

**San Francisquito Watershed Council**  
**Steering Committee Minutes**  
July 12, 2006

Introductions. Pam Sturner introduced the Watershed Council's new Field Coordinator, Ryan Navratil. Ryan is a 2006 graduate of Stanford's Bio Sciences Master's Program in the Ecology and Evolution track. The Watershed Council met Ryan through Alan Launer, who recommended Ryan for a project to develop a monitoring protocol for the revegetation sites throughout the watershed. He got his Bachelor of Science in biology at Carleton College in Wisconsin. The Watershed Council created the Field Coordinator position based on our needs and Ryan's skills. He will be coordinating the revegetation monitoring program, volunteer workdays, the planning and implementation of site maintenance, *Arundo* eradication work, and the Streamkeeper program.

The July 12 agenda was approved, and June 14 minutes were approved. The next Steering Committee meeting will be September 13. There will be no meeting in August.

**Presentation: Overview of the San Francisquito Watershed Council's new revegetation site monitoring project** (Pam Sturner and Ryan Navratil, SFWC)

Pam Sturner began the presentation. The Watershed Council is undertaking a science-based monitoring program of its existing revegetation sites throughout the watershed that will be staffed by volunteers. The two goals of the project are to develop best management practices for effective management of the sites with respect to both cost and ecological benefit, and to build connections between people from the communities throughout the watershed.

Pam then gave some background about how the project fits in with the Watershed Council's work plans and priorities. This project came out of the Draft Watershed Management Plan (DWMP) update in the winter of 2004-2005. To assist in updating the natural resources section of the DWMP and developing work plans related to this topic for the Watershed Council, the Steering Committee asked staff for a presentation about the volunteer workday program, and specifically how the workdays fit in with the Watershed Council's goals and priorities from 2002 and reaffirmed in 2004. They asked for a description of the sites and outreach conducted as part of the workdays, as well as how much time and money were being put into the project.

With regard to priorities, the answers were that volunteer workdays fit well with the Watershed Council's highest priority – community outreach – and that the hands-on component was a very effective way to engage residents in watershed stewardship. They also fit with the second priority of pursuing small-scale, on-the-ground ecological restoration projects. With regard to resources, the Steering Committee learned that maintenance of the sites was taking a lot of time and resources, consuming 25% of one staff member's time, and that the work was essentially unfunded. The grants funding the volunteer-based revegetation program covered planning and workdays adequately, but not site monitoring and maintenance. At the time, the Steering Committee suggested that the Watershed Council staff explore requesting more funds for these tasks by building them into the grants as overhead, continue efforts to explore how to best

expend resources on this program, learn to say no to taking on new sites if there were no resources to support them, and develop criteria for when, where, and why to take on new sites.

Taking these recommendations into account, the Watershed Council created work plans for 2005-06 and 2006-07 to try to build lessons learned from its previous revegetation work and apply that to future efforts. The revegetation monitoring project arose in response to the need to answer questions about how to conduct effective site maintenance, how to continue offering meaningful volunteer opportunities to the community, and how to help ourselves and other groups learn from our experience.

Pam brought the idea for a revegetation site monitoring project to the Steering Committee as part of the work plans for Fiscal Year 05-06 that were approved in July 2004. Since then, the project has evolved as a partnership with Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. Pam thanked Jasper Ridge Administrative Director Philippe Cohen for making a connection to the Smart Family Foundation, which was interested in funding the project. Philippe Cohen and Alan Launer, Stanford's campus biologist, helped flesh out a methodology that would meet the goals and answer the questions brought together by the Steering Committee.

*Question:* How did the Army Corps of Engineers vegetation study tie in with the update of the Watershed Management Plan natural resources section?

*Response:* Neither Pam Sturner nor Bill Springer (Santa Clara Valley Water District) were familiar with this study.

*Action:* Libby Lucas will email Pam the title of this study.

Ryan Navratil took over the presentation at this point. He explained that there were two parts to his talk: (1) a description of the project's strategy and goals, and (2) the practical part of the project – how to achieve the project goals. (The PowerPoint presentation is downloadable at <http://www.sanfrancisquito.org/projects/forums>.)

