



**Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
San Antonio River Authority (RA)
Hybrid Meeting: In-person & Virtual
May 17, 2022, 6 p.m.**

Committee Members Present

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Skye Curd, Co-Chair
Barbara Chavez, Los Bexareños
Genealogical Society
Ramiro Gonzales, Prosper West
Jerry Lockey, Beacon Hill NA
Norberto Jeremy Landin, Prospect Hill NA
Charles Oisten, Woodlawn Lake NA

Anne Parrish, Bexar Audubon Society
Kamala Platt, Ph.D., TexasTejano.com
Brianna Salas, Our Lady of the Lake Univ.
Albert Salgado, University of Texas at SA
Gabriel Velasquez, Avenida Guadalupe
Assn.

Staff and Public Present

Lourdes Galvan, RA Board Member
Derek Boese, RA General Manager
Reuben Bazan, RA
Carrie Brown, RA
Collen Brownlow, RA
Christine Clayton, RA
Frank Engallina, RA
Steve Graham, RA
Meera Keshav, RA
Brian Mast, RA
Julen Navarette, RA
Joshua Spencer, RA

Aarin Teague, RA
Charles Blank, River Aid SA
Wilson Harpe, SA Housing Authority
Zach Rosen, Resource Environmental
Solutions
Laura Calderón, Ximenes & Assoc.
Tomas Guadiano
John Hamilton
Rita Maria Contreras Avery, Bexar Audubon
Society
Various callers numbered 2, 3, and 4

I. Welcome

Committee Co-Chair Skye Curd called the WCROC meeting to order and recognized Co-Chair Robert Ramirez. She called on Lourdes Galvan, SARA Board Member, who addressed the recent \$75M federal grant awarded to restore the Westside Creeks. She said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will take the lead on the project, and the Board looks forward to the community's involvement in the restoration planning. She thanked the staff and Co-Chairs Ramirez and Curd.

II. Roll Call

Meera Keshav, RA staff, called the WCROC roll. A quorum was present. Committee members who were present are listed above.

III. Citizens to be Heard

There were no citizens signed up to be heard.

IV. Calendar Items

Ms. Curd reviewed the calendar items which included:

- Yoga on the Creek with Mobile Om – Mondays at 6:00 pm – Legacy Park
- Creekfest: A Celebration of Sustainability – May 21, various times -- Virtual

- Fit & Flow with Camp Gladiator – May 28, 10 a.m., San Pedro CCP
- Get Creative (guest TBD) – June 3, 12 pm – Virtual
- San Pedro Creek Sub-Committee Meeting, June 9, 9 a.m. – Virtual
- Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee Meeting, August 16, 2022, 6 p.m.
- San Pedro Creek Cultural Park Phase 1.2/1.3 Opening – October 15, 2022

V. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 15, 2022

Mr. Ramirez made a motion to approve the minutes with a correction to Section VII. Eco-system Restoration Update, line 4. The statement “Design will include removal of riff-raff” was corrected to read “Design will include removal of riprap.” The motion to accept the minutes as amended was unanimously approved.

VI. Status Report on Westside Creeks Improvements Projects – Reuben Bazan, River Authority

Ms. Curd introduced Reuben Bazan, who gave updates on the Westside Creeks Linear Trails Project.

Mr. Bazan reviewed the Zarzamora Creek Trail project. Phases I and II total 1.45 mile long. There are trailheads and eight street connections. Park amenities include shade structures, drinking fountains, benches, signage, trash receptacles and solar lights.

Substantial completion for the hardscape was reached in December 2021 and is now in the warranty phase until December 2022. Substantial completion for the overall project is expected in the coming weeks once the contractor installs trailhead signage.

Ms. Galvan asked about the location of the solar lights and the park’s irrigation system. Mr. Bazan said the lights were installed only at the trailheads. Regarding irrigation, Mr. Bazan said the irrigation system is only for the trees since they need consistent irrigation to survive. The installation is permanent and the trees will be irrigated for at least a year. Mr. Bazan said the City of San Antonio (COSA) is aware of the irrigation system and ultimately determines when it will be shut off.

Rita Maria Contreras Avery, Bexar Audubon Society, asked about the type of grass being used and if weed eaters would be used near the trees. Mr. Bazan said COSA uses a particular grass seed mix and he will provide the name. He stated COSA is responsible for maintenance.

