



**Minutes of the
Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
June 11, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm in the San Antonio River Authority's Boardroom, 100 East Guenther Street, San Antonio, and Bexar County, Texas.

Elected Officials Present:

Mr. Roberto G. Rodriguez, San Antonio River Authority Board Director, District 2

Committee Members Present:

Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair

Abigail Kinnison, Beacon Hill NA

Cary Guffey, Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU)

Theodore Ozuna, Donaldson Terrace NA

Ray Flores, Westside Development Corporation

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair

Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelman

Jude Valdez, University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA)

Dave Stafford, Downtown NA

Staff and Members of the Public Present:

Danny Allen, USACE

Nova Robbins, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Charissa Kelly, USACE

Brice Moczygemba, Pape Dawson

Fred Blumberg, Arcadis/Malcolm Pirnie

Walter Heard, Terra Design

Daniel Applegate

S.X. Callahan, III, Property Owner San Pedro Creek (and 3 family members)

Jerry Geyer

Rosemary Geyer

Teri Kilmor, Zarzamora Creeks

Ashley Hernandez

Suzanne Scott, SARA

Brian Mast, SARA

Gloria Rivera Rodriguez, SARA

Rudy R. Farias, SARA

Russell Persyn, SARA

Linda Whitaker, SARA

Armando Cardena

Theresa Gold, Bexar County Historical Commission

Placido Salazar

Skye Curd

Elginio Rodriguez

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Welcome

Co-Chair Robert Ramirez thanked all attendees and called on San Antonio River Authority Board Director, Roberto G. Rodriguez, who welcomed and thanked everyone for attending.

Mr. Ramirez congratulated SARA for the Acceptance of Healthier City Project for Mission and Museum Reaches. Mr. Ramirez asked new attendees to introduce themselves.

- Teri Kilmor, Loma Park Neighborhood Association introduced herself and stated her interest was Zarzamora Creek
- David Stafford, committee member of the Downtown Residents Association
- Mr. S.X. Callaghan, property owner on the San Pedro Creek, along with other family members

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Approval of Minutes for April 9, 2013

Mr. Ramirez presented the minutes to the Committee and asked if there were any corrections. Mr. Rodriguez mentioned a correction under Item 4 stating he did not receive all of his ideas for the beautification of the Westside Creeks from a Westside charette presentation 20 years ago. Mr. Rodriguez said his ideas came at the time the creeks were channelized, wondering if the creeks would ever be restored. After this clarification the minutes were approved as presented.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Update on US Army Corps of Engineers Feasibility Study

Charissa Kelly, USACE presented the status of the study, upcoming Agency Technical Review (ATR) and public review processes. Ms. Kelly reminded the WCROC that the objective of the study was for ecosystem restoration.

Ms. Kelly discussed the structure and function losses, and the various restoration measures used in the Corps modeling analysis. These measures included: 1) No action plan, 2) Riparian Meadow Pilot Channel, 3) Riparian Woody Vegetation Trees and Shrubs, 4) Slack Water, and 5) a five acre wetland for Martinez Creek.

The computer model identified 7,200 plan combinations using the measures above. Ninety-nine plans were cost effective and of those ninety-nine plans, seven best buy plans were selected.

The seven best buy plan alternatives included:

- Alternative 1 was a no action plan
- Alternative 2 included all restoration measures for San Pedro Creek
- Alternative 3 included Alternative 2 and the earthen channel portion of Apache Creek
- Alternative 4 included Alternatives 2 and 3, plus riparian meadow only for Alazan Creek
- Alternative 5 included Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 plus riparian meadow only for Martinez Creek.

Beyond Alternative 5, Ms. Kelly noted the challenges for receiving buy-in from Headquarters but a case was made for Alternatives 6.

- Alternative 6 included Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 and added full restoration to Alazan Creek. This was the Alternative Headquarters approved for advancing the study.
- Alternative 7 was not selected and would have included full restoration of Martinez Creek.

Alternative 7 was not selected primarily due to the higher costs associated with relocating sewer lines along Martinez Creek. Ms. Kelly indicated SARA argued for Alternative 7, but due to costs, the Corps felt Alternative 6 was appropriate for the project.

Ms. Kinnison requested clarification regarding Martinez Creek, which Ms. Kelly provided.

Mr. Rodriguez asked about the estimated project cost of \$39 million. Ms. Kelley said it is an estimate for restoration up to Alternative 6, which includes Alazan Creek, but does not include recreation.

