



**Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee Meeting
San Antonio River Authority
Online Meeting
August 18, 2020, 6:00 pm**

Committee Members Present

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Skye Curd, Co-Chair
Erwin DeLuna, United SA Pow Wow Inc.
Charles Oisten, Woodlawn Lake NA
Anne Parrish, Bexar Audobon Society

Kamala Platt, Ph.D., TexasTejano.com
Patricia Seidenberger, San Antonio
Conservation Society

Staff and Public Present

Lourdes Galvan, SARA Board Member
Suzanne Scott, SARA General Manager
Kerry Averyt, SARA
Reuben Bazan, SARA
Carrie Brown, SARA
Richard De La Cruz, SARA
Hillary Lilly, SARA

Brian Mast, SARA
Chris Vaughn, SARA
Daniel Leal, City of San Antonio
Amelia Valdez, Historic Westside Residents
Assn.
Laura Calderón, Ximenes & Associates, Inc.

I. Welcome

Co-Chair Skye Curd welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She asked Committee members, staff and members of the public to introduce themselves.

Co-Chair Robert Ramirez thanked meeting attendees. He said the meeting agenda was ambitious and would cover new items Committee members should be aware of. He asked Hillary Lilly, SARA staff member, to continue the online meeting.

II. Citizens to be Heard

Ms. Lilly called for Citizens to be Heard. There were no citizens to be heard.

III. Calendar Items

Ms. Lilly reviewed upcoming calendar items through November. She noted that due to COVID-19, all classes and meetings were being conducted virtually. Calendar items included:

- San Pedro Creek Culture Park: Yoga Mondays
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park: Creekside Chat, August 26, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Sub-Committee Meeting: September 10, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park Fit & Flow: September 12, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park: Creekside Chat, September 16, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Sub-Committee Meeting: October 8, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park: Get Creative, October 10, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park: Creekside Chat, October 28, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park: Community Drum Circle, November 10, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Sub-Committee Meeting: November 12, 2020
- Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee Meeting: November 16, 2020

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 19, 2020

Ms. Lilly stated a quorum was not present to approve the minutes. These meeting minutes will be considered at the next meeting, provided there is a quorum.

V. Update on Ammonia Spill – Chris Vaughn, SARA

Mr. Vaughn provided an overview and timeline of the ammonia spill that occurred late June 2020 at the Kiolbassa processing plant, located off Apache Creek. Approximately 5,500 fish were lost, representing 20 native and non-native species. The San Antonio Fire Department (SAFD), who responded to the spill, assumed the runoff would flow to a designated sewer system, then to a wastewater treatment plant where it would have been treated. He explained Kiolbassa's safety practices failed. The water flowed into the streets, then to a storm sewer, and into the Apache Creek, right above the confluence of Apache and San Pedro creeks. SARA learned of the issue when a citizen called about the ammonia smell.

SARA investigated and notified SAWS, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The TPWD is reviewing the data to determine a fair restitution value. Mr. Vaughn reviewed previous spills, noting the good news is they have found unexpected aquatic life. He reviewed next steps for this spill event.

Amelia Valdez, Historic Westside Residents Association (HWRA), asked about the timeline for reporting the incident. Mr. Vaughn reviewed the timeline and added SARA is making sure it is part of the future reporting chain should similar incidents occur.

Suzanne Scott, SARA General Manager, said SARA is working with Kiolbassa to ensure their drainage and emergency systems are in place. She said SAFD believed the water was draining into the sanitary sewer system, but it was not.

Ms. Curd asked if Kiolbassa had immediately self-reported the incident, and if the issue was about miscommunication and misunderstanding by SAFD. Mr. Vaughn said SAFD did report the incident to SAWS, but SARA was not in the communication chain and is in the process of correcting communications protocols with SAFD.

Concerning restitution, Ms. Curd stated a concern that SAFD and SAWS could be liable. Mr. Vaughn responded SAFD acted correctly and they assumed Kiolbassa had safety protocols in place.

Ms. Lilly said a Kiolbassa representative is invited to the November WCROC meeting to discuss plans for the funds, and the improvements to their operations.

Mr. Ramirez said he is concerned about the residents who do not know about the spill. He asked if there were any lingering ground water effects, or impacts to the soil and banks. He inquired how restitution would occur with respect to the community.

