

**San Francisquito Watershed Council
Steering Committee minutes
January 11, 2006**

Introductions. Pam noted the addition of a 10-minute item to the agenda at 4:00, "New business: Request for advice on a support letter for a Stevens and Permanente Creeks Watershed Council project." The agenda was approved as amended. December minutes held over for approval at the February meeting. Next meeting: February 8.

Announcements

- Philippe Cohen (Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve): The New Year's storms totaled the Bear Creek monitoring station. It was hit by a concrete abutment; the data logger was OK. Stanford is working with the insurer to try to get it replaced. The storms also deposited 4-1/2 feet of sand over an 8-foot fence on the Preserve. The flow rate rose from 400 cubic feet per second (cfs) to a couple thousand cfs in 40 minutes.
- Jerry Hearn (Acterra): The Steering Committee might want to agendaize an item about Stanford's proposed trail along Alpine Road next to the existing trail and close to the creek. The Steering Committee could have a presentation about it and a discussion about how to have input into the trail design (not the alignment) that would bring SFWC's knowledge of streams to bear and make this the best possible trail for the creek environment. There's also a role for us in turning the trail into an educational resource with interpretive signage to help the community see the creek in a new way.
Comment from Philippe Cohen (Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford University): The Watershed Council could draft a letter to Stanford, with cc's to the Town of Portola Valley and San Mateo County, offering to provide input to the trail design as it relates to the creek.
Question from Pam Sturner: When does the design process start?
Response from Jerry Hearn: I don't know. Preliminary designs from Brian Kangas Faulk exist. Santa Clara County gave Stanford 5 years plus a possible 2-year extension to get the trail done; after this Stanford is no longer obligated to fulfill this requirement.
Comment from Pam Sturner: The Watershed Council will work with the Management Advisory Committee to draft the letter to Stanford.

Presentation: Update on Native Plant Nursery (Peter Neal, Acterra)

Pam Sturner introduced Peter, the Acterra Native Plant Nursery Manager. The nursery was formerly a part of the Watershed Council, but about two years ago, all parties agreed that it would make more sense for the nursery to be an independent project of Acterra. A lot has happened with the nursery in the last 1-1/2 years, and Peter is here to tell us about it.

Peter started by inviting the group to ask questions at any time.

Since its separation from the Watershed Council, the nursery has broadened its focus. It now has a 5-year lease on a half acre of land adjacent to Foothill Park next to the park maintenance yard. There is some extreme weather up in the hills, but the plants seem to be surviving it. Peter circulated a photo book that showed some of the plants the nursery grows and also some damage

that happened in the storms over New Year's Eve this year. The nursery still provides plants for the Watershed Council's workdays – including 200 plants and 200 grass plugs for each of the Watershed Council's last two workdays -- and now also provides plants for workdays at Arastradero Preserve. It has attracted a number of new customers within the last 6 months; Peter passed around a list of these customers and of new projects it is supporting.

The basic work of the nursery is to collect seeds from the wild, grow plants, and then plant the plants back in the watersheds where they came from. The nursery is geared more for contract growing for public agencies and larger scale landscaping and not for individuals, although it does offer plants to private individuals occasionally.

The nursery has experienced huge growth since it expanded its focus. It now collects seeds and grows plants for areas from Pulgas Ridge to Stevens Creek. The seed collection has become more complicated, but the nursery keeps extensive records on where the seed comes from for all plants.

Looking ahead to the next year, the nursery plans to supply plants for restoration of a newly purchased extension of Arastradero Preserve, which is now solidly covered with poison hemlock and other invasives. Also, Friends of Edgewood Park wants to landscape its proposed interpretive center with native plants grown from seed collected at the park.

Seed collection is done year-round in order to capture plants that seed at different times of the year. This is part of the beauty of native plants. They also provide an ever-changing array of food for wildlife. It is typical for restoration work to require a good amount of advance time to allow for planning. The work the nursery does is contract growing; the plants are not on the shelf waiting to be bought. The nursery will also supply plants for landscaping at Arastradero Preserve's new Gateway Facility.