Mr. Flores asked if the incremental cost from Alternative 4 to Alternative 5 was \$173,000 and a \$395,000 incremental cost to Alternative 6. Ms. Kelly said yes and described the added environmental restoration benefits. Headquarters recognized the increased benefits and selected Alternative 6.

Ms. Kelly indicated Alternative 7 was a good alternative and adds riparian woody vegetation, pilot channel and a wetland along Martinez Creek. This was the best plan in regard to ecosystem output. The problem however was the \$52.7 million cost. Over 50% of the \$13.7 million incremental increase for Alternative 7 was utility relocations.

Ms. Kinnison asked if the utility relocation expense was only Martinez Creek. Ms. Kelly said there are utility relocations on the other creeks but their estimates ran less than 10% of total first cost. Ms. Kelly stated Ms. Scott did a great job promoting and defending Alternative 7.

Ms. Kinnison asked what type of utilities. Ms. Kelly said primarily wastewater lines. Ms. Kelly said there are more crossings on Martinez Creek including a 21,000 foot line that runs parallel to the creek which would be very expensive to move. Ms. Kelly alluded to possible plans for SARA to move lines because this expense cannot be paid for with federal dollars. Alternative 6 is a 114% increase in habitat quality over what is there currently. There are 222 acres of partially to fully restored habitat. Also there are 137 full ripple complexes which are critical and the basis for the previously collapsed trophic system to get it to function again. Seventy five percent of the total potential miles are partially to fully restored.

Ms. Kelley discussed the NED (National Economic Development) benefits to the project which are 10% of the total restoration costs. NED would be in the form of recreation and valued at \$3.9 million according to the Federal share of Alternative 6. This would include a trail system, shade structures, benches, interpretive directional signage, picnic tables, pads and water fountains. With restoration and recreation, the total first cost comes to \$42.9 million.

Ms. Scott announced there are two NEPA public meetings scheduled on June 25 and 26, which is the next step in the study. The Corps would have to have a finding of no significant impact to allow the study to move forward. The plan has gone through all general reviews regarding the environmental impact perspective. The June 25 meeting will be at Guadalupe Theater and June 26 at Via Metropolitan Center. The community is invited to participate in these meetings which will indicate their interest in the project to the Corps. Ms. Rodriguez said invitations for these meetings should be in the mail within the next couple of days. Also, an ad will appear in La Prensa and an email announcement will be sent to all in the Westside Creeks database.

Ms. Scott mentioned SARA tried very hard to have Martinez Creek restored to the same extent as the other creeks. The request was unsuccessful but there may be opportunities locally to look at a fuller restoration for Martinez Creek. Since all four creeks were treated the same during the channelization project, all four creeks should be treated the same in the restoration process.

Ms. Scott said SAWS is considering replacing older infrastructure and there may be opportunities to coordinate efforts along the creek to save costs on future restoration efforts.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if the community is not in agreement with the Corps assessment and opposition is very strong, does the Corps go back to the drawing board? Ms. Kelly responded the Sponsor would contact the Corps with the information that there is not community support. At that point the Corps would probably back out of the study. If the community desires to move forward without the Corps, the Corps would still be involved from an approval standpoint since these creeks are federal floodways.

Mr. Ramirez asked if \$42.9 million was the federal contribution. Ms. Kelly said no the costs are shared 50/50 for recreation and 65 federal/35 local for restoration.

Mr. Ramirez asked if the \$42.9 million was only the cost estimate of the Corps' scope, or did it include the City's funding for the hike and bike trails. Ms. Scott said no it is in addition to it.

Mr. Ramirez asked if they were talking about the same trails system. Ms. Kelly answered that they were complimentary to each other. She said it was a good thing that the recreation plan has not been solidified so they have the freedom to coordinate and put the connections where they are needed.

Mr. Ramirez asked if there was some leveraging since the two projects were working with each other. Ms. Kelly said yes that was the intent.

Dr. Guffey asked if the Corps had anticipated how they would address potential increase in mosquito population, due to slack water, etc. Ms. Kelly said that slack water is not stagnant water, just slower water and that there may even be fewer mosquitos once the trophic system has been restored.

Mr. Ramirez said they were honored to have Dr. Cary Guffey, OLLU Biology Department, on the Committee.

Mr. Hinojosa asked how many places are there going to be shade structures and is there enough land. Ms. Kelly said that will be better determined during the design phase.

Mr. Ramirez invited questions/comments from the committee and the public.

Mr. Elginio Rodriguez voiced concerns regarding E. coli, flooding, and shifting foundations as a result of removing cement walls in the channels. Ms. Kelly said that foundation shifting is not in the realm of the Corps' expertise, however public health and safety are. She said this project would not affect the existing flood protection levels and as far as concrete removal, most of the concrete is on Apache Creek and the project does not include removing it.

