



Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting July 13, 2010 – 6:00 PM

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Members and Alternates – Robert Ramirez (WCROC Co-Chair), Olga Lizcano (WCROC Co-Chair), Roberto Rodriguez (SARA Board Member), Abigail Kinnison (Beacon Hill N.A.), Rod Radle (San Antonio Alternative Housing Association), Abel Ramirez (San Antonio Wheelmen), Ashley Hernandez (Student Representative), Dr. Catherine Rainwater (Our Lady of the Lake University), Santiago Garcia Jr. (Westside Development Corporation), Barbara Hall (San Antonio Conservation Society), Lourdes Galvan (West San Antonio Chamber), and Edward J. Hinojosa (Los Bexareños).

Staff and Consultants – Suzanne Scott (SARA General Manager), Jim Boenig (SARA), Steve Graham (SARA), Rudy Farias (SARA), Gloria Rodriguez (SARA), Andy Rooke (AECOM), Jeremy Hanzlik (AECOM), Ed Garza (AECOM), and William Long (RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.).

Members of the Public – Mardi Baron (San Antonio Conservation Society), J.R. Carmona, Garri Dryden (SEL), Charlotte Kahl (Old Spanish Trail), Cosima Colvin, Narcisso Cano (San Pedro Subcommittee Co-Chair), Jacque Thomas (Jacobs), Kurt Rutherford, Neville Smith, Baldemar Garcia, Raymond Zavala, Anita Zavala, Mark Judson, Rosemary Geyer (Casa Navarro), Jerry Geyer (Casa Navarro), Caleb Etheredge, and Karen Wheeler.

I. Welcome & Introductions

Robert Ramirez (WCROC Co-Chair) called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for their attendance. He asked if there was anyone at a Westside Creeks meeting for the first time. Karen Wheeler raised her hand and introduced herself. Mr. Ramirez asked if there was anyone else and Kurt Rutherford raised his hand. He mentioned that he had been to a previous workshop and was interested to see how the project had progressed. Raymond Zavala then introduced himself and his wife, Anita. He said they had been interested since 2003 when they met with Lila Cockrell. Mr. Zavala explained that after hearing her discuss issues regarding the creeks, he and his wife became very interested in the San Antonio River Authority. Olga Lizcano (WCROC Co-Chair) welcomed all newcomers and then asked if there were any other new attendees. Hearing none, she asked everyone to move on to the next agenda item.

II. Approval of the Meeting Minutes (June 2010)

Ms. Lizcano then asked everyone to review the minutes. She then asked if there were any changes or additions. Mr. Ramirez said that on page 5, at the beginning of the last paragraph there was a correction that needed to be made. He said that the sentence should read that the lake was “dredged” in 1974, not “built” in 1974. Dr. Rainwater also had a correction in the second to last paragraph on page 5. She said

that the fourth sentence should say that the limits are from the Commerce Street bridge to the dam at 19th Street. Abel Ramirez asked that his name be added to the list of attendees from the previous meeting.

Ms. Lizcano asked if there were any other additions or amendments to the minutes. She then asked all those in favor of approving the minutes to say "Ay". Then she asked all those opposed to approving the minutes to say "Nay". With one abstention from Mr. Radle, who was not present at the last meeting, the minutes were approved as corrected.

Ms. Lizcano noticed someone come in late and asked him if he would like to introduce himself. Neville Smith introduced himself and said he works for a Coldwell Banker/D'Ann Harper Realtors. He said he heard about the meeting from someone named Karen working at Solar Fest. Ms. Lizcano welcomed him and mentioned it was time to move on to the next agenda item.

III. Update on the Concept Plan

Ms. Lizcano then asked Andy Rooke (AECOM) to discuss the update on the concept plan. Mr. Rooke said they have been working on the engineering and the technical analysis of the Westside Creeks. He said the analysis has considered a range of possibilities, and have focused down to what appear to be the more feasible alternatives. Mr. Rooke then started his presentation by discussing the flow of water. He compared the erosion effects from small storm flows up to the larger 100 year flood events. He mentioned that while a large storm can cause more erosion and sediment deposition, the more frequent nature of the smaller storm events cause a greater impact on the shape of a creek (due to erosion and sedimentation) than the larger, more infrequent flood events. Mr. Rooke added that the 1.5 year flood events were estimated as the "channel forming" storm events for the Westside Creeks.

Mr. Rooke then discussed the Rosgen method of classifying streams. He said that classification system is used to determine different types of creek systems, based upon their fluvial geomorphology (the erosion and sedimentation processes that shape streams). Mr. Rooke said they assumed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers channelized the creeks near where they originally were. He then discussed the stream meandering patterns and used a PowerPoint presentation to discuss alignments for the creeks. He showed an image on the screen which showed homes within the 10 year flood plain in red. He explained that the image showed the general creek alignments that will be proposed in the concept plan.