The nursery grows some unusual plants such as *Dirca occidentalis*. It has collected 100 *Dirca* seeds from Foothill Park and Rancho San Antonio. *Dirca* is only found in 6 counties around the bay. It is not easy to propagate on large scale. The nursery also grows an endangered bush mallow called *Malacothamnus arcuatus* with seed collected from one large plant on Arastradero Preserve. They also have grown four new bush poppy plants. Peter passed around a list of plants typically grown at the nursery, emphasizing that they may not have all plants available all the time.

Question from Dianne Dryer (City of Menlo Park): There is an open space area across the bridge from El Palo Alto Park. It was planted at one time with native plants, but has since been neglected. I'd love to see it replanted with native plants. Could the nursery help with that?

Response: The nursery could offer plant advice and grow the plants.

Question: Are you archiving your seed collection and propagation data? It will be very valuable.

Response: It is now handwritten. We could photocopy the books.

Comment: Perhaps you could get some CNPS volunteers to help?

Comment from Philippe Cohen (Jasper Risge Biological Preserve): Write up your needs to get this task done and send them to me. I'll pass it around and see if someone can come up with resources to help.

Peter pointed out that the nursery does not produce cultivars, which are created by cloning a particular nice specimen of a plant by cuttings. This is exactly the opposite of the restoration goals of the nursery, which are to promote genetic diversity of native species.

Question: Do you also provide literature on invasive plants?

Response: We do have CalIPC pamphlets about plants to avoid

Question: There were financial concerns about the cost of operating the nursery, even on the smaller scale when it was only supplying plants for the San Francisquito watershed. You're doing even more complex work now. Is the nursery financially more secure now?

Response: Not yet. With more complex operations, the nursery needs more paid staff. Acterra is incorporating more funding for the nursery into its strategic planning in the coming year.

Peter encouraged everyone to call or email (nursery@acterra.org) him with any questions about the nursery.

Update and discussion: Report on New Year's weekend storm response and follow-up, including questions and comments about ways SFWC could help with emergency preparedness in the future (Cynthia D'Agosta, San Francisquito Creek JPA, and Joe Teresi, City of Palo Alto)

Pam introduced the topic, which she noted is of keen interest to many in the community. She just got back from a 3-week trip over the holidays and was not here for the actual event but has received a number of calls and emails about it. The purpose of today's discussion is to talk about what role the Watershed Council as a consensus-based non-profit can play to help with emergency preparedness, keeping mind that there are governmental agencies with primary responsibility. She also noted that flooding is a large topic, and the group should keep the discussion to the Watershed Council's role in helping with emergency preparedness.

Joe Teresi of Palo Alto Public Works began the presentation with some charts showing how the storm and the creek flows occurred, and how they compare to past high flow events. The peak flow from this storm at the USGS gauge near the Stanford Golf Course took place on 12/31/05 and was 4840 cfs. This is the 4th highest flow in the creek since records have been kept, beginning in the 1930s.

The first graph showed four lines: creek flow at the USGS gauge, creek height at the Chaucer Street bridge, rainfall (from a rain gauge in Foothill Park), and the tide levels in the Bay. The graph showed that the peak flow at the USGS gauge occurred about 3 hours after the peak in the rainfall intensity, and the peak flow at the Chaucer bridge occurred about 1 hour after the peak flow at the USGS gauge. This timing appears to be pretty typical compared to what has been seen in past storms.

The second graph showed four lines: creek flow at the USGS gauge, creek height at the West Bayshore bridge, rainfall (from a rain gauge in Foothill Park), and the tide levels in the Bay. In this graph, there is a short gap in the data near the peak of the storm which was caused by a tree falling and knocking out power to the data recorder. The timing of the peak flow at West Bayshore bridge is probably about 30 minutes later than the Chaucer Street bridge.