Mr. Elginio Rodriguez asked if there was a comparison between the 1970 channel and today's channel because they are now having flooding on the south side. Ms. Kelly said it has to do with hydrology and the changes to the watershed and not the channel. Streets, sidewalks, and homes in the watershed create impervious cover which cause the water to run down into the

stream creating more flow than the channel was originally designed to carry. Ms. Kelly suggested speaking with local officials.

Before moving into the next item, Mr. Roberto Rodriguez recognized Mr. Placido Salazar and Mr. Armando Cardena of the American GI Forum who are interested in what the Committee is doing today.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Update on Elmendorf Lake Park and Westside Creeks Hike and Bike Trails by Walter Heard and Fred Blumberg.

Mr. Heard thanked the Oversight Committee and Board Members for their participation. He then described the project limits for the Martinez and Alazan Creeks Trails, and the Apache and San Pedro Creeks Trails.

The first public meeting for Martinez and Alazan Creeks was on May 6. A second meeting is planned for September followed by an open house to present the final plan in December. On June 5, a public meeting was held for Apache and San Pedro Creeks. A second public meeting is planned for October, followed by an open house in January 2014.

Mr. Heard presented a PowerPoint showing Martinez Creek beginning at Fredericksburg Road for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. There will be a connection to the new VIA Primo station which makes a nice trail head. The trail may move in and out of the channel onto flood buyout properties to create a park-like atmosphere. The trail will go under the Woodlawn Avenue Bridge. At the end of the trail at Cincinnati, there is a planned trail head and parking.

On Alazan Creek beginning at the Woodlawn Lake Casting Pond, the trail is planned to connect to Woodlawn Lake Park and run about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile downstream to Lombrano. The trail will cross under the Culebra Street bridge with connections to street level. Getting the neighborhood well connected to the trails will provide a nice pedestrian route to Woodlawn Park.

At the public input meeting for Martinez and Alazan Creeks, positive comments were received, as well as comments regarding safety and security. The community wants signage and trail components reflecting the character of the community. They also want trail tie-ins at street level.

Along Apache Creek from Elmendorf Lake Park and running almost $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, the team is looking at connections to Casiano Park, Amistad Park, Mission Verde Center, the San Fernando Cemetery, and connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods. All the trails will be 10 feet wide. There will be nodes along the trails that will have way finding and interpretive signage and trails will run underneath bridges.

San Pedro Creek flows under IH 35 and is probably the most difficult section of trail. This stretch of creek is heavily channelized with vertical walls on each side of the channel. It leaves little room for trails so several different ways are being explored. At the end of San Pedro Creek, there is a great connection to Concepcion Park and a tie into the San Antonio River trail.

At the San Pedro and Apache Creeks public meetings, safety and lighting were very important. There may be some portions of Apache Creek trail that can be relighted. They have existing

lights that do not function. Also, street connections and trail markers were very important and people were concerned about being caught down in the creek or at a low place where they might not know the way out. As a standard trail package when it is low in the channel and under the 100 year floodplain, escape route signs will be provided. There were discussions about trails for senior citizens and slope grades. Exercise equipment was requested along the trail. The trail width was discussed and the various uses. Bicycles and people have to coexist on the trail and how to accommodate that was discussed at the meeting.

The consultant briefed on the input received at the Elmendorf Lake Park's three charettes. Residents discussed a natural environment, concerns about water pollution, asked about dredging, and expressed concern that a clinic across the street had a detrimental effect on the park. Residents felt the neighborhood was separated from the park and there was not good pedestrian connectivity to the park or lake. They discussed improved playgrounds, a well-lit park, open and clean spaces. They discussed water features for children and more picnic areas. They talked about a new or renovated pool, Wi-Fi access, a skate park, amenities for the elderly and handicapped, and an additional bridge to the island. There was no desire to acquire additional property to expand the park.

Mr. Ramirez asked for questions.

Mr. Flores asked if emergency phones along the trails have been considered. Mr. Heard answered yes but because of the popularity of cell phones there are no plans for emergency phones.

Mr. Stafford asked where the second bridge would be built. Mr. Heard answered toward the end of the island. They want to move people down through the island and get them out on the island and connect with the trails. It is about a 170 foot bridge.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if park rangers were still patrolling the park because he had not seen any in the past few years. Mr. Heard said that he could not answer that since it was out of his area of expertise; however he has seen park police in other parks in many other areas of town.

