

Lower Alhambra Creek Watershed Management Plan - Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, August 18, 2022  
4:00-5:30pm

**Acronyms:**

CCRCD = Contra Costa Resource Conservation District

AWC = Alhambra Watershed Council

FoAC = Friends of Alhambra Creek

CDFW = California Department of Fish and Wildlife

CUSP = California Urban Streams Partnership

Water Board (SF RWQCB) = San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board

**4:00 Participants:** Victoria Woolfolk (CCRCD), Chris Lim (CCRCD), Andrew (Andy) Chambers (CDFW), Ann Riley (Water Board and CUSP), Igor Skaredoff (FoAC, AWC, CCRCD), Mitch Avalon (AWC), Rany Leptien (City of Martinez), Katie Hart (Water Board), Ali Hatefi (City of Martinez), Bob Huttar (FoAC), Elaine Worthington-Jackson (FoAC), Jennifer Roth (LSA Associates, Inc), Robin Mitchell (MVSD), Walter Pease (CCRCD), Jessica Hall (CUSP)

**4:10 Presentation: Mitch Avalon discusses Alhambra Watershed Council's (AWC) and Friends of Alhambra Creek's (FoAC) comments on the Plan**

- Notice of Violation of the City of Martinez from Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Miscommunication of crews, volunteers, maintenance workers, etc. - adopt a vegetation management plan to increase communication between City and volunteers on working in the creek
- City of Martinez wanted to do sediment removal and it made sense to combine this with the vegetation plan = current plan
- Added community oversight to the plan and AWC was inserted into the document to provide that
- City Council approved the Plan in April?
- AWC and FoAC reviewed the plan and discussed the plan, submitted a comment letter dated July 6th
  - One primary comment is the role the AWC has in the Plan as it was written: very authoritative, having approval over the City's activities within the creek
    - AWC is not an "official organization" such as a 501(c) - no legal stature, no insurance, not interested in taking on any liability
    - What happens if there is an emergency?
    - Comment: Change the aspect from review to more of a community oversight/advisory role
  - Amount of times in the plan where AWC is required to "do something" before the City can "do something" - huge administrative burden for the City
    - Try to consolidate that, or streamline the review
  - **Question brought up during review: If we are going to do this plan, should we look at it from the perspective of the watershed, and is there some benefit that we can achieve to improve watershed health?**

- Remove trash from Creek/watershed
- Section that dealt with trees - request the City to have a policy for tree preservation
  - Climate change - a lot of trees are dying
  - If a tree dies, replace it with a more drought-tolerant one
- Rest of comments were relatively minor
  - Suggested species to include

#### 4:23 Questions

- Ann Riley: Water Board and CDFW see this as a route for permits - there are times when the regulatory agencies would need to engage and would like to engage in this forum with the AWC. The intent was to take advantage of this group, intent was not that the AWC would need to sign off before they would write maintenance permits, etc., they would just like input from the AWC.
  - Mitch: AWC was responding to the way the plan was written
  - Katie: Seems an appropriate modification of the narrative to help provide clarity of intent.
  - Mitch: In essence, the AWC is providing a forum for the Water Board to use to receive commentary to waste discharge permits, etc.
  - Katie: Yes. Additionally, there may be times when the City needs to do work and reach out to AWC, but some projects may require more input/participation from AWC. The frequency of the interface of communication will change.
  - Igor: Welcomed this approach.
- Andy: CDFW will not be too involved in that part, more regulatory. Can also make the evening meetings, and do not need special coordination. Who is the legal signee?
  - Under the 1600 platform, the City of Martinez will be the signee
  - AWC is just a forum for community comment
- Andy: Unforeseen work
  - CDFW has an emergency notification for unforeseen work - can complete work, but notify CDFW within 14 days
- Ann Riley: Mitch, you mention that the Plan should have a purpose, three in mind:
  - 1) Transparency between agencies and different organizations, no surprises of what is being planned, etc.
  - 2) Coordination
  - 3) Sharing of resources
  - Igor: In a lot of cases, when a project is proposed, you start from scratch and “wade through a lot of stuff” before you get down to what is likely to happen. This Plan is an asset to take advantage of.
- Mitch: Why would AWC need to be mentioned in this Plan? This is a plan for the City of Martinez to manage vegetation, etc.. AWC can certainly have meetings to provide input, but not sure AWC needs to be in the Plan.
  - Ann Riley: Used San Pablo Wildcat as a template. The AWC is important to keep as part of implementing this plan because of all the functions it can provide.