The third graph showed a comparison of rainfall for the New Year's Eve storm compared to two other large storms. This storm and the 2000 storm both had a total of 2.7 inches in 24 hours, while the 1998 storm had 4.45 inches in 24 hours.

The fourth graph showed a comparison of stream flow for the New Year's Eve storm compared to the 2000 and 1998 storms. Despite the fact that the 2000 and 2005 storms had the same total rainfall, they had different peak flows (3930 cfs vs. 4840 cfs) because of the difference in the timing of the rainfall pattern. The 1998 had the highest flow at about 7200 cfs.

Question: Is it possible that there was more runoff in 2005 than 2000 because there is more development in 2005?

Response: The change in development over those years probably isn't enough to cause this difference. The most probable cause of the difference in flows is that the rainfall pattern was peakier in 2005.

Comment: The amount of soil moisture in the ground at the time of the rains could also make a difference.

Question: Is there a stage:discharge relationship known for either the Chaucer or West Bayshore bridges? It would be interesting to see how much more water is in the creek at the downstream bridges compared to at the USGS gauge.

Response: No, but that would be interesting to know.

Joe then showed some photos taken on 12/31/05 near the peak flow of the event. In the picture of the East Bayshore bridge, you can barely see the top of the levee. There was also a picture of Highway 101, which experienced a short period of flooding because of back flow from a storm drain. The JPA is collecting pictures and observations from that day. Another picture showed a gap in the flood walls between West Bayshore Road and Highway 101 that may have allowed some flooding of Highway 101 during the peak flow.

Question: Whose responsibility is that gap?

Response: Caltrans. There is currently no discussion of raising the flood wall in that location. There are now three barrels (box culverts) under Highway 101. Adding a fourth barrel will be one of the alternatives considered under the Army Corps project. Caltrans will be brought into the discussion at that time.

Question: Has there been any thought given to using the Palo Alto Golf Course as an overflow area, similar to what has been done on lower Matadero Creek?

Response: This alternative will also be considered as part of the Army Corps project. The Army Corps is planning to hold its first public meeting about the project in April 2006.

Cynthia D'Agosta then reported on the public meetings that have been held in response to the storm. Some of the local agencies have already put together a compilation of the events and how that jurisdiction responded. The JPA will collect these all together in a report. There will be a public meeting at the Palo Alto City Chambers on January 18th to discuss emergency preparedness. The Santa Clara Valley Water District has analyzed the rain data and has found that this storm was a 15-20 year rain event. Stanford is also collecting observations and data about the event.

At the JPA meeting on January 5, member representatives talked about lessons learned between the 1998 flood and the New Year's Eve event. San Mateo County felt that its response time was better than in 1998. They are working on a telecommunications line with Homeland Security money from the County Office of Emergency Services (OES) to the county's cities.

Cynthia also reported that at the public meeting, a man from East Palo Alto wondered if removing debris upstream of Highway 101 was allowing more water to flow to the downstream area, which may have potentially made waters higher downstream. She said that this kind of situation really pointed to the need for a coordinated approach to flooding looking at the whole system so that relief efforts in one location do not worsen flooding in another.

Question: What is the flow capacity of the creek downstream of Highway 101 after the levee restoration that was finished in 2002?

Response: I don't know the capacity off the top of my head. The levees from Friendship Bridge to upstream of the West Bayshore Bridge above the Woodland Creek Apartments were raised to reestablish the original 1958 heights.

Cynthia also said that tide gauges are currently operated by different organizations. She will be attending a meeting on Thursday to talk about tying them together to create a system that is easier to use to determine the tide at a given location.

At the JPA's public meeting, a community member commented that he thought there was more vegetation in the creek than in 1998. Her response had been that there is now an annual maintenance walk at which representatives from all the different jurisdictions decide what flood hazards need to be addressed, including vegetation that needs to be removed, and who will do it. She also mentioned the Watershed Council's arundo removal project, which has helped maintain flood capacity in the creek.

