

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council**  
**January 9, 2024**  
**10am – 12pm**

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

**Attendance:** Tim Jensen, Paula White, Roger Wachtler, Itzel Gomez, Joe Neugebauer, Emma Koeze, Naomi Lichtenstein, Cathy Bleier, Rich Walkling, Jim McCarty, Juliana Gonzalez, John Steere, Josh Bradt, Martha Berthelsen, Tania Pulido, Anthony Falzone, Roger Wachtler, [Naama Raz-Yaseef](#), Jim McGrath, Josh Bradt, Ann Riley, Steven Cochrane, Jose Avila, Michele Mancuso

- 1. CUSP report** – Ann Riley reported that the Streamside Management Program for Landowners (SMPL) program assisted homeowners with issues, mostly in Walnut Creek watershed. There was one person who was concerned about Wildcat Creek. Riley would like to connect with Itzel regarding willow staking along Wildcat Creek in San Pablo. The City of San Pablo did one event with the help of Trout Unlimited; they are planning a subsequent spring event. After March 15 would be a good time, best to do the staking work during the rainy months if possible. Paula added that she would like to connect with Riley about providing resources to Rheem Creek residents through the SMPL program.
- 2. Urban Tilth report** – Lucas Barrera was not available to provide a report.
- 3. San Pablo Watershed Neighbors Education and Restoration Society (SPAWNERS) report** –Martha Berthelsen reported that Jessica from the SMPL program came to Wilkie Creek in December. The main concerns are trees falling into the creek and trash blockage from people dumping. Neighbors often aren't clear about their responsibilities, and even if they do know them, struggle to address them. They also looked at the landslide off of Santa Rita road, and are concerned that this could happen to their property. SPAWNERS was there to advise. Met with Naama from The Watershed Project about the Wildcat Creek improvement project, Martha provided background about SPAWNERS. Explored Wilkie Creek with a school group from Crestmont School, grades 4-8. The kids had a great time exploring the creek and also worked on sheet mulching and planting native plants. Planning an evening event about rainwater. Jose Avila mentioned that for unincorporated county dumping issues call 925-608-5500
- 4. The Watershed Project (The Watershed Project) report** – Juliana Gonzalez reported that Verde Elementary programming has begun. Intensive approach with 3, 5, 7 graders, to provide opportunities for exploration. Funded by City of Richmond (1 year) and Richmond Outdoor Coalition (1 year). Water Quality monitoring continues in Wildcat, San Pablo and eventually Rheem Creeks. There are about 7 new HOBO data loggers for continuous monitoring of temperature in the upper Wildcat Creek watershed. There are

also a few sites for Benthic Macroinvertebrates, and several sites with full Water Quality Monitoring parameters. Sediment monitoring in the Rheem creek watershed has begun, and this will increase and expand. North Richmond Watershed Connections has wrapped up most elements, but there are still a few trees to be planted. Trees that have been planted are visible in a database and Contra Costa County is discussing a long-term plan for urban forestry in the county. North Richmond is being considered as a pilot for a model for rolling this out countywide. Hope Gardens project is continuing in North Richmond and the Shields-Reid Habitat Garden is in the planning and outreach phase. The Urban Nature Loop in North Richmond is active and is a wonderful way to understand and see natural resources in the neighborhood and be connected to them. Fish passage project is at 35% planning phase, and the amenities portion includes a small pocket park next to Verde School. The trail will have to be redone to accommodate redesign of the sediment basin. 3 new projects coming up: Rheem Creek sediment project, regional effort to study how sediment might feed Dotson marsh, compare to South Bay and Marin sites and will consider the uses of sediment. BIL funding secured to create a coalition of stakeholders including nearby residents to improve Wildcat Creek. EPA grant also very likely to be successful. Finally, The Watershed Project is hiring for several new positions that will be posted on our [website](#).

