



CALIFORNIA STREAMING

News From CUSP Partners Around the State

Issue 1, October 2015

Contents

Page 3: Statewide News and Views

Page 7: News from the Central Coast

Page 9: News from North and South

Page 10
Conferences and Workshops

Page 11
Acknowledgements

Greetings Urban Creek Enthusiasts!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the CUSP newsletter! It is hard to believe that CUSP has been in existence for over 4 years now. In this time we have continued to grow as a coalition of urban creek and watershed advocates. We were sad to see our first paid staffer, Arianna, leave for a position at Audubon last fall. However, we are overjoyed to have our long friend Lisa Owens as a part-time Project Manager and Coordinator.

Through the efforts of our outstanding lobbyist, Vern Goehring, and in partnership with the California Watershed Coalition, CUSP is working in Sacramento to ensure that the



needs of the urban creek community are met. This includes tracking and commenting on key legislation, educating policymakers about the outstanding state programs that were left out of Prop 1, and pushing to make greenhouse gas reduction funds available for restoration projects.

In Bay Area CUSP news: we will be leading hands-on soil bioengineering workshops in Oakland and Richmond over the winter. If you are local, please join us, they are free (see page XX for details)! Many thanks to the Schwemm Family Foundation for their support. In the past few years we have worked with local youth programs such as Urban Tilth's Watershed Program and The Watershed Project's Green Collar Corps by providing lectures and field training to our next generation of community-based stewards.

Carole Schemmerling, co-founder of the original Urban Creeks Council, had the terrific idea of collecting the stories of local creek champions throughout the state. We'd be happy to include their stories (better yet, interviews) of these heroes and heroines in future CUSP newsletters. Sadly, Zeke Grader, one such hero in the Bay Area, a long-time, tireless fish advocate, passed away this fall. Learn more about him at <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Conservationist-Zeke-Grader-advocate-for-fish-6491817.php>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4Aab4KL6sc>

We hope to keep all of our allies, partners, and friends informed of our efforts with newsletters such as this once or twice a year. Please let us know what your local and state priorities are, so we can include your needs in our work.

Wishing you all a nice wet winter!

Josh Bradt & Mike Vukman, Directors

Want to participate?

jshbrdt@gmail.com vukmanmike@gmail.com

Join us for Watershed Day at The Capitol. This event is organized by the California Watershed Network and is held in April. At the event you can meet high-level members of the Brown Administration and legislators.

Think about calling your legislator and taking them on a tour of your projects—it really shows them the value of these projects for which we need their support!



CUSP members (left) and Luis Martinez, Emanuel Peterson, and TyJohn Sykes from The Watershed Project's Green Collar Corps (center) visited Sacramento legislators in December. With Hans Hehman, Chief of Staff for Senator Loni Hancock, and CUSP lobbyist Vern Goehring, far right.

Statewide News and Views

The State Capitol and Urban Rivers and Streams: What Does our Future Look Like?

The urban streams community is at a critical crossroads as to whether we will just be surviving or thriving. Local agencies, non-profits, resource conservation districts, watershed councils, and for-profits deliver on-the-ground neighborhood and business district stream restoration projects and solve flood and erosion conflicts often associated with urban streams. Whether our state grant programs are re-funded (or not) by the state Legislature will determine our options into the near and long future.

Will urban streams be included in state climate change funding?

The California Climate Change program enabled by AB32 established a cap and trade system for reducing carbon emissions in which polluting entities pay for pollution credits. To clarify an important point: the funds are not for adapting to climate change. They must be used to reduce a measurable amount of carbon. These payments go to a Green House Gas Reduction Fund (GHGRF) to fund projects that reduce carbon. Some of these funds are allocated by the California Air Resources Board, and the Legislature reserves the option to allocate a portion. By May of this year the Legislative Accounting Office estimated that there was about \$2 billion in this fund. The State Assembly, Senate, and Governor Brown came up with competing plans for how to spend these funds. Many CUSP groups and individuals sought support from their legislators to include the Department of Water Resources Urban Streams Restoration Program in these funds. A CUSP sign-on letter to support this effort included about 23 organizations, joined by additional letters from cities and counties. The scheduled the end of the session in August to address these allocations, but to our disappointment, punted the issue to the next session beginning in January. Our Sacramento representative, Vern Goehring, can tell that all of your phone calls and letters got through to key decision-makers. We are now faced with needing to renew this push in January 2016. Because this fund has such potential for being a sustainable and substantive funding source into the future, it makes sense for us to put energy into this now.