Joe let the group know that the Palo Alto City Council is holding two flood-related meetings in the next few weeks. The first will be one on Wednesday, January 18, at 7:00 pm that will be a town hall meeting focusing on the flood response (what worked, what didn't). The second will be on Monday, January 30, at 6:00 pm. This meeting will be a forum for a group of Palo Alto residents to present ideas for interim measures to reduce flood risk while the long-term Army Corps project is being developed. This will be a joint JPA-City of Palo Alto meeting. There will also be a meeting in East Palo Alto, but the date hasn't been set yet.

Pam asked the group for ideas about what the Watershed Council, given our capacity and non-profit status, can do to help with emergency preparedness. Suggestions by people in attendance are listed below:

- Help at the Baylands pre-sandbagging low spots and monitoring trails that are closed off next to the creeks
- Help monitoring sandbag stations in East Palo Alto
- The City of Palo Alto sends out an annual bill stuffer every October with flood and other emergency contact information and sandbag information. We need more sandbag education. Everyone waits until it's too late to get sandbags. The Watershed Council could help publicize this message.
- Each jurisdiction has its own information that are all sent out at different times. We should have a watershed-wide event in the fall to say, "It's time to prepare!" We could have a sandbag party and do more about flood preparedness at each city's emergency preparedness month in October or November.
- Watershed Council Streamkeepers could help report what's going on upstream (for example, if there are any downed trees). The challenge is to find a central location for information to come to.

Other comments:

- In East Palo Alto it would be a big help if people call in flood observations to the City dispatch.
- Cynthia D'Agosta commented that the JPA has met with EOCs (Emergency Operations Centers) from various watershed jurisdictions to find out their role in emergency response. Emergency response is very hierarchical because there is a great need to avoid duplicating information and roles. Having a single point of information avoids giving the community conflicting messages.
- The Palo Alto emergency phone number that is supposed to give out flood information over the phone was not up to date in the recent storm. Also, the radio stations that Palo Alto usually works with to broadcast local communications were not used or were too tied up broadcasting information about flooding on the Russian River. A letter was sent to the City of Palo Alto pointing out that several of these emergency communications systems were not used during the New Year's Eve event.
- Using KZSU to broadcast emergency information was one of the recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Committee in 2000, but since that time there has been a lot of staff turnover and there needs to be constant retraining.
- From the East Bayshore bridge along the Gardens neighborhood it looks like the rock stabilizing the levee may not hold and may become dislodged in high flows. There are also a lot of squirrel burrows making holes in the levee. We need to get an expert to advise on how to fix these problems. *Response from Cynthia D'Agosta:* Looking at these issues will be part of the Army Corps project alternatives.
- The creek level monitor on Palo Alto's website didn't have real-time information. You need to talk to someone on the ground to find out what's actually going on. The message on the City of East Palo Alto phones during this event just said, "We're on furlough. Have a nice day."

- Having one radio station that broadcasts emergency information to the whole watershed would be best. The OES offices should have one station that they report information to. The JPA could help coordinate this.
- The Menlo Park Fire District, which covers East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Woodside, and Atherton, is going to reinstate its CERT program for disaster preparedness. There is no date for the training yet.
- Can we get the cities to buy sandbagging machines? East Palo Alto and Palo Alto already have them, Menlo Park does not. There are also other home flood protection alternatives such as some kind of rubber contraption filled with water. Could the JPA coordinate with the cities to find out what other alternatives besides sandbags they would advocate using?
Comment: Advising use of flood protection devices carries huge liability.
- The Santa Clara Valley Water District has a sandbag education video that airs five times a day on Palo Alto public access TV. Broadcast times are listed on the Palo Alto website.
- Does anyone know of any other rain gauges besides the one in Foothill Park? This one is sort of at the edge of the watershed. Can we put more rain gauges on Skyline or use existing private rain gauges? *Comment:* For a storm that is big enough to cause flooding, Foothill Park is not really at the edge. *Comment:* The Woodside Fire District tracks rain, but I don't know if it is real-time and automated.