The Watershed Council has seven revegetation sites throughout the watershed, most of which were adopted in response to some kind of creek bank damage or disturbance. Because each site is different and was adopted under different conditions, the management strategy for each is fairly customized. With the variable management history and site characteristics, there is no consistent answer about the “doneness” of a given site; the site trajectories are unclear.

There are short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals that will be developed for each site. Short-term goals include identifying key criteria for achieving sustainable and healthy sites. These criteria include percent native vs. invasive plant cover, percent bare ground, survival of the plants planted by the Watershed Council, and comparison of the sites to the surrounding area in the form of control sites. Another goal is to collect baseline data to use as a springboard to determine how to move the sites forward toward sustainability.

Intermediate goals are to determine changes in the sites, in other words the succession of each site. There are fundamental revegetation goals, such as quantifying the change in the proportion of natives vs. non-native plant cover over time and the natural recruitment of native plants to the site, and also site-specific goals that will be developed by seeking input from the community.

We hope to get the community's and the Steering Committee's input to help develop targets for specific end point conditions for each site.

Long-term goals for the project include developing guidelines to know when the goals have been met, imparting efficiency into the site management process, and cultivating expertise in plant ecology in the community.

Ryan then moved on to the second main topic of the presentation: field techniques for data collection. This spring Ryan conducted a pilot study to test out the data collection protocols at the Watershed Council's site at the intersection of Alpine Road and Arastradero Road. The revegetation site is next to the Rossotti's parking lot in the shade of a large eucalyptus. The control site is immediately adjacent to it, so it has similar sun, soil, topography, etc., but has not been actively revegetated with native plants. A grid was developed for each site with transects to be surveyed. Volunteers were taught to use a 10-pin frame design for the surveys. This piece of equipment is a PVC pipe with pins attached every 10 cm. The volunteer records data (plant species, bare ground, etc.) for every place the pins touch the ground. This system is set up to be non-value-based and is generally considered to be a reliable, standardized way to gather data. It is based on the volunteers' ability to identify plants. To help with this, Ryan developed a short field guide with approximately 58 plants commonly seen in the San Francisquito watershed. For each plant there is a large color photo and coarse-grained information on the plant family, where along the streambank it is commonly seen, how large it usually gets, and other information to help identify it. This guide does not contain a complete list of all plants that will be seen. It is intended to be an introductory way to get volunteers used to identifying plants and help them learn how to look them up in a more technical resource.

*Question:* Will the volunteers be doing their surveying when the plants are in flower, in fruit, or both? I see you didn't give any seed information, but seeds are another good way that plants can be identified.

*Response:* Volunteers will be going back to the same site during both flowering and fruiting. There will be permanent plots set up, so volunteers will likely see the same plants multiple times. We think this will help us get robust data even with some expected error factored in.

Ryan then showed a slide with four graphs from data collected at the pilot site (Rossotti's). The graphs showed native vs. exotic species richness, community composition, reproductive diversity, and guild diversity at both the revegetation site and the adjacent control site. Even though volunteers collected the data in the spring before flowering occurred, Ryan felt that the plants were fairly easy to identify and that the data set was solid. He is optimistic about volunteers learning to identify the plants and retain this information. The criteria are set up to show broadstroke differences between the sites.

*Question:* I'm familiar with your pilot site and have done weeding there, both with the Watershed Council and on my own. How will you work out what kind of effect volunteer weeders have on the site?

*Response:* That's an excellent question, and we need to communicate with anyone working on the site. Because these plots will be part of a site management plan that includes weed eradication, we may have a situation where we change the conditions of the plots during the

course of the study, even though this is not ideal from a scientific standpoint. But the most important thing is that we need to know what other groups are doing and keep that communication going so we can incorporate this information into the interpretation of the results.

*Question:* You talked earlier about the criteria for success of a site. Does achieving those criteria imply that the site is finished and no more work will be done at the site?

*Response:* Regarding the fundamental restoration goals, we hope that if we achieve the criteria, we can stop work at the site. But we will continue monitoring to see what happens after active work has stopped. However, regarding the site-specific goals, we will continue to be responsive to community needs and may continue work to achieve those goals.

*Question:* What is maintenance to you besides weeding?

*Response:* Also watering, possibly planting new plants, possibly mulching, and other things that the site may need.

