

San Francisquito Watershed Council
Steering Committee Minutes
September 13, 2006

Introductions. Agenda approved with a new item: Request for Steering Committee's support to sign funding letter for NOAA Community-based Restoration Program. July 12 minutes approved. The next meeting is October 11, at which Sandi Potter from the Regional Board will give a presentation on the sediment TMDL in our watershed.

Announcements

- Pam Sturner (SFWC): The Watershed Council will be hosting a Coastal Cleanup Day site on Saturday, September 16, from 9 am to 12 noon. Meet at the corner of Woodland Road and Manhattan Ave.
- Brad Eggleston (City of Palo Alto): Brad recently attended the Regional Monitoring Program annual meeting. It was a mini-conference on watershed, biota, and pollutant monitoring. The "Pulse of the Estuary" document from the conference is in the circulating file. Trish Mulvey added that more copies of this document are available from SFEI.
- Paul Heiple (Portola Valley Conservation Committee): There is a new inventory of California invasive plants available from CAL-IPC. It contains new weed ratings and is available from CNPS.
- Jerry Hearn (Acterra): In the November Measure A, "Parks for the Future in San Mateo County," will be on the ballot in San Mateo County. It would be a 1/8% sales tax and the money will go to the County Parks Department. There are two county parks in our watershed: Huddart and Wunderlich. This measure would double or triple funding for San Mateo County Parks and could result in the Parks Department finally being able to undertake some much-needed long-term projects. Paul Heiple added that the Parks Department is grossly underfunded. There are no resource managers for the parks currently; this work is all done by volunteers.
- Pam Sturner (SFWC): There is a notice about the Stanford University Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) scoping meeting in the circulating file. The meeting will be on September 21 from 4-6 pm. The location is on the notice.

Presentation: Update on water quality data for the San Francisquito watershed (Jonathan Owens and Chris White, Balance Hydrologics; Brad Eggleston, City of Palo Alto)

Pam introduced the presentation, which will be on data collected through the LTMAP program by the City of Palo Alto and Stanford University at four permanent monitoring stations at the following locations: San Francisquito Creek at Newell Road, San Francisquito Creek at Piers Lane, Los Trancos Creek at Piers Lane, and Bear Creek on at Sand Hill Road. At the October or November Steering Committee meeting Brad Eggleston will give another presentation summarizing and interpreting results since the beginning of the program in 2002.

Brad Eggleston began the presentation, saying that he will give a short summary today about this year's data (through water year 2006). He reiterated that he will be back at an upcoming Steering Committee meeting to give more analysis of all the data over the last five years.

Brad's first slide was a map of the watershed (see 091306_Eggleston.ppt from <http://sanfranciscuito.org/projects/forums/archive>) showing the location of the Newell Street monitoring station, which Palo Alto operates. It captures runoff from most of the watershed, including most of the urban part, although there is a small part that is bypassed to downstream of Highway 101. It is different from the upper watershed monitoring locations in that flow is intermittent. This means that the automatic sampling in which water is pumped from the creek up to the reservoir to measure dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and pH typically only occurs during storms. Instead, monitoring focuses on chemical analysis from hand-sampling at this station.

There were 6 sets of dates in water year 05-06 on which composite samples were taken which covered a range of creek conditions. The December 19-20 sampling covered the first flush storm at this station. The upper watershed had substantial flow earlier in the year, but this was the first rainfall that produced significant flow this far down in the creek. Also, there was a sample taken from the big New Year's Eve storms; there were samples from medium-sized rain events in February and March; and samples from low flow conditions in January and May.

Dissolved copper concentration: The first graph in the slides shows dissolved copper results from five years of data. There was a very high copper concentration during the New Year's Eve storm, but it is not clear what the cause of this was. Generally there are higher copper concentrations at the Newell station than higher up in the watershed.

Question: Could this have been the result of an overflow from the pond on Stanford land where the landowner accidentally dumped a large amount of a copper-based algicide into the pond in the spring of 2004?

Response from Jonathan Owens (Balance Hydrologics): Unfortunately, the monitoring station on Bear Creek was damaged in that storm and there is no data on copper from that part of the watershed for that storm.

Dissolved nickel concentration: Brad continued the presentation with the dissolved nickel concentration graph. The concentrations were far below aquatic toxicity levels. Someone asked what the source of nickel in the watershed would be. Another Steering Committee member offered that it is associated with serpentine rock, but it was not known what the anthropogenic source was. Jonathan Owens responded that if nickel were primarily associated with sediment, you wouldn't see it remain stable as the total suspended solids fluctuates.

