, submitting grants.

Naama added that there is a Spanish version of the book also. The Fish Passage project was another grant submitted recently.

6. Golden Gate Bird Alliance (GGBA) report – Cathy Bleier reported that they had changed their name recently (formerly Golden Gate Audubon), and everyone is pleased. They are going to be partnering with TWP hosting a Meeker Slough cleanup adjacent to The Watershed Project's cleanup. They are offering a bird walk from 8-9 am prior to the event. They are expanding work with middle and high school students, including at Nystrom. working with YES on family bird walks on Saturdays this fall. Also offered a bird walk to the staff. GGBA is offering this to other staff of partner orgs, such as Urban Tilth. Have started doing bird trips in Spanish. They reconnected with Earth Team, took a group of SPAWNERS volunteers on a bird walk In Pinole. If anyone is interested in a bird walk, reach out to Cathy. Could be a fun staff event.

7. Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed (City of Richmond) report— Rich Walkling reported that construction is imminent; during construction phase, RDG’s involvement fades away. Pre-construction meeting tomorrow, gives us just enough time to get the project done before the rains. Sarah Puckett added that there is a lot happening, UST services has been hired to do the construction. TWP outreached to the community prior to a bilingual community meeting and there was good attendance and a lot of support from the community. Wendy Wellbrock has done an amazing job making sure this project gets underway. Tim Jimsen complimented all the partners who have come together to make this happen

8. San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) report—Liz Juvera reported that on Aug. 31 SFEP submitted a grant to the EPA water quality improvement fund. Many partners including The Watershed Project, Urban Tilth, West County Wastewater, Contra Costa County Flood Control District, Flow West, East Bay Parks, and Ann Riley created a grant with a three-pronged approach, that will create a more wholistic approach to watershed planning and restoration along the entire Wildcat Creek watershed while also designing plans to address better access to shoreline recreation for adjacent communities. The first component of the grant is revising the original 2010 WRAP to expand into a watershed-scale, comprehensive plan to address existing conditions that negatively affect ecosystems, wildlife, and communities. The 2nd part of the proposal will address critical restoration needs including removal of over-sedimentation of the creek channel (alongside Verde School) which currently causes flooding and eliminates dry season habitat for aquatic wildlife. West County Wastewater will host the sediment removed (40K CU) from the creek channel in a newly decommissioned sludge pond, with the hope that the sediment can be used to build the North Richmond Living Levee project. This sludge pond decommissioning is connected to the Clean and Green updates taken on by WCWD and will supply over \$6M in needed match for the proposal. The 3rd part of the proposal focuses on designing pedestrian access from the fish passage to the Bay Trail, including overpasses over the Railroad tracks and Richmond Parkway. Riley contributed a wealth of information and historical knowledge to the project. Total grant requested was \$6.2 million, which was matched by WCW. Total amount in the EPA fund is \$25 million.

Tim Jensen complimented Liz and James for their stellar management of the process.

Juliana also thanked the EBRPD for agreeing to advance the redesign of the Richmond Parkway overpass. Naama also thanked the council for coming together to work on these resources so in need of updating and improvement. Hopefully in the next decade we’ll see profound changes all along the Wildcat Creek watershed from Jewel Lake to the shoreline. Liz will be able to provide an update by the end of October.

9. East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD) – Scott Stoller reported that there are several projects in the Wildcat Creek watershed. Sediment basin in Wildcat Creek near the golf course will be dredged, invasive removal project near the botanical gardens. Looking for funding to close out gaps. Study of the future of Jewel Lake is ongoing. 2024 is the year to finalize study and determine the direction of Wildcat Creek. Cathy asked if there is a public process for Jewel Lake planning. Scott replied that there have been some public meetings, there is one more presentation scheduled.

10. West County Wastewater (WCW) report – Joe Neugebauer reported that the Wildcat Creek trail north of the Wildcat Marsh was closed to accommodate truck traffic for a concrete repair. Clean and Green project constructed a bioswale and decommissioned sludge fields to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90%. Cathy sent information about other youth serving partners looking for environmental education opportunities at the wastewater treatment plant, will be starting possibly in December, more likely early 2024. Juliana mentioned that while the trail is closed it might be a good idea to install an interpretive sign along the trail. Naama will follow up. Repair will likely be wrapped up by the end of the week.

Sept.26–WCW, Mithun, Tania Pulido and Juliana will report on the levee project to the Richmond City Council. It will be helpful to have their support to move the project forward.