5. **Golden Gate Bird Alliance (GGBA) report** –Cathy Bleier reported that 158 people participated on the Dec.30 Richmond Christmas bird count, 185 species identified. Cathy went to WCAT staging area and the trail near Verde School. Held 1st annual dinner and mentioned all of these great birding resources. Have hosted bird walks with The Watershed Project and YES nature to neighborhood. Next year are planning to do targeted Christmas bird counts with youth groups in Richmond. Are planning a cleanup near Pt. Molate and Meeker Slough in early spring in order to reduce trash that might be picked up by nesting ospreys. Interested in working with the City of Richmond on addressing the Meeker Slough trash problem. Juliana suggested that she connect with The Watershed Project and the city to discuss a draft contract to address this.
6. **Community Based Ecological Solutions in Rheem Watershed (City of Richmond) report**– Rich Walkling mentioned that the construction project is in a holding phase during the rainy season. Approximately 1/5 of the project was constructed. Area downstream of Fordham is complete. There have been several challenges in the storm drain pipe replacement at Greenwood Ct. Paula added that residents had many questions about the project during a Dec.9 tour. She is looking forward to working with members of the council to communicate best practices for creek restoration to help answer these questions.
7. **East Bay Regional Parks District (East Bay Regional Park District)** – Scott Stoller was not available to provide a report.
8. **West County Wastewater (WCW) report** – [Joe Neugebauer](#) was not available to provide a report. Naama mentioned that Mithun is working with WCW on a final report of the

living levee project. Looking for implementation funding for the 5 mile long project along the shoreline—there are three pending grants. Would like to spend some time to present renderings for designs to the council. We can make some time for this next meeting. Cathy would like to know where to get the most up to date summary of the living levee shoreline project. Naama shared links to the project page and will provide the final report when it is ready. Collaborative Adaptation Project:

Webpage - <https://thewatershedproject.org/shoreline/> News article - <https://thewatershedproject.org/what-will-our-shoreline-look-like-when-sea-level-rises/>

- 9. City of San Pablo report** – Itzel Gomez provided a couple of updates on the pilot project called neighborhood champions. Three residents have been selected to do outreach in the Old Town neighborhood along Wildcat Creek. They will be working with students at Downer elementary and their parents to raise awareness about illegal dumping. One champion will be doing targeted outreach to Spanish speakers, and a 3rd champion is focusing on social media outreach. Jan. 23 there will be a council meeting to introduce the champions. Talking with Earth Team and RCD about starting a pollinator habitat garden at Davis Park using Xerces Society pollinator habitat kits. Rumrill project should be wrapping up by early spring, with a ribbon cutting ceremony.
- 10. City of Richmond report** – Jeff Barich is new to the council and added about the Rheem Creek project that there are some unforeseen utility issues. He added that there is a mitigation project that is downstream of the current project. It is going into the design phase. NCE is the engineering and design firm working on the project.
- 11. Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) report** – Emma Koeze reported these updates: MLK Day January 15, working at their site on the Richmond Greenway. Jan. 20 hosting a cleanup with Friends of Pinole Creek near the I-80 fish passage project. Jan. 25 Pinole High event. Fliers linked for these upcoming events. Emma is moving on to a new position with Coastal Quest and thanks the council for being so welcoming. Chris Lim will attend council meetings going forward.
- 12. Contra Costa County Watershed Program report** –John Steere reported that the final months of the North Richmond Watershed Connections (NRWC) project are underway. There will be additional Street trees planted through May. Coastal Conservancy is being asked to extend the contract for another few months to address additional trees to be planted and to replace three trees along Fred Jackson Way. In addition, he provided an update for the revised North Richmond Green Streets Corridor project with an alternative with the Parr segment, along San Pablo Creek to Fred Jackson Way, and up Goodrick Avenue to's Dotson Marsh improve access to Richmond, San Pablo and North Richmond residents to the Bay Trail. Posted link in the chat with these updates. <https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/9983/Adopt-a-Tree-Updates>

**13. San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) report**—Liz Juvera contributed a brief and exciting announcement. We will be receiving funding for our recent submission of the Restoring Wildcat Creek: Community-Led Watershed Health Update and Priority Project Implementation proposal! Please do not share this information publicly. The EPA wants to make the formal announcement. She adds that this is a testament to the incredible collaboration of this team and will lead to necessary and important work in North Richmond! She adds her appreciation for their dedication to this proposal and project. Finally, she mentioned that the State of the Estuary Conference (<https://www.sfestuary.org/state-of-the-estuary-conference/>) will be held from March 12-13 at the Henry J Kaiser Center in Oakland, and we are currently looking for nominations for awards: <https://www.sfestuary.org/awards/>. It would be great to have folks from this group send in some ideas for these categories and see some North Richmond/Wildcat Creek projects honored at the conference.