Some of our urban environmental partners, the urban forestry groups, are already benefiting from this fund. The role of trees in reducing carbon in cities has been recognized: urban forestry projects were one of the first approved uses of this fund. It is only logical to equate urban forestry carbon sequestering benefits to urban stream restoration carbon benefits associated with planting forests along creek corridors in cities—at higher densities than street tree plantings.

Governor Brown, whose priority has been to use the fund for transportation projects, and the Legislature's lack of cooperation with his request for a new gas tax, have complicated this issue.

The 2014 Water Bond: The glass is half full

The Water Bond which passed last fall (Proposition 1) re-funded some local conservancies such as the Sierra-Nevada Conservancy, Los Angeles San Gabriel Rivers Conservancy, the San Joaquin River Conservancy, etc., but our expectations that the statewide urban river and stream programs that are usually available to all of us would be included in the bond act was dashed by the earmarking of \$100 million to the Los Angeles-San Gabriel River Conservancy and the Santa Monica Conservancy for the Los Angeles River. We had expected the statewide river programs funds to re-fund the Department of Water Resources Urban Streams Restoration Program and Natural Resources Agency River Parkway Program. The need to re-fund these statewide programs through the Green House Gas Reduction Fund now becomes critical for supporting projects located outside of Los Angeles.

The Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP) was included in the water bond for a generous \$810 million. CUSP-affiliated groups and their legislators have discussed how IRWMP has better served some of the smaller or more rural regions of the state. In larger metropolitan regions such as San Diego, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area, disadvantaged communities (DAC), friends of creek groups, and watershed councils have had a difficult time participating at the IRWMP table, which has been dominated by large, well funded water districts. A Herculean effort to pull some DAC projects into IRWMP in the Bay Area brought home the startling reality that once the DAC projects were funded it would take 9-16 months for small, community-based organizations to be reimbursed for their work. This is in complete conflict with the requirement for the IRWMP to benefit and serve organizations located in disadvantaged areas. CUSP supported Senator Ricardo Lara's bill, SB208, which provides for advance payment within 90 days of the award of an IRWMP grant or for 50% of the grant award for non-profit organizations and DACs. This bill is on the Governor's desk.

Watch for a new park bond or a citizens' initiative bond act

A friend of the urban streams community, Senate President pro Tempore Kevin DeLeon (Los Angeles), introduced a park bond act with placeholders for statewide urban streams programs. CUSP is seeking funding in particular for the Natural Resources Agency River Parkways Program, DWR Urban Streams Restoration Program, the Strategic Growth Council's Urban Greening Program, Department of Forestry Urban Forestry Program, and the California Conservation Corps Watershed Stewardship Program. A citizen water-parks initiative is currently being drafted for signature collection to potentially qualify for a 2016 or 2017 ballot vote. CUSP has been in touch with the drafters who, so far, support including statewide urban streams programs.

Use a volunteer: Go to jail

This issue goes back to 2004 when the state found a potential conflict between the labor prevailing wage code and using volunteers in restoration projects that could be construed to be "public works" projects. This turned Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, student groups and families participating in Coastal Clean Up Days into potential outlaws. The restoration, parks, and open space community has had to fight in 2004, 2008, 2011, and again in 2015 to keep the use of volunteers legal. Fortunately, Assemblymember Richard Gordon's (Menlo Park) AB327 volunteer bill recently became law, recently extending the use of volunteers another 7 years.

