

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council**  
**November 14, 2023**  
**10am – 12pm**

Tim Jensen began the meeting at 10:06 a.m.

**Attendance:** Tim Jensen, Paula White, Roger Wachtler, Peter Mangarella, Itzel Gomez, Joe Neugebauer, Emma Koeze, Jonathan Owens, Audrey Davidson, Lucas Barrera, Cathy Bleier, Martha Berthelsen, Naama Raz-Yaseef, Peter Guerrero, Rich Walkling, Jim McCarty, Juliana Gonzalez, John Steere

1. **CUSP report** – Ann Riley was not present to provide a report.
2. **Urban Tilth report** – Lucas Barrera reported that the Basin of Relations group is working on doing some plantings along with the watershed apprentices. This coming Sunday there will be a nature and gratitude hike along Wildcat Creek. Construction is continuing on the Urban Tilth farm, including farm greenhouse, native plant nursery and more. Next year greywater installations in the Iron Triangle will be— they are free to residents, funded by a grant program. Tim added that flood control staff has partnered with Urban Tilth on plantings before and are working on getting into contract with them to help out with projects.
3. **SPAWNERS report** – Martha Berthelsen reported that SPAWNERS is continuing Wilkie Creek workdays and has a school trip planned there in January. The site is flat and safe for children. Have hosted both Earth Day and Coastal Cleanup Day events in El Sobrante that have removed a lot of trash. El Sobrante stroll is an important fall outreach event in the fall. Martha mentioned that homeowners often don't know about how to handle debris in the creek that is their responsibility, but they don't have the means or expertise to deal with it. Tim responded to the concern that homeowners have about these needs. The FCD is exploring other models being tried and will continue to provide updates. So far there is the SMPL program available to provide nature-based solutions.
4. **The Watershed Project (TWP) report** – Naama mentioned that TWP is meeting to discuss a redesign of the Fish Passage Project with Mithun and Flow West. The North Richmond Watershed connections project walkability components have been completed, and the tree planting components have nearly been finished. Juliana added that TWP is partnering with Contra Costa County to develop a framework to combat sea level rise in selected neighborhoods. Juliana requested a letter of support for the project from the council for a grant from the California Strategic Growth Council called the Resiliency Collaborative Coalition. Ryan Hernandez is the county agency representative. The project proposal will include the following communities: Baypoint, Montalvin Manor, and North Richmond (lower wildcat creek watershed). TWP previously met with numerous stakeholders and applied for this grant last year and was invited to reapply

this year. Tim asked the council to make a motion, and Peter Mangarella made a motion for the council to provide a letter of support for the shoreline resiliency project. Cathy Bleier seconded the motion. Joe Neugebauer requested more information about the organization providing the grant, and added that the West County Wastewater district could provide a letter of support also. The motion passed with no objections.

5. **Golden Gate Bird Alliance (GGBA) report** – Cathy Bleier mentioned that the mission of her committee is to build new networks in the Richmond area and to increase access to birding and other natural resources to residents. They collaborated with The Watershed Project on Coastal Cleanup Day, and with YES Nature to Neighborhoods. They are working with the Richmond Outside Coalition to take High school students birding and are working with Urban Tilth also on birding events. GGBA also works with local agencies on restoration projects, and there is a potential for collaborating on the Rheem Creek restoration project, and other partnerships.
6. **Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed (City of Richmond) report**– Paula reported on Wendy Wellbrock’s behalf that the portion of the creek downstream of the Fordham Street Bridge was completed, including vegetation removal and grading. A storm drain pipe and outfall structure at Greenwood Court will be completed in the next few weeks. The remaining upstream portion of the project will be completed next dry season, after May 1, 2024. The construction company did some clearing of the upstream section but no grading of the creek. Urban Tilth will plant the completed downstream portion of the project this winter. Rich Walking added that the project got a late start and encountered a few hurdles, but that flooding will hopefully be reduced even though the restoration is only partially complete.

Naama added that there was a kickoff meeting of a sediment monitoring project in the lower Rheem Creek watershed managed by SFEI project to monitor sediment. This project also includes a watershed in the North Bay, and the monitoring will take place in the San Francisco Bay.

7. **East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD)** – Scott Stoller mentioned that they’re working on a bridge removal project in the upper watershed in Tilden Park; they’re currently looking for grant funding and it is likely to begin 2025. They are also working on a project in the botanic garden, also likely to begin in 2025. The 2020 feasibility study for the Jewel Lake project hasn’t yet been finalized; they are still reviewing community feedback. There are two strong options but no clear winner between the two. Peter Guerrero asked about the dieback of trees along the Wildcat Creek watershed. He also asked about the status of the Wildcat Creek Landfill Loop trail and mentioned that it doesn’t feel safe. He feels unsafe there because it is little used and wonders whether the Park District has any monitoring there. He also mentioned that fencing in Tilden Park along the creek is deteriorating. Scott responded that revegetation work in the

watershed is ongoing and also mentioned that the fence has been replaced in many areas and is being actively maintained. The Wildcat Marsh staging area close to the bay often is closed off due to safety concerns. There is not enough staff to have someone there all day. Scott will put Peter Guerrero in touch with the people who are responsible for these assets. Peter Mangarella mentioned that they're doing monitoring in the upper watershed of Wildcat Creek and took a look at Jewel Lake. There was a major landslide there, and the small diversion channel that used to provide water downstream has failed. Since the Wildcat Creek watershed is known to be landslide prone, Peter wondered if there is any monitoring of the concrete channel. Scott responded that they are monitoring that and are hoping to fold that into the Jewel Lake project (bank stabilization effort). Naama added to the discussion about safety in the lower watershed and is interested in continuing the discussion and improving equity and access to natural resources to residents in the lower watershed. Cathy asked if there are any plans to open the bathroom and be able to use these areas. Currently the Park district warns people not to leave their cars there. Scott will take these concerns back to the district, Peter Guerrero added that this is a longstanding concern, and that when parks are not well maintained, they continue to deteriorate, and lead to vandalism, trash build up, and other problems.