Pam will provide the input from this meeting to the JPA and other agencies as appropriate.

New business: Request for advice on a support letter for a Stevens and Permanente Creeks Watershed Council project

The Watershed Council has received a request from the Stevens and Permanente Creek Watershed Council (SPCWC) to write a support letter for a fish passage improvement project grant proposal seeking funding from NOAA. The request came in just yesterday because the SPCWC got property owner permission for the project then. The grant proposal is due tomorrow. The project would modify the bottom of a box culvert to improve fish passage. Pam doesn't want to short-circuit the correspondence review process but, given our group's history, would like to help support local fish passage improvement work if possible. She asked the Steering Committee if she needs to do a correspondence review for the letter or if she could just write it. All unanimously agreed she could write and submit the letter without correspondence review. Pam read a sample letter that the final letter would be based on. The Steering Committee also agreed that for future cases support letters should still receive correspondence review.

Staff reports

Coordinator's report (Pam Sturner):

The Watershed Council is seeking to hire a Restoration Site Planner. The position will be approximately quarter time and duties include choosing plants for volunteer planting workdays, scouting sites for invasives removal and creek clean ups, developing a site maintenance plan and doing site maintenance, and assisting the Outreach Coordinator in leading workdays. Katie will circulate the announcement via email to the Steering Committee.

Pam has been selected to participate in the Watershed Partnerships Seminar sponsored by CalFed. It was supposed to be last June but was cancelled, and will now be held 2/27/06 through 3/9/06 in Folsom. It will focus on watershed management and leadership training. Pam will need to reschedule or make other plans for the March Steering Committee meeting.

Restoration Project Manager's report (Katie Pilat):

The Watershed Council had a great workday on January 7th planting native plants at the Woodside School site. The next workday will be February 4th, but the location hasn't been decided yet.

Contracts have been signed for designs for two fish passage projects: the culvert replacement on McGarvey Gulch in Huddart Park, and box culvert modification at two locations on Los Trancos Creek. We hope to have 50% designs to review by mid-February.

The two stormwater demonstration projects made it through the New Year's Eve storms OK. The first half of the parking lot with pervious concrete is complete; the second half has not been started yet. The residential project (modifying the driveway) is almost done. There was some standing water after the large storms, and Katie will meet with the property owner to determine if the standing water was reasonable for such a large storm, or whether there is a problem that needs to be remedied.

Comment from Art Kraemer: Bill D'Agostino of the Palo Alto Weekly is interested in doing a story on this project when we are ready.

Continuing business

Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative (SCBWMI):

Work continues on implementation of priorities from the August 2005 retreat. A very successful workshop sponsored by the SCBWMI Land Use Subgroup and the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program was held in December. It focused on how creeks affect land use and how land use affects creeks and included a site visit to the adjacent reach of Coyote Creek. Comments were very positive, and work has now started on planning the next workshop. Additional subgroup participants are welcome to join. Please direct questions to Phil Bobel or Trish Mulvey.

The Communications and Outreach Subgroup of the SCBWMI is working on its efforts to reach planning official and decision makers about land use and watershed issues. SFWC will want to be kept advised as the presentation package is developed about opportunities for use throughout this watershed. Might the SFWC Steering Committee want to volunteer part of a meeting for a "dry run"? Questions to Phil Bobel.

Santa Clara Valley Water Resources Protection Collaborative (Collaborative):

The Santa Clara Valley Water District will present its new draft ordinance to the Collaborative for initial feedback on January 12, 2006 (tomorrow). The ordinance will focus on permitting for land use near streams and provide options for the cities/county to take on some permitting authority from SCVWD. An additional element, a resolution, is being developed that will

delegate to the SCVWD Chief Executive Officer, Stan Williams, the authority to implement the ordinance and associated Guidelines & Standards. The District will sponsor a multi-month outreach effort about the ordinance for information-sharing and to get feedback prior to taking it to the SCVWD Board for adoption later this year – likely in April or May. Trish Mulvey (and possibly Cynthia D’Agosta) will be at the Collaborative workshop this week. Questions to Trish Mulvey.