Lourdes Galvan, SARA Board Member, said SARA should prepare for another spill, citing increased inner city development where the creeks are located. She suggested SARA identify the entities along the creeks, the nature of their business, chemicals used, and then, educate everyone about protecting the creeks. Ms. Scott said staff has discussed identifying the

businesses along the creeks, and working cooperatively with them. She mentioned using spill kits for these businesses.

Mr. Vaughn addressed whether the ammonia spill would have lasting effects. He said, despite the devastating fish kill, ammonia denatures very quickly, so there would be no lasting effects.

Mr. Ramirez asked if there would be any restitution or benefit to the community, in particular for nearby residents, such as the HWRA since they are next to the creek. Mr. Vaughn said SARA is considering what impacts the funds can have on the environment and the surrounding community. He added only one meeting has been held, and it will be some time before any funds are received.

Ms. Valdez stated Kiobassa should have attended this meeting. She said an apology from Kiobassa is necessary because the community is asking about the incident.

Ms. Curd asked if there had been a change in the protocol with SAFD and SAWS. Mr. Vaughn said SARA's in-house environmental investigator has been working with them. Moving forward, the investigator or someone on his staff will be notified of any spills. Previously, SARA was notified if the river was directly impacted, e.g., when a car drives into the river. SAFD and SAWS now understand the river is impacted, regardless of a spill's location.

Mr. Ramirez recommended Ms. Valdez represent the HWRA in discussions about restitution. Ms. Scott said SARA would include her.

See the related presentation, Apache Creek Fish Kill 2020, for more details.

VI. Status Report on Westside Creeks Improvements Projects – Reuben Bazan, SARA and Richard De La Cruz, SARA

Ms. Lilly introduced Richard De La Cruz and Reuben Bazan who provided overviews of the Westside Creeks Linear Trail Projects.

Mr. De La Cruz updated the Committee on the Alazan Creek Trail project. He described the construction work currently underway at Farias Park, and the various street connections to the trail. He said the expected completion date is summer 2021.

Ms. Valdez asked if additional rest areas and benches would be included. She compared the trail to Mission Concepción trail, saying the Alazan trail was not inviting. Mr. De La Cruz said the five street connections will have seating, architectural retaining walls, grass and landscaping, shade trees along the trail, and more street connections that add beauty.

Ms. Galvan requested renderings of the final design be shown, and agreed the trail was unattractive. She said she and the Committee can help keep the community informed if they are familiar with the final design, its landscaping and amenities.

Ms. Galvan and Ms. Valdez agreed there should be community involvement to determine how the area would look. Ms. Scott said renderings are on the website. Ms. Lilly added that all presentations for the last eight years are also on the website. She said community meetings were held throughout the design process for each creek. The meetings identified designs that fit

each creek and features the community wanted. Ms. Lilly said staff could assemble the renderings.

Mr. De Luna said he appreciated the discussion, but asked the Committee to limit their comments in order to cover the long agenda.

Mr. Bazan reviewed the Martinez Creek Trail project. He stated the design is complete, but the project has been on hold due to ongoing sewer work by SAWS. It will be about a year to 1½ years before the project can proceed. When completed, the project will have the shade structures and amenities that are standard to all of the trails.

Before proceeding with his presentation, Mr. Bazan said all of the trail projects had included community input, and renderings could be added to the presentations.

Mr. Bazan provided an update on the Apache Creek Trail project, an existing linear park being enhanced to the new standards. The project is behind schedule, but is expected to be completed by fall 2020. The contractor planned to finish the sewer line first, and then start the park amenities.

Mr. Bazan reviewed Phase I and II of the Zarzamora Creek Trail project. When completed, the trail will have eight trail connections and include park amenities, such as shade structures and drinking fountains. The project includes landscaping and irrigated trees. Mr. Bazan also reviewed the details of the additional work being done.

Ms. Curd said \$1.3M had been allocated to add trees to the westside creeks, and asked if fruit and nut-bearing trees could be planted. Mr. Bazan said the trees were funded from the \$1.3M budget. He said the types of trees were specified when the package was bid, but the Committee could make a recommendation. A Committee member agreed planting such trees would benefit the community and birdlife. Mr. Bazan said he would provide a list of the trees.