Mr. Rooke went on to say that when an area is urbanized there are more frequent high flows, which makes the creeks run deeper. He stated that the Westside Creeks were assumed as a "Type 9" succession scenario. He said they may have started as "Type C" creeks, and the goal is to return them to that classification. Mr. Rooke said that whatever we come up with has to be very consistent throughout the project. He invited everyone to stay and review the maps after the meeting. Ms. Lizcano asked if the alignments shown are the actual creeks. Mr. Rooke said they were generic examples of what will be done to each creek, but that some of his earlier examples were creek specific. Mr. Rooke then explained what areas would be potentially widened, with available land being the main constraint. Ms. Lizcano asked for the water amounts in each creek and what they would be once they are restored. Mr. Rooke said that changing the amount of base flow that occurs between storms is not currently being considered for creeks other than San Pedro (which may utilize recirculation of water from within the existing flood tunnel). Ms. Lizcano added that if the creeks are deeper then there would not be as much water for wildlife. Mr. Rooke

said that this project is attempting to restore the stream environment to a state that is better than currently, but it is very unlikely that they will ever return to the condition that they once were.

Mr. Ramirez asked if the numbers shown were averages. Mr. Rooke said that it all depends on the rainfall. Mr. Ramirez said there would be segments of the creeks that will have some water, like pools. Mr. Rooke said that there will be riffles and pools in the design, but in times of drought there may be very little water in them. Ms. Lizcano said she thought there would be water in the creeks once they were restored. Mr. Rooke said that the design will take advantage of any water in the creeks, but he added that restoring base flow in the creeks is something that can be further investigated in the design phase.

Roberto Rodriguez (SARA Board Member) said that before the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers covered the creeks, there was a lot more water. He added that now there is not very much water on the surface, but that water exists in the area and can somehow be added. Mr. Rodriguez said that there were sections in the past that had large pools of water.

Mr. Ramirez said that using recycled or redirected water could be looked at. Mr. Rooke said that it is a definite possibility on the San Pedro Creek due to the tunnel underneath, but other areas might not have as much opportunity to reintroduce base flow.

Abigail Kinnison (Beacon Hill N.A.) asked if once the restoration was complete, would the springs that were along each creek begin to flow again. Mr. Rooke said that other reasons may have led to the springs no longer flowing (such as lower aquifer levels). Ms. Kinnison suggested that it be discussed further in the report.

Ms. Kinnison asked what the Corps of Engineers are looking at regarding the flood plain. She added that many of them use different numbers when discussing flood plains. Mr. Rooke said the general standard for design of the restored portion of the creeks is the 1.5 year storm event, but other storms such as the 100 year storm event must also be considered for overall flood protection purposes.

Mr. Radle asked for clarification on a slide regarding the flood plain. Mr. Rooke explained the differences in the flood plain diagram. Jim Boenig (SARA) said that the flow conveyance is from the 100 year flood plain and the sediment flow is discussed with the 1.5 year flood plain.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if the flood that damaged the Elmendorf dam was a 100 year flood. Mr. Boenig said the Westside creeks did not receive that type of intensity, but other areas of San Antonio almost reached the 75 year flood plain.

Mr. Rodriguez said the Corps of Engineers did a good job managing the flood, but killed much of the environment. Suzanne Scott (SARA General Manager) said that all SARA projects have the restriction of not making anything worse. She said they have to either keep the same environment or make it better. She said they are always concerned with making improvements to each area. She added that they are currently working with the City of San Antonio on a flood control master plan. Mr. Rooke said they are working with the master plan team and that information will be in the report as well.

Rod Radle (San Antonio Alternative Housing Association) said that the flood maps have changed within the past 24 months. Ms. Scott said that SARA knew the maps had recently changed and Mr. Rooke said the project team was also aware of the change.

Ms. Kinnison asked if the flood maps shown were also used by the city. Mr. Rooke said they were based off the same information. Ms. Scott said that the city, county and SARA are all working to create new maps to better identify the flood plains. She said that although buyouts are not popular, sometimes they are the best option for high risk areas.

Lourdes Galvan (West San Antonio Chamber) asked if the flood plains are different on each creek. Mr. Rooke said yes, each creek has a different flood plain.

Mr. Ramirez asked if the extension of this project was due to the Corps of Engineers wanting more information. He asked if there was consensus that the concerns of the Corps had been met and if so, would the proposal coming up be more attractive to them. Mr. Rooke said it was. Mr. Boenig said it would be more accurate and have more detail that would provide a clearer conceptual budget than what was previously stated. Ms. Scott said that the Corps of Engineers was interested in the additional study so that they could determine whether or not they have a financial interest. She added that they will use this study to move forward. Mr. Ramirez asked if it was more likely to be accepted now. Ms. Scott mentioned that it is more likely to be accepted now. Mr. Ramirez said that what is being done should be whatever the Corps of Engineers needs and that he wants that to be the case.