*Question:* Will your study have a way to evaluate the effect of different components of your maintenance program? For example, will you be able to tell the effects of watering vs. weed control?

*Response:* For a scientific paper, we would want to be able to do controls on different variables. But in this context, we're also trying to meet the needs of revegetating the sites and returning them to a more natural native state. For example, we wouldn't expect to see a deliverable like "watering 9 times a month and weeding 7 times is better than watering 8 times and weeding 8." Instead, I'd much rather know what happens if we plant a certain native in year one to stabilize the ground; will it facilitate recruitment by native plants? What is the best suite of plants to put in the ground in year one? Year two? How does the community fare as a whole?

*Question:* Were the plants that have been planted picked to achieve any particular goal such as to provide food for specific birds or frogs, or to stabilize the soil, etc.?

*Response:* The person that chose the plants for all the sites retired last year, so I can't answer that question from first-hand experience. But it is my understanding that some of these goals may have been built into the process of choosing plants, while they also were chosen to become a healthy functional habitat corridor. The sites are small, so we can't be sure that they will achieve recruitment of the desired animals, but they will hopefully facilitate the possibility of the animals using the habitat. The sites were designed to generally resemble native habitat.

*Question:* How many sites will be part of the study?

*Response:* Four: Ormondale School and Rossotti's in Portola Valley, Waverley Street in Palo Alto, and University Drive in Menlo Park.

*Comment:* The University Drive site is more of a demonstration garden.

*Response:* This is true, but it is a good demonstration site of what might be expected for a long narrow site next to a road.

*Comment:* Regarding the choice of plants, I want to comment that all the plants are natives grown from seed collected in this watershed and all provide food for native animals.

*Comment:* The sites were usually chosen because of some disturbance, so in addition to providing habitat, some of the goals were to stabilize soils. The priorities may be different from site to site.

*Question:* Did you consider selecting El Palo Alto Park for the study? I understand it's one of the most successful and mature sites.

*Response:* I understand that the criteria for selecting sites for the study were that they be accessible and that there is another similar site that can act as a control. I was not part of selecting the sites, but I would imagine that this site might not have met one of those criteria.

*Comment (Pam Sturmer):* Alan Launer and Philippe Cohen from Stanford helped us to select sites. After visiting them all, we felt that El Palo Alto presented challenges because it's so different from the others and because there's no obvious control site. These characteristics made this a difficult site to work with.

*Comment (Katie Pilat):* Also, it's my understanding that major volunteer work to do more planting will not be done at sites selected for this study, and we feel that there are still good opportunities for more volunteer planting work at this site.

*Question:* Will the monitoring help you choose future sites, or prioritize criteria for choosing new sites, as is the case with invasives mapping we are doing on Stevens Creek?

*Response (Pam Sturmer):* Yes. The Steering Committee will also be involved in answering the question of when to take on new sites and how to decide what to take on.

*Comment (Katie Pilat):* Our sites were chosen organically in response to various situations that arose, so we don't really have a proactive site selection plan at this point. This will evolve based on our needs and lessons learned from current sites.

*Comment:* You said you plan to share information you collect on this project. As part of the Army Corps flood damage reduction project, they may consider diverting flood waters out of the creek at some locations where there will not be property or infrastructure damage to avoid flooding in others. It would be very useful if you could provide information about ecological damage that might result from some of the alternatives that may be considered. For example, maybe the creek will flood 3000 houses, or you divert the water to some upland area. It would be useful to know if the habitat in that area will recover after 1 year vs. 100 years.

*Comment:* I understand that there used to be a boom that diverted creek water into Lake Lagunita that was lost in the 1998 floods. It might be good to know what habitats are in Lake Lagunita.

*Response (Marty Laporte, Stanford Utilities):* The University is still diverting creek water to Lake Lagunita to provide habitat for tiger salamanders. The Utilities Department has worked with Alan Launer (the campus biologist) to develop a diversion schedule. There is usually enough runoff from surrounding areas that flows into the lake early in the season that allows the salamanders to start their process, but the water in the lake usually needs to be augmented later in the season. We actually prefer not to have too much water ponded in the lake as that allows bullfrogs to live there and they would prey on the salamanders.

*Comment:* Stanford could do more outreach about how they're helping the salamanders. I don't think many people know this.

