

---

**San Francisquito Watershed Council**  
**Steering Committee Minutes**

May 9, 2007

This meeting was held at the Palo Alto Baylands Interpretive Center. Pam Sturner welcomed everyone. Participants introduced themselves. Pam began by saying that the Watershed Council has faced some significant challenges over the past five years including financial difficulties, a difficult relationship with Acterra, a difficult relationship with the JPA. These issues are now clarified – Pam has worked with the MAC to resolve issues with Acterra, and the JPA’s recent strategic planning process has largely answered that the JPA’s future priority will be the Army Corps project. They are now asking who can take on other things that are important for the watershed, like landowner assistance and community outreach – and they’re asking if it can be the Watershed Council.

For the first time in five years, the Watershed Council is now free to be visionary to think about what we want to do next. We need to be bold and visionary because the things we need to do to build this organization are going to require a lot of energy, creativity, and commitment to get done. Throughout this process, we’ve said many times that we need to re-energize the organization by bringing in more people. And to bring in more people, we need an inspiring vision for why we do what we do. We need to be able inspire others to join our cause and share our passion about why we think preserving watershed health is so important so that they will support us in all the ways we need.

Pam asked everyone, in going through the exercises, to ask themselves: What is it we want to see happen in this watershed? What will it mean to be successful? How can we build on our past successes to do what this community needs to meet the continuing pressures on this resource? What opportunities can we seize that didn’t exist five or ten years ago? What do we want to accomplish so that people look back and see that we “got it?” Pam summarized by saying the purpose of today’s meeting is to bring the passion and energy we have for this resource to create a compelling vision that will spread that energy to others.

Pam then introduced Debbie Mytels who facilitated the remainder of the meeting. Debbie was the first coordinator of the group when it was called the CRMP and is now Acterra’s Associate Director.

Debbie explained that today’s exercise would be conducted using the world café process and that it is meant to be creative and fun. It is a structured brainstorming process in which participants let their ideas flow, then later harvest the ideas as a group. The first question the group will consider is “If we are successful, what will the watershed look like in 50 years?” Later, the group will ask itself “What should watershed residents know?” then finally a question about equity and a discussion of tradeoffs: “Does the Watershed Council have a role in helping people learn about and understand tradeoffs involved in making choices about watershed-related decisions?”

Before the brainstorming began, Debbie showed the group a presentation about a San Leandro Creek watershed awareness program.

After the presentation, Debbie explained how the first brainstorming session would work. In answering the first question, everyone was to give their response with no cross-talk. After this first round, then the back-and-forth would begin and people could elaborate and ask questions of each other. After 15 minutes, each person would write the best idea they heard on a 3x5 card. Debbie repeated the first question, “If we are successful, what will the watershed look like in 50 years?” She gave examples – would the creek still be around, would children be able to play in it, what critters would live in it? She suggested that the group think of this as what legacy they would like to leave – our aspiration for the watershed. She also suggested that participants consider all senses – visual, smell, sounds – and be both general and location-specific, for example what do creek banks look like in Portola Valley or driveways in Menlo Park; what 5<sup>th</sup> graders in East Palo Alto know about the creek; or do you know there’s a creek nearby when you’re at Stanford Shopping Center?

The group then broke into small groups (4-5 people each) and brainstormed about the first question for 15 minutes. At the end of that time, everyone wrote down the best idea they had heard during the session on a notecard. Everyone then reshuffled themselves and formed new groups. During a second 15-minute session, people in the new groups began by reading their card to the rest of the group, then continued discussing and brainstorming about the question.

At the end of the second brainstorming session, Debbie commented that it sounded like people were having fun with the exercise. She then asked participants to call out the best ideas they heard and recorded these on a flip chart.

After a short break, the whole group brainstormed responses to the question, “What do you think people who live in a watershed should know?” Debbie recorded responses on flip chart paper.

Then participants again broke up into small groups to respond to the question, “Does the Watershed Council have a role in helping people learn about and understand the tradeoffs involved in making choices about watershed-related decisions? Why or why not?” After the brainstorming session, the whole group discussed some of the responses raised as Debbie recorded.

After this final brainstorming session ended, Pam thanked everyone for their active participation and great ideas. She hoped it was an interesting exercise for everyone and that everyone felt they had a role to play in the strategic planning process, first in reviewing the Watershed Council’s past through the timeline of accomplishments, then in thinking about its present by getting a sense of how we are doing through the internal and external stakeholder interviews, and finally in setting the Watershed Council’s future through developing its vision. The next step in the process will be to bring the pieces together to set the Watershed Council’s priorities for future activities. Pam and a sub-group from the Strategic Planning Committee will review the data from external stakeholder interviews that are currently being done and will look for patterns and themes regarding how the Watershed Council is doing, what we do well, what we can do better, etc.

Debbie then asked the group to consider how well the visioning exercise went, what they liked, and what changes could be made to improve it. She recorded responses on the flip chart paper.

Pam ended the meeting with the following announcements:

- The June 15 Steering Committee meeting will be in the regular time and place (Peninsula Conservation Center from 2:30 – 5:00).
- The National River Cleanup Day creek cleanup will be held on May 19 from 9:00 – 12:00, meeting at the corner of Woodland Road and Manhattan Avenue in East Palo Alto.
- The San Mateo County Times just ran a nice story about Plaza #5, the pervious concrete parking lot we worked on with the City of Menlo Park.
- The Watershed Council had fantastic turn-out for the El Palo Alto Park site in the Going Native Garden Tour – 93 people signed the sign-in sheet! They had great questions and many were contemplating landscaping projects in their own yards. There were also questions about the homeless people in the creek. Overall we received lots of compliments on the park.
- Tom Zigterman had some corrections to make to the draft minutes for the March 14 meeting that were not announced at the April meeting. We will explain what those changes are at the next meeting.

Viv Blomenkamp added that the Palo Alto and South San Mateo County chapters of the League of Women Voters are all in the San Francisquito watershed and work together on water issues.

**In attendance:**

Katie Pilat – SFWC  
Brad Eggleston – City of Palo Alto  
Philippe S. Cohen – Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve  
Art Kraemer – Crescent Park Neighborhood Association  
Marty Laporte – Stanford Utilities  
Liz Schwerer  
Judy Dauberman – Youth Community Service  
Jerry Hearn – Acterra  
Bill Whitmer – SFWC volunteer  
Kevin Murray – SFC-JPA  
Leslie Lambert – Town of Portola Valley  
Bill Springer – SCVWD  
Trish Mulvey – SFWC volunteer  
Walter Nelson – FFG Institute  
Miyko Harris-Parker – SFC-JPA  
Ryan Navratil – SFWC  
Viv Blomenkamp – LWVPA  
Pam Sturner – SFWC

Minutes respectfully submitted by Katie Pilat.