Ms. Kilmore said there is a park on 24th Street and Commerce and there is one behind the University which she doesn't see anybody utilizing. She asked if swings, slides, or something else is needed. The students are in school and won't be walking around or swimming in there. She felt like they were overdeveloping and putting too much in the Park. She said the area needs to be cleaned because there is a lot of E. coli. There are other places that need that help.

An audience member asked whether there will be a new pool or will the old pool be updated. Mr. Heard said that is being investigated. The pool is more than 70 years old and the average life of a pool is 30-40 years. The current one has 6 inch cracks in the bottom.

Mr. Rodriguez asked what the approximate date was for breaking ground on the walking trails. Mr. Heard said the project should be finished in about 18-24 months.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if that would be approximately 5 years from the time the citizen voters approved the sale tax initiative in November 2010. Mr. Heard said he believed it would be in 2015.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if this was the final plan or is it subject to change again. Mr. Heard said they were still working toward a final budget so the plan may change to accommodate the budget.

Ms. Curd asked if the design team was also going to work with the Federal Government. Ms. Scott said the Corps is not going to do any work in Elmendorf Lake because it is outside of the scope of their project and not part of the feasibility study.

Ms. Curd asked if they will be working with the same design team and the same material so that improvements are cohesive. Mr. Heard said there will be design guidelines.

Mr. Ramirez turned the agenda over to Ms. Lizcano and Mr. Rodriguez announced that the GI Forum pamphlet regarding the recent flooding was being passed out.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Update on San Pedro Creek

Mr. Jerry Geyer, San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Co-Chair shared that the county had a press conference on May 21 regarding their support of the San Pedro Creek Restoration Project and their commitment to fund it. Mr. Geyer attended the County Commissioners meeting that same day and the Court voted on committing \$125 million for the project. The funds will come out of the flood control fund so it does not affect taxes. The goal is to have the project finished by the end of 2018, which is the 300th anniversary of the founding of the first Spanish settlement.

Mr. Persyn said that at the last meeting the design consultants showed the final renderings of the project and explained the cost table and answered questions. The cost estimate is broken down by the various character areas along the creek. Option A and Option B were two possibilities for character areas. Not all character areas had two options. Option B had a higher cost because of additional amenities. The cost estimate included the cost for construction, design fees and property acquisition to contain the floodplain. About 50 acres were identified in the floodplain and one of the design goals was to be able to remove all the property from the 1% annual chance floodplain. That goal requires acquisition of both private and publicly owned properties.

The costs for the two options are:

- Option A was almost \$149 million where Option B was \$161 million
- If all public properties were donated to the project, as with previous projects, Option A was around \$142 million and Option B \$154 million
- If all property were donated, Option A was estimated at \$122 million and Option B \$131 million.

The delta from Option B's \$161 million and \$131 million is about \$30 million in property along the segment that has been identified. About 25 different parcels have been identified for incorporation into the project in order to maintain the goal of containing the 1% annual chance floodplain.

The team also studied the creek downstream of South Alamo. It became apparent that there needed to be some improvements in this area to meet and achieve that goal of containing the

entire floodplain within the channel. This option was included in the Request for Qualifications (RFQ). The project limits extend from the tunnel inlet to the confluence with Apache Creek.

Ms. Scott said this added section overlaps a small section of the restoration project that was briefed on earlier. In the areas of overlap, the San Pedro Creek Project was about expanding the railroad bridge for flood conveyance and trail connections and will coordinate the restoration piece with the Corps.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if the Corps was aware of all the water in the San Pedro Creek tunnel and Ms. Scott answered yes.

Mr. Persyn reviewed the RFQ schedule stating the solicitation was advertised June 5 and was due June 26, seeking design services. The project limits have been modified slightly to include the tunnel inlet at the north to the confluence with Apache Creek near IH 35 at the south.

The evaluation committee consists of three members from the Bexar County Manager's Office, public works and the county architect. From the River Authority there is a representative from the engineering group, the parks department and a member from SARA's capital improvements program. From the City of San Antonio there is a member from the City Center Development Office.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if the selection process would go through the SARA Board. Mr. Persyn answered the full Board will be briefed at this month's meeting.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if the selected firm would use the previous work that the consultants developed. Mr. Persyn said that was a condition of the RFQ. The consultants have been provided the preliminary engineering report to build upon.

Mr. Rodriguez apologized for not recognizing Mr. Brice Moczygemba earlier. He also mentioned that Mr. Moczygemba had attended the recent linear creeks trails meeting.

