



**Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
San Antonio River Authority
GoToMeetings - Virtual
August 17, 2021, 6 p.m.**

Committee Members Present

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Skye Curd, Co-Chair
Veronica Lopez-Alvarado, WSA Chamber of
Commerce
Erwin De Luna, United SA Pow Wow Inc.
Alfredo Guillen, Los Bexareños
Genealogical Society
Patti Radle, SAISD
Hillary Lilly, SAISD Alternate
Norberto G. Landin, Prospect Hill NA

Charles Oisten, Woodlawn Lake NA
Kamala Platt, Ph.D., TexasTejano.com
Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelmen
Brianna Salas, OLLU
Albert Salgado, University of Texas at SA
Patricia Seidenberger, SA Conservation
Society
Gabriel Velasquez, Avenida Guadalupe
Assn.

Staff and Public Present

Kerry Averyt, River Authority
Reuben Bazan, River Authority
Derek Boese, River Authority
Carrie Brown, River Authority
Katie Brought, River Authority
Christine Clayton, River Authority
Richard De La Cruz, River Authority
Shaun Donovan, River Authority
Taylor Galvan, River Authority

Meera Keshav, River Authority
Brian Mast, River Authority
Aarin Teague, River Authority
Monica Trevino-Ortega, River Authority
Katy Bravenec, Office of Councilwoman
Terry Castillo, District 5
Caller 01
Caller 02
Laura Calderón, Ximenes & Assoc.

I. Welcome

Co-Chair Robert Ramirez called the WCROC meeting to order. He welcomed committee members and noted meeting attendance had increased since following up with members.

Ms. Keshav introduced the River Authority's new General Manager, Derek Boese. Mr. Boese said his experience includes working in New Orleans, where he ran the Hurricane and Mississippi River Flood Defense System. Previously, he was an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Mr. Ramirez welcomed Mr. Boese on behalf of the WCROC.

II. Roll Call

Ms. Keshav called the WCROC roll. Committee members who were present are listed above. A quorum was present.

III. Citizens to be Heard

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

IV. Calendar Items

Ms. Keshav reviewed the calendar and noted events were being held virtually and in-person. Calendar items included:

- Yoga on the Creek with Mobile Om: Mondays, 6 p.m., in-person at Legacy Park

- Historic Plaza Days: August 20, 2021, 4:30 p.m. at Main Plaza
- Creekside Chats: August 27, 2021, 12 p.m., virtual on SPCCP Facebook page and YouTube
- San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Meeting: Sept. 19, 2021, 9 a.m., Sheridan Board Room
- Get Creative: Sept. 18, 2021, 10 a.m., in-person at SPCCP
- River Symposium: Sept. 24 – 26, 2021, in-person at locations throughout the watershed
- Fit & Flow: October 3, 2021, 12 p.m., in-person at Confluence Park
- Dia de Los Muertos Celebration: Oct. 30, 2021, 6 p.m., in-person at SPCCP
- Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee Meeting: Nov. 16, 2021, 6 p.m., venue to be determined

V. Approval of Meeting Minutes – March 2, 2021 and May 18, 2021

The March 2, 2021 meeting minutes were approved as presented. The May 18, 2021 meeting minutes were approved with a correction on page 4, section VII, third paragraph, first line. The minutes were corrected as follows: “Nation Recreational Trail” was changed to “National Recreational Trail.”

VI. Status Report on Westside Creeks Improvements Projects –Reuben Bazan & Richard De La Cruz, River Authority

Ms. Keshav introduced Reuben Bazan and Richard De La Cruz who gave updates on the Westside Creeks Linear Trails Project.

Mr. Bazan reviewed the status of the Apache Creek Trail project, which runs from Cassiano Park to Elmendorf Park. The project is a joint-bid contract between the City of San Antonio (CoSA) and San Antonio Water System (SAWS). The River Authority will manage the trails and park amenities, which include a shade structure, tables, benches, trash receptacles, a drinking fountain, signage and ADA parking.