Ms. Platt, Committee member, asked who is responsible for the overall care of the trees. Mr. Bazan said COSA Parks Dept. is responsible. They have conducted walk-throughs and are aware of the new trees. Ms. Platt said she was concerned about their ability to maintain the trees. Mr. Bazan said he met with the city’s forester and his assistant so they are familiar with the vegetation. She asked that the Committee be kept informed about the development and care of the trees.

Mr. Ramirez agreed with Ms. Platt’s comments and said he would like to invite a Parks Dept. representative to address their plan for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the creeks projects.

Mr. Mast, RA staff, said COSA has made a significant investment in the Westside Creeks through designing and constructing the trails and do not want to see this fail. They have been a good partner.

Mr. Ramirez agreed about the partnership and said the Committee wants to be part of any ongoing plan for maintenance and possibly leverage resources to help. He would like to hear the city's plan for the recent vandalism and see how the RA can help mitigate vandalism.

Mr. Bazan said recent vandalism included the burning of a trash can and the vandalization of several bicycle fix-it stations. The San Antonio Park Police and the trail stewards monitor the parks but there is often a lag between the time a crime is reported and their arrival on the scene. He also reminded the Committee about the rock retaining walls which were hammered in more than 60 areas.

Mr. Velasquez, Committee member, said members should be aware of the oversight authority the Committee has, so false expectations are not set. He said the area experiences a significant amount of vandalism caused by the community itself. To win the fight against vandalism, we must see positive images of our community using and enjoying these park amenities. Mr. Ramirez thanked him and said the Committee could discuss this later.

Anne Parrish, Committee member, asked if the grass used in the projects was St. Augustine. She said she didn't see any plants for birds. Mr. Bazan said St. Augustine grass was not used. He said the photo did not show all the other areas where there is vegetation. He added the RA has spoken to COSA about not mowing wildflowers.

Mr. Bazan gave an update on the Alazan Creek Trail project. The 2.9 mile trail connects to the existing trails at Woodlawn Lake and the Apache Creek confluence. Substantial completion was reached in April 2022. The project is under warranty until April 2023. He told the Committee the wayfinding signs were being replaced at the contractor's expense due to a design issue.

Ms. Curd complimented the use of flagstone and tile. Mr. Bazan said the flagstone had been used in other projects. Mr. Velasquez commended the RA staff for being a leader in bringing positive change to the Westside community.

The Martinez Creek Trail Project is on hold awaiting funding. Plans were completed, but a nearby SAWS project also conflicted with the trail project's timing, so it was delayed. A redesign is likely since the SAWS work may impact elevations. There are remaining COSA funds for the redesign.

Mr. Ramirez said that since Zarzamora, Alazan and Apache creeks project are substantially completed, the Committee will no longer require monthly updates. He said Mr. Landin had previously asked for a tour of the trails and Mr. Mast had agreed to a tour. Ms. Galvan said when the community sees what has been accomplished, they will be more supportive.

Mr. Ramirez said he had not considered that the vandalism might be due to perceived gentrification. He encouraged the community to express their concerns in productive ways at WCROC meetings or by voicing them to the RA. As the public increases their use of the trails, they will experience the benefits offered by the trails and help protect them.

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

VII. Update on Agreement to Begin Ecosystem Restoration Project, Brian Mast, River Authority

Ms. Curd turned the meeting over to Committee Co-Chair Robert Ramirez.

Mr. Ramirez recognized Mr. Velasquez, who referenced the title of the Committee's agenda item, "Update on Agreement to Begin Ecosystem Restoration Project." He said since it had been challenging to find a way to honor Roberto Rodriguez, the Committee could begin by referring to the presentation as an "Update on Agreement to Begin the Roberto Rodriguez Ecosystem Restoration Project." He said he was unsure Mr. Rodriguez would be honored as had been discussed.

Mr. Ramirez said the Committee had voted on it and it would occur. While this discussion was not on today's agenda, the renaming committee would reconvene. He said with restoration funding coming, there is momentum, but he didn't want to take the liberty of changing the slide. He reiterated renaming will happen and agreed with Mr. Velasquez on its importance.

Mr. Ramirez called on Mr. Mast for an overview of the ecosystem restoration. Mr. Mast referred to the earlier question about grass reseeding on the trail project. He said reseeding occurs only when construction has disturbed an area, so only the disturbed areas of Zarzamora Creek were reseeded. For the upcoming ecosystem restoration, the full creek area will be reseeded with native grasses and trees.