Dissolved lead concentration: All dissolved lead concentration were "non-detects" (below the detection limits of the analysis techniques used) except for the New Year's Eve storm, which was the highest lead value seen in the five years of monitoring.

Hardness: When considering the toxicity of dissolved metals to fish, you must account for the hardness in the water. Hardness varies with the amount of rainfall, in other words dilution. When there are higher flows and the hardness is lower (more diluted), metals become more toxic to fish. This is exactly what happened during the New Year's Eve storm: there was a spike in metals concentrations at the same time as a dip in hardness due to high dilution. This is sort of a worst-case scenario.

Total suspended solids (TSS): Data that are collected during storms show a high TSS level; those collected during low flows are almost zero.

Total mercury: Low TSS levels coincide with low total mercury concentrations because mercury adsorbs to sediment particles.

Mercury Comparison: Methyl mercury data is only collected at the Newell Street station, while total and dissolved mercury is monitored at all stations. Methyl mercury is generally a very small percentage (less than 1%) of total mercury. At the recent Regional Monitoring Program meeting, members reported monitoring methyl mercury at 0.1 nanogram per liter in the Bay water. In San Francisquito Creek at Newell, methyl mercury was measured at 0.1-0.3 nanograms per liter. This is a little higher than the percentage seen in the Bay water, but not drastically. The concern about methyl mercury is concerning bioaccumulation in the food chain, not acute toxicity.

Pyrethroids: The City has been sampling for organophosphates since it began these monitoring efforts and has never detected any in five years. Residential use of diazinon and chlorpyrifos was phased out in the late 1990s. The replacement in pesticides is pyrethroids. The City of Palo Alto began monitoring for pyrethroids in water year 2005. Bifenthrin is the most common for residential use. All pyrethroids were “non-detects” for all 12 sampling events at fairly low detection limits. However, pyrethroids tend to sorb to sediment particles, which could lead to toxicity for invertebrates in the sediment. Palo Alto would like to do sediment sampling for pyrethroids during the next rainy season.

Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs): After seeing an article about the City of Austin Texas teaming up with the USGS to look at PAHs from asphalt parking lot seal coating. The coal tar seal coating that was being used in that area was more than 50% PAH by weight. However, this kind of seal coating is not as common on the West Coast and there are lower PAH levels in asphalt here. All PAH samples were “non-detects” except one very low value. Palo Alto is not planning to continue this monitoring for next year.

Data Review and Analysis: With five years of monitoring completed, the LTMAP team will be looking at data from all four stations and making recommendations for changes to the monitoring program. Palo Alto has received a draft report with recommendations for changes from Armand Ruby, who helped devise the original monitoring program for the LTMAP team. Some of these recommendations are summarized on the Data Review and Analysis slide. Brad will come back and present these recommendations at the October or November Steering Committee meeting.

Chris White and Jonathan from Balance Hydrologics then gave a presentation on the results from the three upper watershed stations (San Francisquito Creek at Piers Lane, Los Trancos Creek at Piers Lane, and Bear Creek at Sand Hill Road). Jonathan began by talking about the big storm on December 31, 2005. At the USGS gauging station, the peak flow was 5,000 cfs, which is approximately the 19-year storm, or 5% chance of occurrence in any year. The Bear Creek station equipment was destroyed in this storm. Jonathan guessed that it was more than a 20-year storm in the Bear Creek watershed, but a smaller storm on Los Trancos and Corte Madera

Creeks, which averaged out to approximately a 20-year storm by the time it got to San Francisquito Creek. Jonathan guessed that the flow on Bear Creek might have even been a little bit higher than the flow in Bear Creek during the 1998 floods (although there is no data from either storm to know for sure).

Balance staff were at the three upper watershed stations just before and just after the peak of the storm, but not on the day of the peak. Peak flows estimates based on survey data for the three stations were 3,800 cfs at the Bear Creek station, 4,300 cfs at the San Francisquito Piers Lane station, and 640 cfs at the Los Trancos Piers Lane station.

The hydrograph slide shows that there were several storms in a row, so the ground was very saturated when the big storm hit. The next two slides showed a list of field measurements and lab analyses done for the whole water year.

In the hydrograph of the whole water year, you can see the first and second flush storms, and as Brad noted in his presentation, the first flush storm at the Newell station came later in the year than the first flush storm in the upper watershed. Balance was hoping to get a spring storm after a dry period when garden and lawn chemicals might have been applied, but because of all the rain last March, that never came. They also did one sampling in August.