Ms. Kinnison asked if the County Commissioners indicated what they wanted, whether it was Option A, B or all the property donated, regarding their \$125 million. Mr. Persyn said the goal is to attempt to get all the property donated. There have been informal discussions with the property owners and overall support is positive for the project. During the design process, exact property needs will be determined.

Mr. Ramirez asked if the San Pedro Creek Subcommittee will remain intact as it is constituted now. Mr. Persyn said that is their preference. The Committee and Subcommittee provide a catalyst for the project's public input process. He said he believes the Subcommittee will have to meet more frequently as they get into the design phase. They will have to make decisions very quickly and stick to those decisions so they can continue to make progress.

Mr. Ramirez said Co-Chairs Michael Cortez and Gerry Geyer have done a wonderful job along with all the Subcommittee members and expressed appreciation for their work.

Hearing no other questions, Ms. Lizcano went to the next item advising each speaker they had three minutes to speak so everyone could be heard.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: Citizens to be heard

Mr. Elginio Rodriguez said he has attended several creek restoration meetings. His greatest concern is flooding and E. coli contamination. He referred to the Elmendorf Lake Final Report and Westside Creeks best management practices. He referred to various amenities such as park benches and different facilities for people to get close to the water. He asked in the event of a flood is there a reoccurring cost for the City to power wash all these areas that come in contact with the water and get contaminated. He also mentioned he read if dredging is done the silt would have to be disposed at a Hazard 1 or Hazard 2 disposal site. He said in 2005 he walked several of the creeks and noticed missing manhole covers. He commented self-locking manhole cover mechanisms stop manholes from overflowing but now overflow occurs in homes. He mentioned that SAWS instead of being fined by the EPA, will use \$489 million to fix sewer lines.

Ms. Lizcano called on the next speaker.

Ms. Curd asked who will approve the design contract for the Elmendorf Lake Park. Mr. Persyn said the contract for design services for Elmendorf Lake and the linear trails is with Walter Heard. The design contract for San Pedro Creek Project is under selection. Construction for these projects will be bid out once design is complete.

Mr. Rodriguez said that the Board of Directors would rely on the recommendation of the staff and asked if staff will consider previous experience. Mr. Persyn said yes.

Mr. Rodriguez requested that the Corps provide him with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Placido Salazar, Veterans Legislation Liaison and Civil Rights Chair for the Dr. Hector P. Garcia American GI Forum Organization of Texas, commented on the recent flood and adverse impacts to the families. He attributed the flooding to poor planning by City and County officials by spending millions of dollars on cosmetic changes to the banks of the river. He indicated the flooding is a bad situation for taxpayers, homeowners, and human families living downstream. Those that are interested in hiking and biking have plenty of other areas to do so and taxpayer dollars are better utilized to dredge lakes and creeks for safety purposes. On behalf of the affected citizens and citizens in flood prone areas throughout San Antonio and the surrounding communities, he asked that immediate and prudent action be taken to prevent further loss.

Ms. Lizcano asked for any other comments.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Miscellaneous Items.

Mr. Ramirez added that since Mr. Salazar's comments addressed the Mission Reach and the San Antonio River, he requested that the comments be extended to cover the Westside Creeks Project along with the hike and bike trails, which was probably his intent anyway to add the flooding consideration and welfare of residents foremost in all of these projects because this Committee covers the Westside Creeks.

Mr. Salazar mentioned that there is still a threat to lives along the area east of Acme Road and West Commerce.

Ms. Kinnison announced the Thursday night Streetcar Project public meeting at the central library.

Mr. Cardena stated in 1988 he had to rescue his mother-in-law from flood waters near Couples and Zarzamora. He hopes something can be done about the flooding. Mr. Ramirez said that it is outside the scope of this Committee but maybe the information could be relayed to the City Storm Water Department. Mr. Persyn said that area is upstream of the Concepcion Creek watershed. The railroad creates a back water condition. Ms. Lizcano added in her past experience they had flooding in her neighborhood. She suggested working with the City Council representative and the neighborhood association if applicable.

Ms. Gold pointed out that the San Pedro Creek Engineering Analysis fact sheet, under stakeholder participation, fourth paragraph, fourth line, states Bexar County Historical Society. This should be Bexar County Historical Commission because the members are appointed by the County Commissioners and work in cooperation with the Texas Historical Commissioner in Austin.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Next Meeting.

Mr. Lizcano announced the next meeting will be Tuesday, August 13, 2013.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: Adjourn.

Since there were no other comments or statements, the meeting was adjourned @ 7:55 pm.