November–Next quarterly meeting of the stakeholder group meeting for the living levee project. Will be looking for presenters to discuss what they’re working on , especially as they intersect with sea level rise.

11. City of San Pablo report – Itzel Gomez reported via email: we’re hosting our annual Wildcat Creek Cleanup event

with Kids 4 the Bay on Saturday, October 14th at Davis Park. (See attached flyer)

Our maintenance crews have begun the annual creek cleanup and maintenance along Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks. They're working on clearing some fallen trees and overgrown vegetation in the creek channels and removing encampments and other trash. All Creekside property owners in San Pablo received a letter earlier this month notifying them to clear debris from the creek banks and channel prior to October 15th. Desilting will also be happening in Wildcat Creek starting next week.

We're working with our consultant, Sequoia Ecological Consulting, in scheduling a Willow Staking event this Fall. Folks from John Muir Trout Unlimited reached out and are interested in volunteering. We'll share a date with the group as soon as we have one on the calendar.

12. City of Richmond report – Mary Phelps was not present to provide a report. Paula will add Wendy Wellbrock to the mailing list.

13. Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) report – Chris Lim reported that they're interested in doing a regular community work day on the Richmond Greenway, and potentially a native oyster/eel grass restoration at Pt. San Pablo Harbor. Emma Koeze mentioned that the Pinole Coastal Cleanup Day event is happening on Sat. Sept. 16 at Bayfront Park, in partnership with the RCD and the City of Pinole. A sign up link was posted in the chat. Cathy Bleier asked about the location of the proposed eel grass location, and it is at the Point San Pablo Harbor, north of Pt. Molate Beach. Restaurant plus public art is there. Juliana mentioned that TWP had done some oyster monitoring there in the past. Cathy is interested in hearing about all of the partners' projects that are mentioned during council meetings. Juliana suggested that a quarterly announcement of activities from the WCSP could be helpful.

14. Contra Costa County Watershed Program report – John Steere reported on the accomplishments of the NRWC. It is nearing completion. The FJW raingarden of Urban Tilth has been completed, The Watershed Project has created an "Urban-Nature loop" trail constituting the "walkable watershed" portion of the grant that incorporates interpretation of creek plants and animals on medallions to be installed on the sidewalks that demarcate the Safe Routes to School route from Verde School to Shields-Reid Park. The Urban Nature loop walk includes rich information about the history, culture and ecology of the North Richmond area that will be conveyed by QR codes along the route and that will be a great educational resource to connect community members to their watershed. TWP is identifying residents who will adopt trees that shall be planted in their front yards. This will be a very important boon to increase tree canopy coverage to the target of 30%. There is a concern over the preservation of "heritage trees" located on Las Deltas housing sites that will be redeveloped. It is also challenging to find Street tree locations in the Public Right of Way for lack of sidewalk strips in many portions of the route.

Juliana suggested that the council could be a group that provides feedback on the Urban Greening Master Plan. In future potentially a TWP staff member could report on how the tree inventory was compiled and how it will be maintained, including implementing a toolkit that can be adopted in other neighborhoods. John added that we are at an important juncture. The Urban Greening Master Plan is a first for the County and will likely be approved by the Board of Supervisors as part of a countywide effort to help implement the upcoming general plan revision.

John also mentioned that the "North Richmond Green Streets corridor" remains at a concept level, for which grant funding will be pursued, especially if the SFEP grant noted and item 8 is not fully approved to include a bridge over the railroad tracks and the Richmond Parkway. He will bring it before the West County Transportation Authority – bicycle and pedestrian subcommittee in November to receive their endorsement for the proposed project.

15. Flood Control report – Tim Jensen reported that they're excited to participate in the grant led by SFEP. doing normal maintenance activities, getting ready for winter. On the Wildcat Creek at Richmond Parkway Jonathan Owens from Balance Hydrologics will be doing some quick surveying on vegetation maintenance needed to make sure there is

adequate flow; county crews will do suggested maintenance.

16. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee report (Trout Unlimited) – Anthony Falzone reported that the design was approved by Department of Water Resources (DWR), moving to 70% design, including remodeling the sediment basin and upstream hydraulic modeling to ensure that fish passage criteria are met. Goal is to have the plans ready within two months, County has been active in fundraising for the project. DWR contributed additional funding for the design phase. Have partnered with TWP on components of the project (storybook). Naama reiterated that the next phase of the project is to redesign the Wildcat Creek trail area near Verde School.

Tim Jensen adjourned the meeting at 11:23 am.

18. NEXT MEETING: Tuesday November 14, virtual