Ryan finished his presentation by thanking Philippe Cohen, Alan Launer, Jasper Ridge

Biological Preserve, the Smart Family Foundation, and the San Francisco Foundation Bay Fund.

Pam Sturner finished the presentation with a summary of next steps. The Watershed Council is now in the process of recruiting the first group of volunteers to staff the project. We are looking for 20 people – ideally four people from each of the five communities in the watershed. These volunteers will learn the protocol this year, and will teach it to drop-in volunteers, who will begin next year. We're looking for people who are interested in watershed science as well as in the community involvement aspect of teaching the protocols to others and being a team leader. It will be about 40 hours per year and we are asking for a 2-year commitment. This fall (2006) we are developing the curriculum, in the winter we'll be training the first set of volunteers, and they will begin using the protocol in the spring. The first drop-in volunteers will begin in fall 2007 and monitoring workdays will be once per quarter.

We are looking for two kinds of input from the Steering Committee: input on community needs and goals for each of the sites and ideas for candidates for the program. Volunteers do not have to be Steering Committee members.

**New business: A look ahead to Steering Committee business for 2006-07 (Pam Sturner)**

The transition to new status with Acterra is complete. Pam sent out an email announcing the new status last week and will also mention it as part of her report at the next JPA Board meeting. This is a cause for celebration (and we have brownies today to help celebrate)! Now that the transition is finished, there are some organization matters to revisit. The first is that in our communications with stakeholders, the community, funders, etc., we need to be really clear about who we are and what we do. We also now need to review memberships guidelines, meeting ground rules, guidelines for correspondence review, and the work plans and wish list we developed in 2004-05. Pam has begun working with the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) to review existing documentation on these topics, with idea of coming back to the Steering Committee with a summary and recommendations. Pam asked the Steering Committee for input on the format for how they would like to be engaged in the process of reviewing these matters.

*Comment:* We should review what kind of memberships are possible and what expectations and responsibilities come with each kind of membership. For example, there could be a fully participating voting member vs. an attendee who comes less frequently and just to listen.

*Comment:* That was always the problem in the past – we could never decide whether membership is supposed to be representational or whether we are just attendees.

*Comment:* This may be where meeting ground rules come in. Examples of ground rules could be that members stay engaged, provide input to discussions, read background information, provide information on various topics, and attend a certain percentage of meetings per year. Pam's question to the group is: how should she set up the conversation to bring this discussion to the Steering Committee? How would we like to be involved in reviewing these things?

*Comment:* The MAC (Management Advisory Committee) could make a start on drafting these documents, then Pam could distribute them to the Steering Committee via email for review and comment. I think it would be best for the MAC to set up the framework.

*Comment:* Then when any one topic is ready to be agendaized for discussion here, Pam could also send out any background materials on that topic. These could include any previous versions of these documents, or other materials.

Pam commented that she wants this process to be energizing rather than draining.

*Comment:* We've all dealt with these situations in other settings: setting up rules for who members are and what it means to be a member. Any ideas from past experiences on how to get it done would be very useful. If we take money off the table, meaning that no membership dues are required, this should be pretty straightforward. We are a consensus-based group, we don't interrupt, we don't draw lines in the sand. There are different ways to deal with consensus, but when the time comes to make a decision, we need to know who has standing to vote. And for example, if someone is a representative of an organization, he or she may not have to vote at the meeting, but instead can take the issue back to the organization to get approval before voting. Maybe all we need is a set of ground rules.

*Comment:* One thing that's never been addressed in the past is when people only come to the meeting where their issue is being discussed and nothing else. Do they get the same privileges as regular attendees?

*Comment:* I can think of a few times where that happened, once with the horse boarding facility and once with the tennis courts, for example. I think it was understood that they were visitors and were not expected to sign on to the rules of our meetings.

*Comment:* We need a method to acknowledge when this comes up and how to handle it.

*Comment:* It should be spelled out in the meeting guidelines.

*Comment:* It seems to me that there are two main issues that have been stumbling blocks in the past for getting these guidelines established. The first is that voting rights should be kept to those who stayed informed, but on the other hand we don't want to limit voting to specific people. This is a stakeholder group after all. The second issue is the difficulty that comes with representing an agency or organization. I feel that the conversation needs to be around these two issues to move forward.