Ms. Valdez said the Apache Creek area needs more amenities, especially where the spill occurred. She said Kiolbassa might be able to assist, and the HWRA wants to be involved. She added the contractor delays are unacceptable.

Mr. Bazan said SARA contracts provide for liquidated damages if a contractor exceeds their contract completion date without good cause. This allows SARA to assess damages. The Apache Creek project is a SAWS contract and under their control. Ms. Valdez stated that this would not be happening, if it was not on the westside.

Mr. Ramirez asked who was responsible for maintaining the Westside Creeks. Mr. Bazan said the City maintains all of the Westside Creeks, except for San Pedro Creek, once the construction is completed. SARA will manage all of the Apache Creek construction occurring down to I-10, and from Probandt to the confluence of the San Antonio River.

Ms. Scott said SARA is working on securing restoration funding and there is encouraging news from the federal government. If funded, SARA will discuss maintenance with the City and County.

See the related presentation, Status Report on Westside Creeks Improvements Projects, for additional details.

VII. Status Report on San Pedro Creek Culture Park - Kerry Averyt, SARA

Kerry Averyt reviewed the current status of Phase 1.2 construction work, and Phases 1.3 and 2 design and construction activities.

Mr. Averyt noted the discovery of the African Methodist Episcopal Church foundation during Phase 1.2 construction. There are ongoing coordination activities with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Texas Historical Commission, and the COSA Office of Historical Preservation. Due to the archaeological find and associated work, the new completion date for Phase 1.2 is November 2021.

Mr. Averyt said the Phase 1.3 and Phase 2 100% Design was received. Construction had started in both phases and partner coordination activities were ongoing. He reviewed various street closures due to the projects. Mr. Averyt said Phase 1.3 will be complete in fall 2022, and Phase 2 in early 2023.

See the related presentation, San Pedro Creek Culture Park, for further details.

VIII. Update on Public Art for San Pedro Creek Culture Park (SPCCP) - Carrie Brown, SARA

Ms. Brown updated the Committee on three new public art projects coming to the SPCCP. Phase 1.1 includes *Creek Lines*, to be located at the Plaza. Phase 1.2 art projects include *Rooted in History*, at Commerce and Dolorosa, and *Stream*, to be located between Houston and Commerce streets.

Ms. Brown said all programmed public events, noted earlier in the agenda, will remain virtual through December 2020. SARA is launching three new series, plus other programming. They have tentative plans to resume in-person programming in January 2021.

Ms. Valdez said she hoped this type of programming would occur on the Apache and Alazan creeks, because programming did not seem balanced across all the creeks. She requested a presentation for the HWRA board meeting.

Ms. Brown stated she has explored expanding SPCCP programming to other areas, and there is a second SARA person who does programming. She said as the project is completed, there will be opportunity to expand.

Ms. Curd noted this presentation was specific to SPCCP, which is not part of the Westside Creeks projects. She said community input is always encouraged, but this was a separate project.

See the related presentation, San Pedro Creek Culture Park, for more details.

IX. Bird City Texas Application, Robert Ramirez and Anne Parrish

Ms. Lilly presented a video on becoming a Bird City Texas community. Ms. Parrish stated the Bexar Audobon Society had been motivated to act given the outcome of the Bird Island situation. The Bexar Audobon Society is organizing the effort for San Antonio to declare itself an official "Bird City." This is jointly sponsored by the TPWD and the Audubon Society. She complimented SARA for building habitat along the creeks and planting trees, and asked SARA to be a partner organization.

Ms. Lilly said she would relay this information to staff and provide further information to the Committee.

Mr. Oisten asked Ms. Parrish to coordinate the effort with the Dark Sky initiative, by working with local dark sky astronomy groups. Ms. Parrish said once she confirms support from the Mayor's Office, she will reach out.

Mr. Ramirez stated the presentation was only informational and does not require a letter from the Committee. It will be sufficient to say the WCROC supports the effort. Ms. Lilly said she would poll Committee members by email to determine support for the Bird City designation, since a quorum was not present.

X. Miscellaneous Items

No miscellaneous items were discussed.

XI. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.