Mr. Mast said there are 11 miles of the Alazan, Apache, and Martinez creeks that will be restored. The total project cost estimate is \$115 million. The federal portion for the project comprises 65 percent and the remaining 35 percent is Bexar County's local match.

Mr. Mast said the RA Board will likely authorize RA General Manager Derek Boese to enter into the Design Agreement which provides \$2.34M to be used only for preconstruction engineering and design. By June or August, the RA will enter into the Project Partnership Agreement, totaling \$75M. These funds can be used for additional preconstruction engineering and design services, as well as construction to complete the project.

Ms. Curd asked what the Design Agreement entailed. Mr. Mast said it allows the USACE to initiate the contracting process to select the firms who will do the initial design work. He said the design work must meet the 2011-2014 feasibility study outcomes.

Mr. Velasquez asked if funding was for shovel-ready projects and what criteria determined shovel-ready status. He also asked for clarification between the Design Agreement and the Project Partnership Agreement. Mr. Mast said the RA projects are shovel-ready for the \$75M Infrastructure Act funding because of the \$2.34M in the Administration's budget. Without this funding, the project would not have been considered shovel-ready.

Mr. Mast said to speed up the process, the RA has requested a Memorandum of Understanding allowing it to begin work-in-kind before the two agreements are executed and to receive credit toward the local match. He said the Board Executive Committee was recommending the RA Board authorize the General Manager to negotiate the Design Agreement at their next meeting.

The RA anticipates community engagement occurring during fall 2022. The RA hopes the USACE will have the design consultant hired by then so the RA can provide them the community's input. Mr. Ramirez said the Committee had come full circle, starting out in 2009 when they first conceptualized the creeks' restoration. The Committee's work then focused on hike & bike trails and the restoration of Elmendorf Lake Park. Now, the Committee will return to the restoration of the creeks and hold community workshops and charrettes.

Mr. Velasquez reminded the Committee of the contributions made by former RA General Manager Suzanne Scott and others. He commended the RA for its transparency and for setting an example of doing things right.

Ms. Galvan said an organization is only as good as its staff, and the RA staff is accomplished and well-known around the country. She commended Ms. Scott, Mr. Mast, and Roberto Rodriguez for their contributions.

See the related presentation, Update on Agreement to Begin Ecosystem Restoration Project, for additional details.

VIII. Bexar County Creeks and Trails -- Collen Brownlow, River Authority

Mr. Brownlow said the program includes 24 river and creek projects involving trails, restoration and drainage and has a 10-year budget of \$240M. The restoration of the Alazan, Apache and Martinez and San Pedro creeks are part of this program. An interlocal agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities for the city, county, and RA.

He said if the Design Agreement and Project Planning Agreement, previously described by Mr. Mast, are executed timely, all four creeks could be designed between 2022 to 2024. Construction for San Pedro and Apache creeks would occur from 2025 to 2026, while construction for Alazan and Martinez creeks would take place from 2027 to 2028.

He gave an overview of the Westside Creek trails to be addressed under this program, which includes the Zarzamora Creek Trail extension from Alderete Park to Tierra Del Sol Park, the restart of the Martinez Creek Trail project, the Leon Creek Connection to Rodriguez Park, and the Leon Creek extension.

Mr. Ramirez commented on the Leon Creek Connection to Rodriguez Park. He said it is good to see a vital connection from Loop 410 to the deep Westside.

Ms. Contreras Avery asked what percent of the Westside Creeks green space is dedicated to native plants. Mr. Mast said they have not conducted that level of study to know the percent, but the 11 mile-restoration would have native grasses, shrubs and trees. He said he was not aware if other green spaces had conducted such an analysis. Mr. Ramirez said he would request a list of the tree species being used.

Mr. Velasquez said it is important to understand this is an ecosystem restoration, and the USACE and the RA would likely be open to considering different types of vegetation as long as it supports the restoration. Mr. Ramirez said by definition, a restoration implies a return to its native state with native grasses, trees and bushes.

See the related presentation, Bexar County Creeks and Trail Programs, for additional details.