The contractor reached substantial completion in July 2021. A punch list remains with two Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance issues and work on the vegetation.

Mr. Bazan presented the status of the Zarzamora Creek Trail project. Phase 1 is one mile long, and Phase 2 is .45 miles long. Both trails will have 10-foot-wide concrete hike and bike trails. There are three trailheads and eight trail street connections. Park amenities will include shade structures, drinking fountains, benches, signage and trash receptacles. Three solar lights will be installed at the trailheads.

Mr. Bazan said there is a continuous trail from Alderete Park to Gen. McMullen, except for a portion at San Felipe Street due to a SAWS conflict. SAWS should have completed its project prior to the start of the River Authority project. However, problems on a different project affected tie-ins and sewer lines. This problem then affected work on the Zarzamora Creek project. The River Authority issued a stop-work order from April 2021 through June 2021. The contractor completed the concrete trail (except for the SAWS conflict and creek crossing), retaining walls, and continues work on vegetation, park amenities, signage and the SAWS conflict area. Rain delays and damage have pushed substantial completion to fall 2021.

Mr. De La Cruz provided an update on the Alazan Creek Trail project. The project begins at Lombrano Street and ends at the Apache Creek confluence. It is 2.9 miles long, and includes five street and two trail connections. The project’s expected completion date is fall 2021.

Mr. De La Cruz reviewed the ongoing construction activities, including the retaining wall, stone pavement, a seating wall, concrete trail installation, and the construction of the railroad bridge piers.

Mr. De La Cruz reviewed the Martinez Creek Trail project. The project is on hold while awaiting funding. It will tie to existing trails at Cincinnati Ave. and Farias Park which connects to the Alazan Creek Trail.

Mr. Ramirez questioned the Westside Creeks Linear Trail Project color-coded map, which showed ongoing construction on a portion of the San Pedro Creek (SPC) from the confluence of the Apache Creek to the San Antonio River. He said this section was not under construction and staff agreed. He added that the portion of SPC that is currently under construction, was not color-coded. He said it should be noted on the map since SPC is part of the Westside Creeks Restoration Project.

Mr. Ramirez said completion dates had been slipping significantly, noting the incomplete status of the Apache, Zarzamora, and Alazan creek projects. He asked for completion dates.

In reference to the Alazan Creek Trail project, Mr. De La Cruz cited the heavy spring rains which washed away vegetation which now needs replacement. The contractor fell behind when the relocation of nearby fiber optic lines necessitated a redesign. He said that the estimated completion would take 60-75 days.

Mr. Bazan said the Apache Creek project was delayed by the SAWS sewer line project. This was packaged as a joint bid project between the River Authority and CoSA. SAWS had to do their underground work prior to the start of the trail project. SAWS had problems with the contractor, and once the sewer lines were placed, SAWS did not direct the contractor to complete the project. SAWS has placed the contract into liquidated damages, but it is not clear if liquidated damages will be assessed. The utility contractor's unfamiliarity with trail construction also contributed to the delays. As of July 2021, the trail is completely open. The replacement of the vegetation and ADA issues remain to be completed. The River Authority has discussed the delay with CoSA, and CoSA is working with SAWS to push the contractor to complete the project. Completing the pending repairs would take about 10 days.

Mr. Bazan addressed the Zarzamora Creek project delay. The contractor has not had sufficient resources to complete the project. In September 2020, SAWS informed the River Authority about this conflict, so work was stopped for two and a half months on this portion of the project. When the River Authority received approval from the CoSA & SAWS to start construction, they found SAWS had never started work. The River Authority was told in March 2021, SAWS would begin work on their water and sewer lines, so the River Authority stopped construction. From April 2021 onward, there was significant rain which saturated the creek. The creek crossing and the 700-foot SAWS section remain to be completed. The River Authority has issued an 80-day extension to complete that portion. Mr. Bazan said it will likely be completed within the extension.