Let's bring back watershed coordinators

Someone has to plant the seeds before the projects sprout...Remember those critically important grants that the Department of Water Resources and the Department of Conservation used to fund watershed coordinators? The last watershed coordinator grants were finished in 2014 with no additional state watershed support programs in sight. A high-energy group of about 25 people from many regions of the state gathered at an Earth Island Institute-sponsored meeting in Berkeley on August 14. This watershed working group is discussing with the state Natural Resources Agency the important functions those grants supported, including identifying priority watershed improvement projects, assembling funding packages from multiple sources, and implementing projects to accomplish resource management needs. The group is promoting cooperative conservation for climate adaptation and sustainable communities. CUSP's Sacramento representative is helping develop funding sources to continue cooperative conservation initiatives.

The Los Angeles River's time has finally arrived



In 1986, urban streams representatives from around the state flew to Los Angeles to join Lewis MacAdams at his kick-off party for the Friends of the Los Angeles River. The party celebrated his sculpture of a sycamore tree, which he built in the middle of the infamous 1930s Los Angeles River concrete flood control channel to demonstrate that the river could someday be freed of its concrete and once again support riverside trees. At the time this was considered a ridiculous, radical idea. But the creative audacity for the vision attracted many of

us to support it no matter where we lived.

Today, restoring the river is taken very seriously, as shown by feature articles in both the *Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times* in September. A fringe idea has become reality. Imagine the decades of work that have gone into this transition. (It wearies our bones to even think of it.) Friends of the Los Angeles River and other local organizations have organized riverside disadvantaged communities to participate in envisioning a new river environment, held parties for the river, organized boating trips, held concerts, delivered a constant stream of media coverage, and brought river education into the schools. For three decades, they have gathered people and held workshops and charrettes on restoration designs for the river, funded by multiple agencies. We have finally reached a time when even though the U.S. Army Corps was paid to destroy the river, the Corps is now equally eager to be paid to restore it, and has new Congressional authority to restore rivers anywhere.

The recent newspaper coverage shows the complications that follow success. An LA River Revitalization Corporation has dollar signs in its eyes anticipating new riverside development opportunities. The Famous Los Angeles architect, Frank Gehry has appointed himself the new river restoration czar and ultimate designer of the river's fate. Upstream and downstream communities eye each other warily. Which communities will benefit from the new resources arriving at the river? What vision will prevail for the river: actual functional ecosystem restoration or aesthetic symbolic facades imagined as restoration? The controversies are painful but nonetheless show huge progress from where Friends of the Los Angeles River started in 1986.

CUSP hopes for true ecological restoration of the river, a restoration plan based on the continued involvement of all of those people and agencies that have poured effort into this cause. We hope that the conflicts at hand do not erupt into counterproductive statewide conflicts over the sharing of state funding resources for urban stream restoration. Assemblymember Jimmy Gomez introduced AB1205 to champion the Los Angeles River, anticipating the city's need to raise what will be at least a \$750 million to billion dollar-plus local contribution to match the Army Corps' efforts. AB 1205 (which was held up in the Senate for possible further consideration in 2016) would create a State River Revitalization Program funded by a new CalRiver account and grant program. An intended source of funding for the program is the GHG Reduction Fund. While seemingly intended for statewide application, details in AB1205 significantly favor large urban areas, especially the Los Angeles River.

CUSP appreciates Mr Gomez's support for restoring the river and AB1205 enabling the use of the Green House Gas Reduction Funds for river and stream restoration, but we have raised concerns about the bias in funding allocations. The bill has become a political lightning rod for some because it favors projects already funded by Prop 1 and larger over smaller communities. Prop 1, passed in 2014, already provides the hundred million mentioned above to the Los Angeles River on top of additional, separate allocations of \$30 million each to both the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. This political intrigue serves no one, including FoLAR, as they have made clear. Limited river and stream restoration funds should be allocated statewide to the best projects using objective criteria. We look forward to the Los Angeles River projects being among them.