IX. UDC Update – Melissa Bryant & Sandy Poleneni, River Authority

Ms. Poleneni presented information about amendments to the COSA Unified Development Code (UDC) intended to protect the investment being made in the restoration of the Westside Creeks, including Alazan, Apache, Martinez, San Pedro and Zarzamora creeks. An Overlay Water Quality Protection Area will require treatment of storm water runoff. The amendment has undergone a technical review and will return to the Planning Commission between July and September.

Mr. Velasquez said he hoped COSA was aware the new requirements, like storm water treatment, will impact construction costs, gentrification and small businesses. He wanted the meeting record to reflect the Committee's concern that the city mitigate these increased construction costs for small Westside businesses.

Mr. Ramirez said he did not think it was within the Committee's purview to comment on developer expenses and small business policy.

Mr. Boese said the RA has recognized the likelihood of gentrification occurring as the creeks are restored. He has raised this issue with assistant city managers, the city manager and mayor. The RA believes the city should lead this effort, but the RA should be at the table since they oversee the restoration. This issue is on the minds of the RA staff, especially since the restoration's design process is imminent. They will keep working with the city to find the best ways to mitigate those impacts.

Mr. Mast said there are exemptions for existing family homes in the proposed UDC amendments. Even if an owner demolishes and rebuilds their home, they would not be subject to the new storm water treatment requirements. Steps were taken to ensure the existing community who wants to remain in their home can rehab without incurring extra costs for storm water concerns. Similarly, if a business is being rehabilitated, and its business purpose remains the same and construction stays within the existing footprint, they would not be required to implement the new standards. Larger redevelopments will have to observe the new requirements, but not necessarily the small business owner or a single-family homeowner who wants to rehabilitate their structure. These exemptions are meant help to manage gentrification and allow people to continue to live in their homes.

Mr. Ramirez said the Committee had foreseen these issues and made recommendations to the mayor. He appreciated the RA anticipating and raising these issues with COSA.

Mr. Landin, Committee member, requested that questions and comments be held until the end of a presentation to respect everyone's time. Mr. Ramirez reminded the Committee the procedure was to hold discussion until after the end of each presentation.

Ms. Platt said the gentrification related to SPCCP is not wanted on the Westside. She suggested a sub-committee with some community-based representation be formed to proactively focus on this. Mr. Ramirez said the issue would be brought up again and he would follow up with her after the meeting.

Ms. Poleneni concluded her presentation by noting the public had raised gentrification and cost concerns, so the amendment included provisions for offsite treatment and neighborhood-scale projects, in addition to exemptions for single-family homes.

See the related presentation, Project Creek Areas, for additional details.

X. Status Report on the San Pedro Creek Culture Park, Christine Clayton

Christine Clayton, RA staff, said segments 1.2, from Houston St. to Nueva St. and 1.3, from Nueva St. to Cesar Chavez Blvd., will reopen at the end of August. A grand opening is tentatively planned for mid-October and members will be given details once they are confirmed. Until then, work will continue on Phase 1.2, which includes the AME church archaeological site at the intersection of

Camaron and Houston streets. To prepare for the grand opening, water will be released into the channel in June 2022 and aquatic plantings installed.

Ms. Clayton reviewed Phase 1.3. The northern half of the Nueva St. bridge is being reconstructed, while the Nueva St. gatehouse is awaiting exterior decorative panels and trellis installation. The first group of large trees has been planted.

For Phase 2, from Guadalupe St. to S. Alamo St., they have been rebuilding the northern half of Alamo St., Camp St. and the Guadalupe St. bridge. Work is also being done on the benches, trail, restrooms, channel walls and water crossing.

She reviewed Phase 3, from the Railroad Bridge to the Confluence with Apache Creek. Ongoing work consists of excavation, grading, removal of riprap and building roads for construction access.

Ms. Clayton reviewed Phase 4.1 from Cesar Chavez Blvd. to Guadalupe St. At this time, the RA is only authorized to work on the segment from El Paso St. to Guadalupe St. and recently completed its design. Construction is expected to start in the next few months.

For the segment from Cesar Chavez Blvd. to El Paso St., the RA continues its property acquisition outreach to owners. Ms. Clayton said that this phase would add public parking to SPCCP at El Paso St. As requested at the last WCROC meeting, Ms. Clayton presented visual layouts for Phases 3 and 4.1 and pointed out the various project features.

She said Phases 2, 3 and 4.1 are all expected to be completed in summer 2023.