Mr. Ramirez said it sounded like all three projects would be complete by the end of 2021. Staff concurred.

See the related presentation, Linear Creek Trailways, for additional details.

VII. Trash Campaign, Katy Brought

Mr. Ramirez said the issue of trash came up at the Urban Waters Partnership event he attended. Its focus was on access, equity and water in relation to the underserved populations of the city. He introduced Katy Brought, brand and public communications manager for the River Authority, to provide an overview of their new trash outreach initiative. The initiative will be announced during the River Symposium on September 24, 2021.

The campaign, beginning in 2022, is multi-year and includes earned and paid media. She reviewed the ad concept to be used, "Don't let litter trash your river." She said images of trash in mucky water elicited emotional responses during their research. As a result, the campaign will show similar images of litter to engage the viewer. The campaign will target particular messages to communities experiencing specific issues, like illegal dumping outside of the Bexar County.

Co-Chair Skye Curd asked via Chat: "Will this tie into the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign?" Ms. Brought said they considered that campaign's success and want to have a similarly effective campaign. They are pursuing community partnerships, and "Don't Mess with Texas" will be on the list. She noted there are many campaign components that can incorporate this type of messaging.

WCROC member Patti Radle encouraged Ms. Brought to consider SAISD as a partner since their Board had passed a resolution on environmental responsibility. Ms. Brought said they want to reach children and families, so the Education department is developing suitable activities.

Mr. Ramirez asked about the qualitative research with internal and external groups mentioned by Ms. Brought. He asked if any external groups were from westside San Antonio. Ms. Brought said a firm conducted constituent research and selected the participants for a representative sample. Mr. Ramirez said a paid consultant might not be as sensitive to the westside community as the River Authority staff or the WCROC, especially when discussing trash. He cited an example of a meeting on Bird Island where a consultant became an issue because they were not from San Antonio nor were they aware of the historical and cultural implications of the site.

Ms. Brought said with this campaign, the River Authority is expanding its reach more than before. Campaign plans include Spanish language commercials, a partnership with La Prensa and Spanish language ads. She said if someone sees an online campaign ad on their phone or laptop, they will be able to go directly to the River Authority website for more information or to volunteer.

WCROC member Gabriel Velasquez said much of the trash seen on the westside is due to the area being downstream. This gives the impression the westside has "trash-like or dirty people." He said he hoped the campaign would reflect sensitivity on this point.

Mr. Mast said the focus group consultant was required to identify registered recent voters from across the city. Several focus groups were held with participants from Bexar County and across the basin. He said the direction for the locally-based consultant was to identify diverse participants across racial and political lines.

Ms. Curd said from her previous experience, some smaller cities, like Windcrest, don't identify as part of San Antonio or the River Authority's service area. She referenced the ads and suggested making the "San Antonio River Authority" logo smaller and placing more emphasis on "Be River Proud" and incorporating the idea of Texas pride to overcome this mindset.

WCROC member Kamala Platt asked via Chat: “Is there an aspect of the campaign to reduce single-use plastics?” Ms. Brought said while the majority of river trash is single-use plastics, the campaign focus is to reduce the litter that ends up in the river. She added the campaign offers many opportunities to incorporate that type of messaging. She said she appreciated the feedback and would present it to her team.

Mr. Velasquez said the staff’s hard work was appreciated and asked them to consider the 1970s anti-litter campaign which showed a Native-American shedding a single tear as he saw widespread pollution and trash. He added an uncomplicated message would be the most effective.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Mr. Ramirez turned the meeting over to Ms. Curd.

VIII. Federal Appropriations Update, Brian Mast, River Authority

Mr. Mast provided an update on federal funding for the design of the Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration. He said one of the new federal administration’s priorities is equity and sustainability. Using supportive socio-economic data, the River Authority communicated the restoration’s potential impact on the immediate community to the USACE and the Office of Management and Budget.