*Comment:* There are processes that have been developed in other settings on getting permission to become a signatory to a group. They spell out what the representative is empowered to do in the meeting itself and what they must bring back to the organization.

*Comment (Bill Springer, SCVWD):* I can give my opinion on what best represents the Water District's interests, but I cannot give the Water District's official opinion. Only the Board can do that.

Pam summarized that she was hearing that the group wanted her to start the conversation with the MAC, develop the options, then bring something back to the Steering Committee that is not open-ended. Also, the MAC will review existing documents on process matters and will help think about the two obstacles that were raised as well as the money question. On the previous signatory documents, the first half of the signature page was committing to participating, and the second half was about making a financial contribution. If anyone has templates or experience in knowing how to make this process fun and acceptable, please contact Pam. Pam will agendaize

this topic again in the fall, when the Steering Committee will decide which pieces to tackle first. The MAC will make recommendations about this too.

The next topic Pam brought up was fundraising. Per the existing correspondence review guidelines, all funding requests must proceed with Steering Committee approval. Although there is no fundraising plan right now, and that is something that Pam will begin working on soon, the Watershed Council would like to continue looking for funds to support our current programs and work plans as well as funding for a strategic outreach plan and a few other things such as IT needs and capacity building. Unfortunately the CalFed proposal that included a strategic outreach plan was not funded, so we plan to look locally for support for this very important project. We think that our fish passage improvement projects are adequately funded through 2007, but if we find that we do need more funds for them, we would like permission to seek them out and submit applications. Members of the Steering Committee commented that ideally we should have a fundraising plan, but until one was developed, they approved of this strategy.

### **Staff reports**

#### Restoration Projects Manager (Katie Pilat):

The Watershed Council will be giving a presentation to the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission about the McGarvey Gulch culvert replacement project on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The project will replace an old decaying culvert that is an obstacle to steelhead migration with a new one that was designed to allow fish passage. The meeting is at 2:30 at the County Board of Supervisor Chambers (400 County Center in Redwood City). We invite everyone who is interested in this project to come see the presentation.

Construction of the stormwater demonstration projects is almost complete. The residential project has been done for several months. The pervious concrete at the parking lot project in Menlo Park was poured in the beginning of June and the contractors are doing the finishing touches on the parking lot now. Once construction is completed, the Watershed Council will begin the monitoring and outreach parts of the project. The outreach will include an interpretive sign at the parking lot site as well as guided tours of each site and brochures and fact sheets.

*Question:* What kind of monitoring will you be doing at the sites? On-the-ground data about how these techniques work will be very important to give to the cities in hopes that they will begin requiring some of these treatment controls.

*Response:* We will try to monitor both infiltration into the ground and runoff escaping the site by using pressure transducers that measure the height of water above them. For the parking lot, one transducer will be in the perforated drain-pipe at the bottom of the swale, and the other will be in the bottom of the gravel-filled trench under the swale. With these, we hope to measure how much water is leaving the parking lot out of the drain-pipe and how quickly it is sinking into the ground from the bottom of the trench. At the residential site there is a similar set-up, with a gravel-filled trench running down the middle of the driveway and a perforated drain-pipe inside of it. When the gravel trench is saturated, excess runoff will overflow at the end of the driveway through a pop-up emitter. We will have the same pressure transducer set-up here as at the parking lot – one connected to the pipe and one at the bottom of the trench.

Additionally, we will monitor outflows from the Menlo Park parking lot site from a row of stalls that has no swale, so this will be a more direct measure of how much the pervious concrete reduces surface runoff. We can either measure the runoff through the outflow pipes during a rain storm, or may be we'll get volunteers to pour water onto the parking lot on the side with pervious concrete and compare it to the same thing on the side without pervious concrete.

*Comment (Art Kraemer):* I am working with middle school kids in Menlo Park, so if you need volunteers, maybe we can get the kids to do it.

*Comment:* Any on-the-ground data will also be really useful to the Regional Water Quality Control Board. They recommend stormwater BMP techniques, but don't have a lot of local data yet to be able to say how effective they are.