Dr. Rainwater asked if there would be more detail in the report showing the detailed plans for each creek. Mr. Rooke said there would be planning diagrams for each section. Ms. Lizcano asked when they would determine how much water would need to be added to each creek. Mr. Rooke said he would have to go back and discuss with his ecologist. Ms. Lizcano asked if more water was needed, would it be an additional expense. Mr. Rooke said that introducing more water from another source would indeed be an additional expense if implemented.

Charlotte Kahl (Old Spanish Trail) said that the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) is capping both public and residential wells as soon as they can. She said they capped the wells around Woodlawn Lake and that talking with SAWS about the wells might help the water level discussions. She said the safety of the slope of the creek was also a concern. She asked if there would be trails for pedestrians to exit in the steeper areas. Mr. Rooke said that the image showing the slope was not drawn to scale and that there would be places provided for people to enter and exit from the creeks.

Mr. Zavala said there is stagnant water at the bridge near Landa and General McMullen. He said that there is little water on the west side of the bridge. He asked what the plans were to eliminate the stagnant water from that section of the creek. He added that there is no flow due to the dam. Mr. Rooke mentioned a dredging project that SARA is working on. Ms. Scott said a study is being done in the area of concern and she would have the project manager for that study call the gentlemen.

Mr. Rutherford asked about money being roadblocks of the project. Mr. Rooke said that the new estimates would be available in the draft report presented to the Oversight Committee next month. Mr. Rutherford said the main roadblock moving from the feasibility study to the conceptual study is a lack of

details on the costs. He asked for clarification on how that would be resolved. Mr. Rooke said that the early cost estimates were based off similar projects and added that they were doing a more intensive analysis that will allow for more details on costs to be determined.

Mr. Rodriguez said that for the last three years he has seen more wildlife coming back to his neighborhood from the creeks. He mentioned that he has seen more raccoons and possums, which he added was a very positive sign that the creeks are coming back to the way they were. He said it is not all doom and gloom for the Westside Creeks.

Ms. Lizcano announced that she wanted to recognize Edward Hinojosa, who had arrived late and represents Los Bexareños Geneological Society. Mr. Ramirez mentioned that the Oversight Committee members are representatives of the public, but that the public are welcome to comment. He asked if there were any other comments at this time.

Karen Wheeler asked if the stream would be natural or if there would still be some cement. Mr. Rooke said that the goal is to return the creeks to their natural state, but that it would not be possible in all areas. He added that some areas would have varying degrees of concrete, primarily in the highly urban portions of San Pedro.

Mr. Ramirez recognized Suzanne Scott and Roberto Rodriguez for all their efforts. He said the San Antonio River Authority is doing some amazing work to revitalize the Westside. Mr. Ramirez asked Rudy Farias (SARA) to discuss the next agenda item.

IV. Committee Feedback – Discuss Potential Hike and Bike Trail Alignments

Mr. Farias started by saying that in November, citizens would have a chance to vote on a sales tax increase to benefit the Westside Creeks. He said that the goal was to show where hike and bike trails could be implemented without interfering with areas that will be heavily restored. He said that we will not know exactly where the trail will go, but the maps will show the general area.

Mr. Farias started with Alazán Creek. He used a series of photos to show the area in its current state. Mr. Ramirez asked what specifically he was looking for since the committee wants trails all along the creeks. Ms. Scott clarified that they are looking for areas that are not targeted for restoration. She added that they are trying to avoid installing a trail and then removing it during the restoration efforts. Mr. Farias said this will still have to go through several other votes, including the Linear Creeks Advisory Board and the City Council.

Edward Hinojosa (Los Bexareños) asked if there had been any thought into soliciting people from the city to put their name on the project. He said that we should look at our own community to sponsor certain areas instead of looking for only government agencies. Mr. Farias said that this could be considered by the City in the future.

Lourdes Galvan asked when the deadline for comments was. She mentioned that she is concerned with the Alazán Creek area near Commerce and Buena Vista. Ms. Galvan said there is a building right by the edge of the creek and she is concerned that erosion will cause the building to fall. Mr. Ramirez said that it would be discussed further when the committee discusses that creek and asked Mr. Farias to continue.

Mr. Garza said that the committee should think about how the creek improvements can tie into existing projects. Ms. Kinnison said that connecting the proposed trails with existing trails may not work because some paths around Woodlawn Lake are pedestrian only areas. She said more research needs to be done regarding those type of issues.

Ms. Kahl mentioned the MPO Bike Committee meeting on July 14th at the VIA Metro HQ. Ms. Kinnison said that the Bike Master Plan would be updated at that meeting.