The River Authority’s initial request was for \$2.34 million in the USACE FY 2022 Work Plan. Instead, the request was placed in the administration’s budget. The funding remains in both the Senate and House versions of the appropriations bills. The most likely outcome is a continuing resolution in November, then possibly an Omnibus appropriations bill to be passed in December 2021.

After the administration included the \$2.34 million request in its budget, the USACE asked the River Authority if they would support an additional \$1.97 million for pre-construction engineering design work. The River Authority supported the funding and the USACE FY 2022 Work Plan now includes a request for \$1.97 million for the Apache Creek Ecosystem Restoration.

Mr. Mast informed the committee about a joint submission by the River Authority, CoSA and Bexar County, for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant. If successful, the grant would fund the Zarzamora Creek hike and bike trail. Currently, the next phase of the Zarzamora Creek Trail project (from Alderete Park to Monterrey Park to Tierra del Sol Park) would be locally funded by Bexar County. However, if the joint request is funded, the federal grant would be used for this phase. CoSA would then provide the local share for the Zarzamora Creek Trail project from Tierra del Sol Park to the Culebra VIA Multimodal Station. These are highly competitive grants and would amount to \$25 million if awarded. A funding decision is due November 22, 2021.

Mr. Velasquez asked if the other creek sectors were complete and whether additional funding would be needed. Mr. Mast said additional funding was necessary. Inclusion in the administration’s budget is a good indicator project funding will continue until the project is done.

IX. Kiobassa Restitution, Shaun Donovan, River Authority

Ms. Curd introduced Shaun Donovan who gave an update on Kiobassa’s restitution for an ammonia spill which caused the death of approximately 5,500 fish.

Upon discovery of the spill, the River Authority notified SAWS, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). SAWS

issued a notice of violation. Recently, TCEQ issued their decision in a 56-page report. Mr. Donovan summarized the TCEQ's decision. TCEQ's recommended corrective action for Kiolbassa is requires Kiolbassa to remediate the spill's impact on their property and take preventive action against a reoccurrence. The TPWD has oversight on the environmental impact of the spill. Data on the number and types of fish killed was submitted to TPWD and they calculated a restitution value of \$33,750.73.

Mr. Donovan said other restitution actions were explored. Education and outreach were not included since Kiolbassa will implement these efforts as a good neighbor and partner. The decision for restitution was to undertake habitat restoration and augmentation. The River Authority is reviewing six sites to determine their feasibility for restoration and augmentation. He said none of the sites are in the Westside Creeks. Their main selection criteria was proximity to the Westside Creeks, in this case, the San Pedro Creek confluence. He referenced Mr. Mast's funding presentation, saying it appears significant restoration of the all the Westside Creeks is likely, so habitat restoration and augmentation now would be premature. By preparing the Mission Reach area near the confluence, healthy fish will be in close proximity to move easily into the creeks, once restored. The proposed habitat augmentation involves the placement of habitat bundles in the creek, which are large boulders covered with anchored debris that attract intolerant or notable species.

Mr. Velasquez said the committee has to trust the science behind why restoration and augmentation should go south rather than west and north. He said the record should reflect the committee's thanks and recognition for the due diligence and professionalism shown by Kiolbassa.

X. Status Report on San Pedro Creek Culture Park and Communications – Christine Clayton & Monica Trevino-Ortega, River Authority

Ms. Clayton reviewed the status of Phase 1.2, particularly the archaeological site. The River Authority continues to work through the Section 106 process regarding historic properties with the USACE. The River Authority has received approval from regulatory agencies to proceed with construction of the west channel wall, a pedestrian bridge and a wet wall to house infrastructure. They are also working on a design concept approved by stakeholders in July that preserves the majority of the Klemcke-Menger Soap Works and the St. James AME Church foundation, and incorporates a multi-use space for events. A final design is expected in August 2021. The goal for completing Phase 1.2 is July 2022.