- Mitch: San Pablo Wildcat Council has a somewhat broader role than the AWC, historically - they take on “extra things”
  - Few differences between channels as well: Wildcat is maintained, Alhambra is not maintained - not cement
  - AWC happy to help comment on problems that arise
  - Watershed council happy to provide a forum for additional and any permit from regional water quality control board - can say that the City is responsible to contact the AWC rather than the other way around
- Ann Riley and Randy: Intent the City will contact AWC, for review
- Mitch: Not really reviewing, providing forum for communication
- Ann Riley: Use example of previous beaver
  - City tried to get a depredation permit
  - Community needs to be notified
  - If the City felt it was important to remove beaver from the creek, it is a controversial thing to do, the AWC would be an appropriate resource to contact to discuss an issue like this
- Mitch: More passive role than plan is currently written
  - Host meeting, make comments, take notes, send notes
  - Resource as a forum for the City and regulatory agencies
  - Cannot take on an active role
  - Igor: Hosting a meeting, making comments is an “active role”. The problem is that the intent and verbiage in the Plan are not in sync
  - **Mitch: Suggestion: take AWC out of the whole agreement, and mention AWC in just one spot and list out the times in which the City should reach out to the AWC to provide a forum for public comment**
  - Igor: Agree, this could clarify
  - Katie: Want the “ownership” descriptions to go away. It is the City’s Plan and AWC is a player in future activities, but not owning, and not being a driver - giving the public/community a voice. Also, there may be times when AWC or FoAC want to do a project - go to the City and see how those things work together
  - **Jennifer Roth: A small section title “Community Oversight” - discuss the connection between the City, volunteer projects, etc. - will draft this**
  - Ann Riley: Yes, it is the “City’s Plan”, but would like to also see it as “the community’s plan” - ex. Worth a Dam wants to do a project, they can go to AWC and ask them to host a forum with other stakeholders - get help in resolving issues, or advocating for particular projects
  - Mitch: Agree with that
  - Katie: Burden of review and approval
- Mitch: Part of the problem is that this plan is two plans in one - Vegetation Management and Sediment Removal
  - Make sense to have separate them and have the vegetation plan as a more community based plan

- Sediment removal would be all City work and the mitigation would go back to the vegetation plan
  - Randy: Does not agree with this. Also, concerned that the City adopted a resolution - do not want to undo this.
    - Sediment and vegetation are intertwined and need to be considered together
  - Jennifer: Thinking logistically, a section could clarify intent
- Ann Riley: Sees beaver being an issue - sees AWC involvement as a forum for more than just vegetation - how do we address flood damage to downtown? How do we address beaver?
  - Igor: Would AWC be held responsible for any damages, etc?
    - Permits are not in AWC's name
  - Mitch: Can add that any watershed issue, the AWC can act as a forum to discuss and provide feedback to the City on that issue
  - Randy: Combine efforts for both sediment and vegetation - runs together. Working with the county on stream gauge, help with site specific monitoring of the area.
- **Jennifer: Go through the document, take out any references to AWC and put it all into one section on “community oversight” or “community involvement”; state the the City will give the AWC the opportunity to review projects before the permits are issued and provide a forum allowing community involvement into the process/projects.**
  - Mitch: AWC would also **provide a forum for any Watershed-related issues that would occur to provide community discussion**
  - Randy: City also provides regular meetings, Plan is an ongoing “living” document
  - Mitch: City could refer issues to AWC to hold a meeting and get public feedback, almost like a subcommittee - AWC can provide/refer information back to the City
  - Randy: Determine communication between AWC and the City
  - Katie: The structure is important, build a better communication system, more planning so emergencies and problems don't occur - figure out solutions together to protect the habitat of the creek
- Andy: Emergency notification is for immediate
  - <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/LSA/Agreement-Types/#55230889-emergency-work>
- Bob: Interested in use of herbicides and limitation of it
  - Herbicides are used on one plant at the moment, but there may be certain plants that get away from us such as perennial pepperweed, can we use herbicides?
  - Do we want to add some additional flexibility now in the plan? Or As a living document, is this something we address as the problem arises?
    - Igor: in favor of latter
    - Mitch: If this problem occurs, the City can have a meeting with AWC, then go to RWQCB and CDFW, etc.

- Jennifer: Can either make that section more general now or deal with it later.
- Elaine: Pesticides are a difficult thing to pin down, general feeling, is that if you can avoid using them avoid them, if not, then use them in the proper way
- **Jennifer: Add language that herbicides may be considered for other species in the future - how to handle writing the procedure if removing AWC from wording**
  - **Mitch: provide ex in section with AWC about “if a new plant/weed...”**
- Andy: Please keep CDFW in the loop if you're looking to target Phragmites spp. at any point.
- Ann Riley: The Plan meets the requests of the Water Board
- **Ann Riley: The plant protection plan, as appears in the figures, looks great. The vegetation management codes 1-7 appear on the vegetation management figures - clarify the figures and what the codes mean**
- **Ann Riley: Inconsistency between saying there is not a need for channel capacity management and removing sediment - clarify (Section ?)**
- **Next steps: Jennifer make edits to the plan, send to Victoria, shoot out to everybody, a few weeks for comments - at least 2 wks**

#### **5:30 Workshop:**

- Meeting at City Council Chambers
- Morning lecture format, afternoon field trip
- Asked to add: a species identification and how to prune plants
  - **Bob Huttar is a tree guy and an invasive identification - October would be better**
    - **Interested in both pruning and invasive identification - Victoria work with Bob, see what support he needs**
- Primary purpose is staff training: Mondays-Fridays better
  - **Prime day: October 17th**
  - **Rain day: October 19th**
- Keep Andy involved

Minutes written by Victoria Woolfolk

#### **Action Items:**

- ☐ Jennifer: make edits to the plan, send to Victoria
- ☐ Victoria: Send updated plan out to everybody, a few weeks for comments - at least 2 wks
- ☐ Jennifer/City of Martinez: The vegetation management codes 1-7 appear on the vegetation management figures - clarify the figures and what the codes mean
- ☐ Jennifer/City of Martinez: Inconsistency between saying there is not a need for channel capacity management and removing sediment - clarify (Section ?)
- ☐ Victoria: Reach out to Bob to see what support he needs for preparing for the workshop

- ☐ Randy: Confirm October 17th and October 19th would work to use the City Council Chambers for the workshop