- 8. West County Wastewater (WCW) report** – Joe Neugebauer reported that the North Richmond Levee and collaborative shoreline project will address safety issues near the Wildcat Creek trail along the wastewater treatment plant. Specific items include providing boardwalks, improving connectivity on the Bay Trail by collaborating with parcel owners along the trail. Hoping to get a second round of funding from the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (SFBRA) that will include funding for community engagement and other amenities. They applied about a month ago and are hopeful. They're working on 60% designs for the main portion of the levee and are at 30% design for the north and south sections. Conversations with the County, the Watershed Project, and other stakeholders to address sea level rise and flooding are ongoing. The Clean Green project is progressing and is about 75-80% complete. It will eliminate 85-90% of greenhouse gas emissions. They are building a thermal drying system to treat solids to 80% dry that can then be used locally. They are the first agency in the Bay area to use this technology. They will also recover methane gas for use in powering their systems. They are expanding their equalization basins to increase capacity to prevent overflow during heavy storms. They are gearing up for the holiday season, planning to do outreach to the public to not let grease go down the drain to prevent clogs.
- 9. City of San Pablo report** – Itzel Gomez reported that the city of San Pablo had a willow stake planting event behind City Hall, and planted 88 willow stakes with the help of Earth Team and Peter Mangarella. Every creekside property owner received a guidebook to help inform them about their responsibilities and provide resources. Next summer they're planning to update the resources listed which are about 10 years old now. They are launching the neighborhood champions pilot program to help reduce

trash. Participants will receive \$2000. A flier for the program will be included with the notes.

- 10. City of Richmond report** – Wendy Wellbrock sent an email about the Rheem Creek project that Paula summarized above.
- 11. Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) report** – Emma Koeze reported that they are hiring an agriculture resource technician, a lead eco-steward technician, and an Americorps member to do outreach and education and provided a link to the job postings: <https://www.ccrd.org/opportunities>. Alhambra Watershed is hosting a pollinator talk on Thursday, <https://www.friendsofpinolecreek.org/events/talk-pollinators-in-pinole-creating-habitat-that-helps> and Friends of Pinole Creek is hosting a couple of events linked here: a <https://www.friendsofpinolecreek.org/events/pinole-community-cleanup> Emma's linked in profile is here: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/emmakoeze/>
- 12. Contra Costa County Watershed Program report** – John Steere mentioned that the North Richmond watershed connections project is wrapping up. He complimented project partners such as The Watershed Project on The Urban Nature Loop and tree planning effort, along with Urban Tilth with their bioswales portion of the project. About 50 funders and other stakeholders attended a tour of the bioswale feature. There was also a public tour of the project included as part of the Contra Costa County Watershed Symposium field trips. John also complimented the Resource Conservation District on this amazing event. The purpose of this project is to help connect people to their watersheds, and have a greater understanding of how watersheds are a part of their daily lives and will serve as a model for future projects in other communities.
- 13. San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) report**—Liz Juvera was not present to provide a report.
- 14. Flood Control report** – Tim Jensen was informed earlier that the Wildcat Creek trail passage under Richmond Parkway was flooded. There was an attempt to pump out the water in July but it returned. In August they realized that there were some gaps in the wall, they repaired the gaps, and were able to pump out the water and re-open the trail. The hope is to open the trail earlier in future years, and they will continue to work with the East Bay Regional Park District to keep this trail open while exploring grant opportunities to build a pedestrian overcrossing. Creek vegetation maintenance to prevent water from backing up has been progressing this fall near Richmond Parkway. Jonathan Owens is a hydrologist who has been advising on this and flagging which trees should stay and which should be removed. In areas where flood control crews cannot get access, they are working with Urban Tilth to remove vegetation there. There is a notable area close to Verde school where the channel has rerouted itself. Joe Neugebauer mentioned a grant by the West Contra Costa County Transportation Advisory Committee (WCCTAC) to improve access to the Bay Trail, including the

possibility of an overpass. Link to project information:

[https://www.wcctac.org/app\\_pages/view/1182](https://www.wcctac.org/app_pages/view/1182)

**15. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee report (Trout Unlimited)** – Peter Mangarella mentioned that Flow West received supplemental funding to address new needs discovered during a review and the need for design changes. The new deadline to finalize the project is 2024. Three elements will be addressed: Fish passage structure, sediment basin, and upstream channel. The sediment basin will be relocated. There are several draft CEQA documents and a cultural resources report, which requires coordinating with tribal partners. Trout Unlimited has been collaborating with TWP and the EBRPD to conduct WQM and habitat monitoring in the upper watershed with three main components: Hobologgers that are continuously monitoring DO and temperature, monthly monitoring of water quality parameters including conductivity, habitat monitoring of stream flow and riparian cover. This will continue through 2026 and volunteers to help are welcome. Roger Wachtler provided a link: <https://johnmurtu.org/projects>

**16. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports**— no updates

Tim Jensen adjourned the meeting at 11:35.

**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, January 9, 2024**