Ms. Clayton reviewed construction activities for Phase 1.3, just north of Nueva Street to Cesar Chavez Blvd. They recently installed the Nueva Street crest gate and a pedestrian bridge.

In Phase 2, from Guadalupe Street to the railroad bridge, several bridges have been closed. However, reconstruction of the bridges is underway. The bridges will remain closed through early 2023 since work will be ongoing.

Ms. Clayton said Phases 3 and 4 are being designed. Currently, they are working on the final design for Phase 3, from Alamo Street at the railroad bridge to the confluence under I-35. They expect to start construction by the end of 2021. For Phase 4, meetings are being scheduled with business owners.

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

XI. Update on Public Art for San Pedro Creek Culture Park - Carrie Brown, River Authority

Ms. Brown provided an update on the Phase 1.1 public art project, Creek Lines. Installation of the sculpture will begin in the next few weeks in the upper plaza and is expected to be complete by mid-September. She said repair work was also being done on the existing Phase 1.1 murals which were damaged by vandalism. The other Phase 1.1 murals will also be checked for any required maintenance.

A teams of artists was selected by Commissioner's Court in July 2021 for the Five-Panel Mural in Phase 1.2. The project is currently in the design development process. Several focus groups have been held with subject matter experts who represent some of the groups to be depicted in the mural. Installation will occur between December 2021 and March 2022.

Ms. Brown reviewed calendar items related to SPCCP.

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

XII. Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Ramirez said he had several items to discuss. He said the Roberto Rodriguez Ad Hoc Recognition Committee has eight volunteers. A virtual meeting will take place within the next two weeks.

Mr. Ramirez thanked the WCROC members for attending the meeting. He also recognized Ms. Keshav for keeping the committee members informed and for her outreach to members who had not been attending. He said the only committee member who had not responded to the outreach effort was the San Antonio Housing Authority. Mr. Ramirez said he will follow-up with River Authority Board Member Lourdes Galvan to seek a replacement if they continue to be unresponsive. Mr. Velasquez said he would like to reach out to them to determine their interest.

Ms. Curd asked if the GoToMeeting Chats could be included in the meeting minutes. Ms. Keshav agreed to include them in the minutes.

XIII. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Virtual Chat Comments – August 17, 2021 WCROC Meeting

Brian Mast to Everyone 6:00 PM

it's better now. I don't hear the feedback

Skye to Everyone 6:07 PM

Reminder if you are not speaking. Please mute your microphone to avoid any background noise

SARA Meeting-5 to Everyone 6:14 PM

<https://www.sariverauthority.org/sara/2021-river-symposium>

Skye to Everyone 6:44 PM

Question can this also join the Don't mess with Texas campaign or to include the slogan

Hillary Lilly to Everyone 6:48 PM

Wow! That looks awesome. Great outreach idea.

Kamala Platt to Everyone 6:51 PM

Is there an aspect of the campaign to reduce single use plastics?

Veronica Lopez-Alvarez (WSACC) to Everyone 6:53 PM

St. Mary's just launched their sign ups for their day-of-service event for the Fall semester. They may be open to coordinating to have a group of students volunteer once a semester.

Kamala Platt to Everyone 6:57 PM

Robert's question of including Westside particularly given larger enviro justice issues here.

Skye to Everyone 7:07 PM

The pictures look great though

Skye to Everyone 7:09 PM

I do like that slogan

Skye to Everyone 7:13 PM

Can we also look at doing tiktoks

Skye to Everyone 7:14 PM

Making the videos are low cost

Katy Brought to Everyone 7:14 PM

We just registered a Tik Tok and are developing a strategy!

Skye to Everyone 7:15 PM

There is a guy I follow that picks up trash in creeks and he gets like 400k likes

Skye to Everyone 7:15 PM

I have to look him up

Patti Radle to Everyone 7:37 PM

Need to sign out, but thank you all for your work and presentations. It was great to finally have a chance to tune in. I should have more time to do so now.