The water temperatures were warm in the spring and summer. July water temperatures (once analyzed) will likely be warm, too, with the hot July we had. These warm temperatures could be detrimental to fish, although they only went above 21 degrees Celsius once through the end of the period shown on the graph (ending in early May).

There were some constituent concentrations that were consistently high. Total mercury, which is not hardness dependent, was high any time the flow was greater than 10 cfs. There are also a few outliers such as the high total mercury concentration from the first flush storm even though the flow was not very high. Dissolved copper was occasionally high, and this constituent is hardness dependent, so it is more toxic to fish during bigger storms when hardness is low. The acute toxicity threshold is 13 micrograms per liter for dissolved copper. It was as high as 25 micrograms per liter at the Newell Street station; in the upper watershed it ranged from 6 to 10. Also, it should be noted that these measurements were from composite samples that are collected over a 24-hour period. Typically acute toxicity measurements are taken from a 4-hour period. So the concentration for the highest 4-hour period was probably higher than 13 micrograms per liter. Dissolved copper is most toxic to invertebrates and algae, which are fish food. From past data, the peak dissolved copper concentration is usually about two times the average for the whole storm. In the future it would be good to try to collect a grab sample of copper during the peak of the storm.

So what does that data all mean when put together? That will be the topic of Brad's next presentation. Since we've been monitoring for 5 years now, we should see effect of management decisions within that period. For example, organophosphates (diazinon and chlorpyrifos) showed up in other monitoring (not part of the LTMAP program, but from within the watershed) in 2001, but have not been detected since. If they are not being seen in the water, we consider discontinuing monitoring for them since the analysis is very expensive.

Question: Diazinon has not been seen in the last five years since we've been doing LTMAP sampling, but the watershed is listed as impaired for diazinon. Why is this?

Response: The listing is actually for "Diazinon and pesticide-related toxicity" so that the implementation plan can address impacts other than diazinon. The TMDL will help get our watershed delisted if appropriate. At some point you stop monitoring and start managing. For example, brake pads are now being developed to result in less copper pollution. Also, the listing was partially to get pesticide regulators to focus on water quality and environmental effects since they had previously been focused primarily on human health impacts. But there are usually no surprises. For example, the negative effects of diazinon were known and the transition to pyrethroids began as early as 15 years ago. But a program to reduce pyrethroid use couldn't be started until data was collected to prove the problem. So pyrethroid data has been collected since day 1 of its use.

As an add-on to the main presentation, Jonathan talked about some flow anomalies that have been seen at the Bear Creek station. He showed a slide that showed a short rise in flow and corresponding dip in salinity most Saturdays and Sundays during November 2005. This makes it look like someone might be draining a pool or pond with water fresher (less saline) than the creek flow on a regular schedule. Balance was able to get a grab sample from one of these events and had a chemical analysis done. There was no obvious chemical signature of a pool. The rise in flow was probably about 5,000 gallons. One Steering Committee member suggested it might be from flushing solar heater pipes. Another wondered if it might be connected to SLAC, but the monitoring station is upstream of SLAC. The main thing above the monitoring station is residential Woodside.

Update: Meeting ground rules review requested by Steering Committee (Pam Sturner)

This item is a continuation of the new business item from July regarding clarification of some organizational matters for the Steering Committee. These four items were items: membership guidelines, meeting ground rules, guidelines for correspondence review, and review of the workplans and wish list we developed in 2004-05. At the July meeting, the Steering Committee wanted the MAC to develop recommendations on the various items. Pam has begun working on these items with the MAC and has recommendations on meeting ground rules to bring to the Steering Committee today.

The draft ground rules Pam passed around are slightly edited from a list used in the past. She asked the Steering Committee to look at the draft and suggest changes or ask questions. She will incorporate any changes from today's meeting and then post the revised document on the SFWC website for correspondence review. If no objections are heard, they will be adopted after five business days.

Questions and comments on draft ground rules for Steering Committee meetings:

- Does "no rank" mean that there will be no chair? *Response:* The Coordinator will enforce the rules, but the idea is that a boss in the room would not control the contributions to the discussion from a staff person. The Coordinator will control the process, but not the content.