**14. Flood Control report** – Tim Jensen reported that there were fewer damages than last year due to rain. The district is addressing the chronically flooded Richmond Parkway underpass at the Wildcat Creek trail in North Richmond by April. Roger asked about the Vale Road gauge station, wondered if there is a plan to recalibrate and get it to read correctly. Riley wondered if the gauge is working. Roger confirmed that it is recording stage levels but it is inaccurate due to recalibration need. Tim confirmed that it is on the Flood Control District's to do list. Anthony agreed that it isn't producing high quality data now. Velocity measurements to be included eventually. Riley requested that further updates be provided next meeting

**15. Wildcat Creek Fish Passage Subcommittee report (Trout Unlimited)** – Peter Mangarella sent this report via email: 1) Department of Water Resources (DWR) Fish Passage and Community Engagement Project - 70% design and Basis of Design Report have been completed and are going to be shared with Department of Water Resources as well as Army Corps of Engineers and Regional Board.

- a. The design covers all 3 major elements of the project: fish ladder design, sediment basin design, and design of channel upstream of BNSF Railroad trestle to mitigate flooding in the City of San Pablo. Current schedule is to complete the project by the fall of 2024, and then pursue funding for construction. In addition the project design includes environmental permitting and community outreach, the latter conducted by The Watershed Project with assistance from Mithun.
- b. 2) Trout Unlimited, The Watershed Project and East Bay Regional Park District are continuing to monitor fish habitat water quality (DO and Temp) at 8 stations in upper Wildcat. Monitoring is being conducted utilizing hobo continuous DO/T monitors as well as monthly checkup with portable equipment. The monitoring program is currently envisioned to be conducted for 3 years. Monitoring is being conducted the second weekend (Saturday and Sunday) of each month so if anyone is interested just contact [info@johnmurtu.org](mailto:info@johnmurtu.org). Anthony added that there some implementation funding has been secured for the project already.

**16. Earth Team** –Naomi Lichtenstein reported that they have begun doing more field events such as the West County Wastewater tour tomorrow with the Richmond High School cohort. Students are interested in helping with stewardship events. They meet every Wednesday and can help on Wednesday after school. They can participate in additional events with advance notice that will count towards their internship. Juliana mentioned that there is a lot of help needed doing cleanups in along Wildcat Creek and that Earth Day would be a good opportunity.

**17. New Items / Other Roundtable Reports**— Martha would like to get more information about doing water quality monitoring with students, something that is less technical. Naomi mentioned that Earth Team will be doing some of this type of work. [Roger Wachtler](#) manages the WQM effort of upper Wildcat Creek.

Jim McGrath complimented the level of effort shown by members of the council in dealing with grass roots issues. As an avid cyclist, he also appreciates the incorporation of green infrastructure elements in Contra Costa roadways. He suggested involving advocacy groups in shoreline adaptation projects to address sea level rise as a good way to get funding and to get shoreline habitat, not sea walls. Tania Pulido added that the county has begun convening the Resilient Shoreline Ad-Hoc committee, which will likely start meeting monthly. Cross collaboration and mutual support is needed to maintain this effort. John Steere added that the county general plan mentions including grass-roots groups in collaborative planning and grant writing efforts.

We discussed trash issues along Wildcat Creek. Jose Avila mentioned that people are stripping AT&T cables and setting fires near the Fish Ladder and Verde School. Naama added that a Coastal Conservancy photographer went to the Fish Ladder and was stunned by the poor conditions there. Jose suggested that a working group be formed to address and report regularly on these issues. Tania offered to help coordinate meetings at her office. After last year's tour of Wildcat Creek several proposals were made. Now need to decide which ones can be implemented. Juliana suggested that the county be part of the discussion on resolving these issues. Michele Mancuso mentioned that the illegal dumping task force developed a list of strategies that could be implemented. John Steere added that the CORE homeless outreach team should be involved in future discussions.

Tim Jensen adjourned the meeting at 11:38 am

**NEXT MEETING: Monday, March 18, 10 am-noon.** Please note the change in date. The meeting was rescheduled so as not to conflict with the State of the Estuary Conference.