News from the Central Coast

The Santa Barbara Urban Creeks Council (SBUCC) is waiting for wet weather to see if steelhead will make a run through the mile-long Caltrans channel in Mission Creek that has been modified to allow passage. Courageous efforts are being made to bring back the iconic species although sadly, the city refuses to release water into Mission Creek to support resident fish. Rainbow trout that had been trapped in warm shallow pools had to be relocated last year, and were placed in another creek. In the lower reaches of Mission Creek, ongoing bridge construction and construction of sections of the Lower Mission Creek Flood Control Project have dominated the creek setting and diminished habitat quality. Conditions improved when our complaints resulted in proper dewatering methods (pumping the de-watered silts into a settling pond rather than directly into the estuary). Water quality in the estuary has cleared up, and many thousands of one-inch top smelt and other fish are schooling throughout the combined Mission Creek and Laguna Creek estuary. Many avian species are feeding there too, including egrets, blue herons, black skimmers, and various shorebirds. In more good news, we have been successful in eliminating tamarisk, arundo, castor, alfalfa, tumbleweeds, and other non-natives, and the beachfront shows some good signs of recovery. Rushes and reeds now line parts of the lagoon, and other native shoreline plants are taking hold.

On the lower main stem of Arroyo Burro Creek, our efforts to protect 15.7 acres of creekside



land over the past 16 years are coming to a very successful and happy conclusion. Over those years, SBUCC, with widespread community support, has defended the rare remnant of riparian and upland open space from numerous development proposals. We successfully

challenged two different city approvals in court, and were victorious in a citywide election campaign that resulted in 66% of city voters saying no to developers. Today, the Trust for Public Land is poised to purchase the land for preservation. On Sept. 22nd the city council, acknowledging that the most desirable use of the property is preservation as city parkland, approved \$2.7 million to go towards the purchase price of \$4 million. When the ink is dry on the paperwork, sometime before the end of the year, the Trust for Public Land will give the property to the city. The city's Creeks Division has some great ideas for restoration of the creek and open space, and SBUCC volunteers are already signing up to help with the work.

Within the same watershed, the City of Santa Barbara's Creeks Division with SBUCC as co-sponsor, will restore a 2,000-foot section of Las Positas Creek, a tributary to the lower main stem. This project, funded in part by the DWR Urban Streams Restoration Program, will remove 30,000 square feet of concrete, replace two undersized culverts, and restore local-genotype native plants to the site. This will result in a diverse, self-sustaining riparian ecosystem that will support fish, migratory birds, and amphibians. In addition, it will reduce risks to homeowners, removing 47 homes from the floodplain.

On Oct. 6th Mike Vukman of CUSP and Stantec Corp. gave a presentation to Arroyo Burro Creek property owners and stakeholders, addressing concerns about instabilities in the reach just below Modoc Road. Stabilizing that stretch of creek will be challenging, but Mike got the ball rolling, and it will be quite interesting to see what can be done to address the serious problems there.



News from the North Coast

Behind the Redwood Curtain, urban and suburban streams are being restored or modified for flood control with greater care for their natural functions. In the small city of Fortuna, a flood control project is being designed to retain much of the natural character of the Rohner Creek, while creating a broad floodplain for high flows. In Eureka, Martin Slough, a salmon-bearing stream, is being restored for enhanced fisheries, stormwater management, and tidal function. The city of Arcata has implemented rain gardens and swales at select parking lots and paved areas to enhance water quality flowing to a couple of the city's creeks. The Doolin Creek Vision for Restoration and Enhancement Plan was recently completed by the city of Ukiah.

News from the South

On July 16, 2015, the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) were thrilled to be in Washington when the US Army Corps Civil Works Review Board unanimously adopted Alternative 20—a \$1.35 billion plan to break up the concrete and restore 11 miles of Los Angeles River habitat—as their Recommended Plan. FoLAR welcomes the Corps as true partners and invites them to take one more vital step—to commit to sharing the costs of the project with the city and people of Los Angeles on a true 50/50 basis. Along with development, efforts to solve a flood hazard 75 years ago degraded the river. The river was smothered under 3 million barrels of concrete in an effort to save lives led by the Army Corps. Now that we're ready to undo the damage, we need the Army Corp's help again—this time to restore the river. Last year, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Jo-Ellen Darcy recommended that the Army Corps and federal government pay their fair share of this project—a true 50/50—to restore the river. We agree with the Secretary, and the time has come for the Army Corps to formally make that commitment. Within the last week it was announced that a large piece of this puzzle has a \$25 million dollar commitment from the state, the G2 Parcel at Taylor Yard, a parcel within the Army Corps Recommended Plan.