- What does it mean to “maintain confidentiality,” given that our meetings are open to the public? *Response:* This is an open forum, so most of the discussion is not confidential. However, we’ve had some discussion about minutes in the past and came to the conclusion that sometimes people express opinions that they do not want to have included in the minutes. This is valid – we want people to feel free to say what they need to say – but it is that person’s responsibility to say that their comments should not be included in the minutes. We could change “maintain confidentiality” to “maintain confidentiality when requested.”
- Let’s add instructions to ourselves somewhere that we should review the ground rules every 18 months to two years.
- We’ve talked about the need to recognize that individuals do not speak for their organization. Can we add this in the ground rules somewhere, or is that a part of the membership agreement conversation? *Response:* It is part of the membership agreement, but it might be good to have as a reference in the ground rules, too. People speaking need to make it clear whether they are speaking for themselves or their agency. Generally people are only speaking for themselves and it should be clear that their reaching consensus on an issue in a Steering Committee meeting has no bearing on approval by the governing body of their agency. We will state this ground rule as follows: “Participants are not perceived to speak for their organization unless they indicate otherwise.”
- Pam will make these changes and will post the revised document for correspondence review. She will add the date of the last revision to the bottom of the document.

New business: Request for Steering Committee’s support to sign funding letter for NOAA Community-based Restoration Program

The Watershed Council received a request yesterday from Restore America’s Estuaries to sign onto a support letter for the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program (NOAA-CRP) that will go to the chairs of the House and Senate appropriations committees. The funding amount is \$22 million for the NOAA-CRP 2007 budget. This program has been a source of funds for SFWC workdays and fish passage improvement projects in the past. The letter is not controversial; it simply asks the Senate to include these funds in the federal budget.

Pam received the Steering Committee’s approval to sign the letter. They also commented that she should copy it to Anna Eshoo and ask Anna’s staff about the best timing for congress to receive the letter. Pam added that if other groups want to sign the letter, the more the better. The deadline is September 18. Talk to Pam after the meeting for a copy of the letter.

Staff reports

Ryan Navratil, Field Coordinator: The last month has been spent preparing for volunteer activities and weed eradication. The Watershed Council has its first volunteer workday of the fall season – Coastal Cleanup Day – this coming Saturday, September 16, from 9 am to 12 noon. There will be several youth groups coming, and we have received requests for more workday opportunities that could dovetail into activities for Saturday workdays. Ryan has also been working on recruiting volunteers and planning for the revegetation site monitoring program.

Question: Save the Bay has worked with a group of agencies from around the Bay to put together a list of the seven worst trash hot spots in the Bay Area. San Francisquito Creek is not on this list, but Coyote and Guadalupe are, along with one spot in San Mateo County. I'm concerned about the kind of trash that we don't want volunteers working with. Do we have training to deal with this issue?

Response: We give the volunteers an orientation at the beginning of the workday based on tips sheets provided by the Santa Clara Valley Water District and California Coastal Commission. We instruct volunteers not to touch needles or feces or to disturb active homeless camps. Sometimes it is a somewhat subjective judgment as to whether a camp is active or not though, and in these cases we tell volunteers to ask a staff person before doing anything. Also, the JPA's annual creek walk was just conducted and large items that the agencies will be removing are tagged.

Question: Are the homeless camps notified before a creek cleanup?

Response: According to protocols developed in the late 1990s, they should be. However, this may be an issue that the watershed agencies need to revisit to make sure protocols are still being followed. The Watershed Council itself does not do this task.

Ryan has also been working on *Arundo donax* eradication through a partnership with the Sonoma Ecology Center. He's been working to get up to speed on the technology that we'll need to participate, mainly GIS and the Weed Information Management System database, and doing preparatory work and mapping. He expects to do the actual eradication work at the end of September. He has passed the certification for the Pesticide Applicator's license.

Question: What is the end date for the Sonoma Ecology Center grant?

Response: March 2007. There is one eradication season of funding left for the fall of 2006.

Comment from Paul Heiple of the Portola Valley Conservation Committee: There is a new invasive plant that has been found at the corner of Page Mill Road and El Monte, also on Edgewood Preserve and in Portola Valley called stinkwort. It likes disturbed areas. You can't pull it out except for when it is really small. It grows in the summer when it has no water. It has been red-flagged by CAL-IPC.

Paul passed around a sample of stinkwort and pointed out that it is sticky and smells like camphor and pine.

Katie Pilat, Restoration Projects Manager: Over the past month Katie worked to finalize the reports on the Local Agency Policies and Practices Review that U.C. Cooperative Extension and EOA conducted. She will post them on the Watershed Council website and will work with the advisory committee for that project to explore ways to follow up on the recommendations made in the reviews.