Mr. Hinojosa pointed out the area that Ms. Galvan had discussed earlier regarding the building that was on the edge of Alazán Creek.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if Nelson Elementary would be closed. Mr. Garza said it will be considered for closing. Santiago Garcia Jr. (Westside Development Corporation) said that joint use agreements are being considered by the city and maybe something could be worked out with the city. He added that maybe the complete streets policy might fit in at some point.

Mr. Rodriguez invited everyone to go see the Apache Creek linear park that Rod Radle and the San Antonio Alternative Housing Association have created.

Mr. Farias pointed out the potential site of Mission Verde, which he said was a green initiative adopted by the City to find ways for city departments to “Go Green”. He added that SARA is interested in making the site an educational facility that would tie into the Westside Creeks project.

Mr. Ramirez asked that everyone hold their comments to the end of Mr. Farias’ presentation unless there was a great objection.

Mr. Farias then discussed Apache Creek and explained where the potential trails were in each section. Mr. Rooke added that many of the creeks would have primary and secondary trails. He said that some places are not being considered for a trail now because of the possible restoration that could happen in the future.

Mr. Farias then continued his presentation by discussing Martinez Creek. Ms. Kinnison said that the trail section near Oak Farms Dairy should go around Cool Crest and down Warner. Mr. Farias said they would look into that.

Mr. Farias then discussed the possible trails along San Pedro Creek. Narcisso Cano (San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Co-Chair) and Jerry Geyer (Casa Navarro) suggested using San Saba Street as a path. Mr. Cano added that some of the land owned by Fox Tech may be used as well. Mr. Ramirez said that the area could be the beginning of a historic walkway instead of a hike and bike trail. Mr. Farias cautioned against going too far from the creek since the Linear Creeks Advisory Board is interested in utilizing the land immediately adjacent to each creek.

Mr. Rutherford said he is really excited to hear about all these ideas and to see these potential trails. Ms. Lizcano asked what material would be used for the trails. Mr. Farias said it would be concrete. Mr. Rooke

added that the primary trails would be concrete and the secondary would be gravel. Mr. Farias said the final determination on the surface type would be done by the City.

Mr. Ramirez asked if there were any objections to adopting the hike and bike trails as presented by Mr. Farias. Hearing none, he announced that the trail system was adopted by the Oversight Committee.

V. Update on the Apache Creek Linear Park

Mr. Ramirez then asked Mr. Radle to update the committee on the Apache Creek Linear Park. Mr. Radle said they were about 60 days out from completion. He mentioned that there are people living under the General McMullen Bridge again and illegal activities are occurring. He said that the police would soon conduct a sweep of the area to get rid of the illegal activity. He said the Apache Creek Linear Park was scheduled to open in late September.

Mr. Ramirez said that only a portion of the tax extension from the linear creeks effort will be used for the Westside Creeks. He asked that it be noted that the Oversight Committee feels that the Westside Creeks should get a fair share of the money for use in the restoration efforts. Mr. Rooke clarified that the restoration aspects would not be on the ballot, but rather the trails which were presented today, and that can be constructed prior to the restoration improvements, will be what citizens vote on. Mr. Rodriguez thanked Mr. Rooke for reminding them about that specific issue.

VI. Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Ramirez asked if there were any miscellaneous items to discuss. He asked Mr. Rooke if the draft concept plan would be presented to the subcommittees. Mr. Rooke said that each subcommittee and the Oversight Committee will have another chance to comment on the draft concept plan before it is finalized.

VII. Next Meeting

Mr. Ramirez said the next meeting would be August 10, 2010. Mr. Rooke added that the subcommittees would meet the week of August 2, 2010 and the Oversight Committee would be the following week. Mr. Ramirez invited everyone to attend any of the subcommittee meetings they are interested in.

Ms. Lizcano asked if there is literature available for the public to know about what is happening on the Westside Creeks. She said it is important since there will be a vote in November. Mr. Farias said that a brochure is being developed and the public can always go to the website, which he added has the minutes and information from past workshops. Mr. Rodriguez thanked everyone for their continued support. Mr. Ramirez thanked Mr. Rodriguez for advocating for the Westside Creeks in his role on the Board for SARA and in the Linear Creeks Board as well.

VIII. Adjourn

Mr. Ramirez thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He invited all those interested to stay after the meeting to discuss any parts of the project in greater detail. Mr. Ramirez then adjourned the meeting.

Action Items

- In the concept plan, the project team should include reasons that natural springs no longer flow, other than just from the U.S. Corps of Engineers covering the springs.

- Also in the concept plan, the project team should research potential issues around connecting proposed hike & bike trails to existing trails, which could not work together due to being restricted to pedestrians only such as at Woodlawn Lake.

Distribution

- WCROC
- SARA Staff
- Consultant Team