Share Technical Experience on Urban Stream Restoration at the Annual SRF Conference

Urban streams organizations renewed friendships over beer and good food in Santa Barbara in March 2014 to warm up for the next day's session on urban stream restoration at the annual Salmonid Restoration Federation (SRF) Conference. The session featured Mission Creek flowing through central Santa Barbara, the focus of about three decades of effort to assist coastal steelhead migrations (see News from the Central Coast).

This year, the urban streams session held in Santa Rosa in March featured this city's remarkable transformation of a trapezoidal concrete channel into a functioning ecosystem. In the early 2000s, the city had removed the concrete bottom and restored floodplain and riparian habitat. On a field trip to the creek at the conference, the important take-home message was that removing the concrete bottom and allowing the return of riparian vegetation did not require additional right-of-way in the creek corridor. The project had proved its flood protection performance in the 2005-2006 flood.

CUSP is grateful to the ongoing support of the SRF, which has helped us participate in this important annual conference. The two conferences covered 16 presentations, ranging from soil bioengineering in urban settings, to beavers in cities, funding strategies for projects and watershed planning, and improving steelhead habitat in cities. Please save the date for the next conference: April 6-9, 2016 in Fortuna. Because this 2016 conference is located in a rural northern California setting, we will be waiting for the next year's conference in 2017 (to be located somewhere in the greater San Francisco Bay Area) to sponsor another urban streams session or workshop. For registration information, contact: srf@calsalmon.org

Upcoming Bay Area Soil Bioengineering Workshops

In partnership with the California Conservation Corps Watershed Stewardship Program, CUSP and partners—Marin RCD, the City of San Pablo, and Friends of Sausal Creek—are sponsoring several soil bioengineering workshops this fall and winter. The workshops will cover cottonwood posts and stakes, brush layering, and brush matting techniques. The San Pablo and Oakland workshops are made possible through a generous grant from the Schwemm Family Foundation.

Saturday, November 14, 10-noon: CUSP and City of San Pablo

City of San Pablo Civic Center, Maple Hall Art Gallery

13831 San Pablo Avenue with hands-on soil bioengineering instruction at Davies Park

Please RSVP to custreams@gmail.com or Lisa Owens 510-292-5095

Saturday, December 5, 12-3: Marin RCD, assisted by Prunuske- Chatham and STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed)

Spirit Rock Center, 5000 Sir Francis Drake Blvd, Woodacre

Bring lunch; To reserve a spot: Sarah Phillips Sarah.Marinrcd.org 415-663-1170x 302

Saturday, January 23, 2015; specific times and locations TBA: Friends of Sausal Creek and CUSP

For information contact Lisa Owens 510-292-5095

California Urban Streams Partnership
A Project of Earth Island
Institute
2150 Allston Way
Suite 460
Berkeley, CA 94704



CUSP Thanks the Following For Supporting Urban Streams and Watersheds

San Francisco Foundation
California Riparian Joint Venture
California Watershed Coalition
California Watershed Network
The Schwemm Family Foundation
The Norcross Wildlife Foundation

A special note of thanks to Vern Goehring. And a big thank you to all of you who contacted your legislators this year as individuals or groups from Eureka, Fort Bragg, Weaverville, Davis, Winters, Sacramento, Roseville, Sonoma, City of Napa, Petaluma, San Rafael, Novato, Richmond, San Pablo, Berkeley, Oakland, San Leandro, San Jose, East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, Los Osos, Santa Barbara, Cachuma, Fountain Valley, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Marin, Contra Costa, and Napa Counties.

Please help support our work with a year-end, tax-deductible donation!

CUSP is a project of the non-profit Earth Island Institute. You can donate securely online at <http://www.earthisland.org/cusp/> or send a check to CUSP at the address above.

All photos used in this newsletter courtesy of our partners or Wikimedia Commons.