Also, the Watershed Council has collected comments on the 50% level designs for modifications to two box culverts on Los Trancos Creek that will improve fish passage, and has sent those comments to the engineers, who will move on to the next stage of the design process.

Katie and Pam also recently gave a presentation to the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission about the McGarvey Gulch culvert replacement in Huddart Park, which is another fish passage improvement project. The Watershed Council is partnering with the County on this project; we have a grant to pay for designs, and the County has a grant to pay for permitting and construction. Recently, the Town of Woodside Conservation and Environmental Health Committee asked Pam and Katie to come give the same talk at their next meeting.

Pam Sturner, Project Director and Coordinator: On the administrative side, Pam spent time in July working with Acterra's business manager to close out SFWC's books for FY 2005-06. On the project side, she worked on setting the agenda and logistics for the educational forum on Searsville with the forum planning committee. Its members include those who volunteered in May -- Ted Bache, Trish Mulvey, Marty Laporte, and Philippe Cohen -- and two new members, Ginger Holt and Alicia Torregrosa.

Continuing Business (Trish Mulvey)

The Water Resources Protection Collaborative is on schedule for the Santa Clara Valley Water District to adopt the new Stream Protection ordinance at its October 24 Board meeting. There will be outreach materials to go with the revised ordinance, and Trish and Pam have been working on the committee that is developing them. There is also a "train the trainers" workshop for Collaborative member agencies to teach city staff how to work with the new ordinance and Guidelines & Standards. The tentative date for this workshop is October 3.

Question: Have there been significant changes in the District's ordinance since the last time it was presented at the Steering Committee meeting back in February or March?

Response: Yes – the District will no longer have permitting authority for any property they don't own or have an easement for. The District's general counsel convened a meeting with the city attorneys and county counsel and it was determined that the District never had permitting authority off their property and easements. It is clear now that only the cities and county have land use permitting jurisdiction, and this policy will take effect on March 1, 2007. District land use permits grew out of a time when the District was part of the County and thus had the authority, but now that they are a special district, they no longer do.

Question: Will the cities be tasked with hydrologic and hydraulic review of projects in creeks?

Response: You would need to ask the District that question.

Question: What is the name of the new ordinance?

Response: The Water Resources Protection Ordinance.

Question: I'm afraid that cities won't enforce land use restrictions as well as the Water District did. Does each city have its own ordinance to be trained on?

Response: All the member agencies of the Collaborative agreed to a common set of guidelines and standards, and each will come up with its own regulations to implement them. At the "train the trainer" workshop, staff will be trained on outreach and procedures for working with the public. Also, in cases where the cities don't feel they have the expertise to implement some part

of the ordinance or the guidelines and standards, the District will provide assistance on a fee-for-service basis on request.

Question: Will the guidelines and standards be used on the San Mateo County side of the creek?

Response: The District is mindful that three sides of the county are bordered by creeks and is figuring out ways to work across county lines. One guideline is to always work with the neighbor across the creek (and upstream and downstream) when doing a project on the creekbank.

The Watershed Management Initiative is in the process of revisioning itself and is continuing to have quarterly meetings.

The next Oakland Museum of California map will be South San Jose, including Guadalupe Creek. It is at the printer as we speak. The Daly City and vicinity and the San Mateo and vicinity maps should be done by the end of the calendar year.

The San Francisco Estuary Project Comprehensive Plan will include a watershed section and Bay Area watershed goals. There will be a briefing on this document in the spring. Bay Area watershed groups will be convening at the end of the month; information about this is in the circulating file.

In attendance:

Kevin Murray – SFCJPA
Judy Dauberman – Youth Community Service
Bill Whitmer – SFWC
Paul Heiple – PV Conservation Committee
Karen Widdel – San Mateo County Agriculture Department
Jerry Hearn – Acterra
Marge DeStaebler – PV Conservation Committee
Trish Mulvey – SFWC / WMI
Brad Eggleston – City of Palo Alto
Chris White – Balance Hydrologics
Jonathan Owens – Balance Hydrologics
Viv Blomenkamp – LWVPA
Annette Walton – Stanford Management Company
Libby Lucas – Los Altos resident
Art Kraemer – CPNA
Katie Pilat – SFWC
Pam Sturner – SFWC
Ryan Navratil – SFWC

Minutes respectfully submitted by Katie Pilat