SCVWD is also launching a streamside property owner outreach effort as part of their “CreekWise” program. Pam Sturner and Trish Mulvey are part of the team developing and reviewing the materials. The first mailing is expected to go to the post office in the next few days. Questions to Pam Sturner or Trish Mulvey.

Question: Could a “casual city” do damage to other downstream cities by being lax with its permit authority?

Response from Bill Springer, Santa Clara Valley Water District: There are a lot of checks and balances between the Water District and the cities on permitting. Most permits are issued for projects that are behind the 2:1 stable slope line and out of the creek. Also, the Water District’s current 50-foot permitting jurisdiction is extended to the whole creekside parcel in the proposed ordinance.

Question: What is the process for putting that authority in place?

Response: The Water District has the authority to adopt ordinances. Also, this ordinance has the support of various cities in the District’s jurisdiction. All the cities of the Collaborative have worked on this ordinance, although their City Councils may not buy into it. The ordinance will be presented to the Collaborative tomorrow for comments and will come before the SCVWD Board in June. We could ask the Water District to give a presentation to the Watershed Council on how the new ordinance would work relative to the interaction with participating cities.

Response from Pam Sturner: We will try to agendize this presentation for February or March.

Question: If a company wanted to move into a creekside parcel, how would the permitting take place?

Response from Bill Springer: There are three possibilities: (1) the City could use the Guidelines & Standards to issue the permit, (2) if the city did not issue the permit, the Water District would retain permit authority, or (3) if the city issued a permit that broke from the guidelines and standards, there would be consequences from the Water District, although they have not been worked out yet.

Santa Clara County Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP):

See the flyer in the circulating file for additional information. This training on January 21 will be of general interest to SFWC since Stanford University is in the midst of an HCP process (as is the Santa Clara Valley Fisheries & Aquatic Habitat Collaborative Effort (FAHCE) for portions of the Stevens Creek, Coyote Creek and Guadalupe River watersheds). At a cost of only \$10 for lunch, participants will get the benefit of an abbreviated version of a UC Davis Extension Service Seminar that usually costs over \$250 and requires a trip to Sacramento. RSVP.

The Santa Clara County HCP Phase I study area has been expanded from the Coyote watershed and South County to include the entire city of San Jose and a few other areas needed for

jurisdictional completeness of two county parks. The change will add large parts of the Guadalupe River watershed and significant areas of serpentine soils. Questions to Pat Showalter or Ken Schreiber.

Meeting adjourned.

In attendance:

Gene Spurlock
Joe Teresi – City of Palo Alto
Brad Eggleston – City of Palo Alto
Joe Collie – City of Palo Alto
Julie Skelton – Stanford Management Company
Bill Springer – Santa Clara Valley Water District
Chris Gale – City of East Palo Alto
Jay Farr – City of East Palo Alto
Jerry Hearn – Acterra
Sheri Lubin – Acterra
Metha Klock – Acterra
Peter Neal – Acterra
Paul Heiple – California Native Plant Society (CNPS)
Libby Lucas – CNPS
Marge DeStaebler – Portola Valley Conservation Committee
Charlie Martin
Michael Fox – Stanford Facilities
Judy Fulton -- SLAC
Philippe S. Cohen – Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford
Katie Pilat – SFWC
Art Kraemer – Crescent Park Neighborhood Association
Cynthia D’Agosta – SFC-JPA
Michael Fox – Stanford Utilities
Dianne Dryer – City of Menlo Park
Viv Blomenkamp – League of Women Voters Palo Alto
Mary Carey Schaefer – Palo Alto resident
Pam Sturner – SFWC

Minutes respectfully submitted by Katie Pilat