Ms. Curd commented it might be possible to incorporate Roberto Rodriguez into the project's artwork to honor him instead of undertaking a complicated process to rename the project. She asked about the number of restrooms in Phase 4.1 and if they are open year-round. Ms. Clayton said there are two restrooms along the SPCCP in Phases 1.2 and 2, but none are currently in Phase 4.1. She added they would be open year-round but close during certain times of the day.

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

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

Ms. Brown reviewed the Five-Panel Mural, *La Gloriosa Historia de San Pedro Creek*, in Phase 1.2. The five designs are now final and feature larger figures in the foreground and a tree of life structure in the background with iconic images representing the panel's story. Installation of panels 2 and 3 are complete and the installation of panel 1 has begun. The panels are located between Commerce and Dolorosa streets, behind the Spanish Governor's Palace.

Ms. Brown provided an update for the Phase 1.2 art project, *Stream*, an interactive artwork featuring a microphone sculpture which picks up sound that triggers changes in the color and lighting of a 250 ft-long water wall.

She anticipates both projects will be complete by June, although *Stream* may take slightly longer since it cannot be tested until water is flowing.

Ms. Brown said updated information can always be found on the SPCCP website by going to the "Art" tab and clicking the "Works in Progress" link.

Ms. Brown reviewed calendar items related to the SPCCP, shown under IV. Calendar Items, and recapped a recent writer's event. She mentioned the RA, in partnership with Bexar County, will select artists by the end of June for Phase 2, 3 and 4 projects.

Ms. Brown provided an update on the revised Interpretative Panels in Phase 1.1 located in the open areas of the park. They are working to complete these by the end of May. The new panels are being reworked to include a Spanish translation. She said the RA continues to work with the Bexar County Historical Commission to review the text on all the panels. The two panels for the AME church archaeological site require additional review by the community stakeholder group. Once Phase 1 is complete, the work will begin on the Interpretative Panels for Phases 2, 3 and 4.

Mr. Ramirez reminded members all SPCCP phases will be completed by next summer, except for Phase 4.2 which is on hold. Ms. Brown's work will continue because there will be temporary installations, classes and other ongoing park projects and activities. He thanked Ms. Brown for her work.

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

XII. Miscellaneous Items

Ms. Curd commended RA staff to Mr. Boese. He said he appreciated the comments.

Ms. Galvan said she was very concerned about the WCROC member organizations who are not attending meetings. Ms. Keshav said staff agrees with her. She outlined the various efforts made to reach out to members about meetings. A quorum has been achieved at the last several meetings likely due to these staff efforts, and they will continue to pursue greater attendance. Mr. Boese agreed and said he hoped the upcoming stakeholder engagement meetings would draw in more community members.

Mr. Velasquez said the WCROC has been together for 14 years and people have been engaged throughout the long process. He said it's not for lack of interest and perhaps a press conference about the upcoming community design meetings could generate interest.

Mr. Ramirez reported the letter sent to the RA's U.S. congressional delegation was acknowledged by Rep. Joaquin Castro and Sen. John Cornyn.

Mr. Ramirez reported the birds had returned to Bird Island and urged everyone to go see them.

XIII. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 p.m.

GoToMeeting Chat Log
MAY 17, 2022 WCROC Meeting

Steve Graham (to Organizer(s) Only): 6:04 PM: ask people to mute

Carrie Brown (to Everyone): 6:10 PM: Hello everyone. Please remember to mute yourself if you are not speaking so we don't hear feedback during the presentations. Thank you!

Zach Rosen (to Everyone): 6:18 PM: Good evening everyone, Zach Rosen here with Resource Environmental Solutions (RES). Based in Houston, we specialize in natural stable channel design, construction, and maintenance. Thanks for letting members of the public join. My contact is zrosen@res.us / 713-325-7219 and would be happy to share more about what we do that could help Westside Creek!

Charles O (WLCA) (to Everyone): 6:18 PM: everyone is muted

Jerry Lockey (Private): 7:19 PM: Hi Meera - gotta go - Beacon Hill is mostly interested in Martinez Creek - can you send me the PPT presentations or give me a link so i can look at them later... Thanks

Meera Keshav (to Jerry Lockey): 7:22 PM: Yes, of course. Here you go https://www.westsidecreeks.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/All-Presentations-WCROC_051722-Short.pdf

Meera Keshav (to Everyone): 7:22 PM: In case you need to look for the link again, the presentation is also on the website and in the email reminder that went out this morning.