Project Director (Pam Sturner):

The Watershed Council closed its fiscal year 2005-06 books at the end of June. Pam also followed up on the ideas generated from the last meeting about an educational forum on Searsville dam and reservoir and talked with the committee that was formed about dates and locations. The USGS can offer one of their rooms at no cost to host the forum, and we have made tentative reservations for October 28 and November 11. These are the only Saturdays in that time period with no home football games at Stanford. Our contact at the USGS, Alicia Torregrosa, is excited to co-sponsor the event. The event will be separate from a Steering Committee meeting held on a Saturday when we hope more people from the community will be able to come.

*Question:* Is it possible to get a tour of the Searsville Lake area?

*Response:* Contact Philippe Cohen to ask for a docent-led tour. You can request what areas you want to see and what topics you want to learn about.

*Question:* Will Jasper Ridge be doing a bathymetry survey of Searsville Lake this year?

*Response (Marty Laporte):* I will ask Philippe Cohen if this is funded and when it will be done.

Pam also recently met with Kirk Lennington, who is in the Planning Division with the Mid-Peninsula Open Space District, to talk about how MROSD and the Watershed Council might work together more. MROSD is doing an evaluation of sediment sources from their lands into the creeks. Pam asked the Steering Committee if they would like a presentation on this study, and everyone agreed that this would be interesting.

**Continuing business (Trish Mulvey)**

Most of the business Trish reports on is on vacation for the summer.

- Santa Clara Valley Water Resources Protection Collaborative: The revised draft ordinance will be reviewed at a Water District Board of Director's workshop on Tuesday August 8 at 10:00 am. It will come back to the Board as a public notice for adoption at either the September or October Board meetings at the earliest. Currently, the language in the ordinance assumes it will be adopted this fall, in which case it would become effective in February. Both Trish Mulvey and Pam Sturner sit on an outreach committee for the Collaborative; the next conference call for that group is July 20, 2006.

- Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative: The WMI is taking July off. Most recently, they have been developing an Indicators Scorecard and are using data from Coyote Creek to test it as a prototype. They will present this to the Core Group at the August meeting. As part of this project, they take quantitative information from technical reports for each reach of creek and lump it into grades for the health of each creek on the scorecard. Louisa Squires will be giving a presentation to the coordinating committee of Fish and Aquatic Habitat Collaborative Effort (FAHCE) with plans for riparian habitat and stream monitoring. The District is moving toward programmatic monitoring rather than project-by-project monitoring which is now costing them \$2-3 million per year and is projected to cost \$20 million per year by 2017 if the system is not changed to programmatic monitoring. The strategy is to get an overview approach to monitoring approved, then to try to get current permits amended such that the regulators get the data they need and the monitoring is more coordinated and useful to decision-makers and the public.

*Question:* What was the feedback from the Collaborative on the District’s new Water Resources Protection Ordinance?

*Response (Trish Mulvey):* A few typos were caught, the new effective date was changed to February 2007, and a request for additional language to say “February 2007 or sooner if a city is ready sooner” will be discussed **at the next meeting**.

*Comment (Bill Springer):* The District held a number of public meetings on the ordinance, and all attendees of those earlier meetings will be invited to the August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. The District is trying to advertise this meeting as much as it can, including to landscapers, agricultural advisories, chambers of commerce, etc. Also, a lot has been changed in the ordinance since Ann Draper gave her presentation to the Steering Committee in February. The biggest change is that District authority (including permitting authority) over any area that is not District property or right-of-way has been eliminated. But it will still gladly give early consultation about projects near creeks upon request.

*Comment (Trish Mulvey):* The cities are waiting until the District finalizes its ordinance to finalize theirs.

Meeting adjourned.

In attendance:

Marty Laporte – Stanford Utilities

Bill Springer – SCVWD

Peter Neal – Acterra

Sheri Lubin – Acterra

Kevin Murray – SFC-JPA

Julie Skelton – Stanford Management Company

Bill Whitmer – SFWC

Art Kraemer – Crescent Park Neighborhood Association

Janet Pelinks

Claire Elliot – Stevens and Permanente Creeks Watershed Council (SPCWC)

Cheryl Turner – SPCWC

Libby Lucas – California Native Plant Society

Marge DeStaebler – Portola Valley Conservation Committee  
Viv Blumenkamp – LWVPA  
Metha Klock – Acterra

Respectfully submitted by Katie Pilat.