



**Westside Creeks Restoration  
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting  
San Antonio River Authority  
In-person: 100 E. Guenther St.  
Virtual: Gotomeetings  
August 15, 2023 - 6 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present**

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair  
Skye Curd, Co-Chair  
Gabriel Velasquez, Avenida Guadalupe  
Jerry Lockey, Beacon Hill NA\*  
Rita María Avery, Bexar Audubon\*  
Mary Ann Valdez-Hernandez,  
Historic Westside Residents Assoc.

Michael Lopez, Opportunity Home SA  
Ramiro Gonzales, Prosper West\*  
Rick Rodriguez, SA Alternative Housing\*  
Anna Alicia Romero, SAISD\*  
Abel Ramirez, SA Wheelman  
William Buhrman, St. Mary's Univ.\*  
Kamala Platt, Ph.D., TexasTejano.com  
Charles Oisten, Woodlawn Lake NA\*

**Staff and Public Present**

Lourdes Galvan, RA Board Member  
Derek Boese, RA General Manager  
Meera Nguyen, RA  
Rebecca Krug, RA  
Brian Mast, RA  
Lee Marlowe, RA  
Aarin Teague, RA  
Christina M. Castaño, Ximenes & Assoc.  
Margarita Saldana, RA  
Melissa Bryant, RA  
George Cisneros  
Bernard Sanchez

Patrice Melancon, San Antonio River  
Foundation, Board Member  
Raymundo Morales  
Natalie Guerrero  
Roberto Rodriguez, Former RA Board  
Member  
Sean McMains  
Robert Reyna, CoSA Public Works\*  
Keith\*  
Sean McMains\*  
Bill, Troy Law Office\*  
McLemmons, Michael Baker International\*

**\* Denotes Online Participant**

**I. Welcome**

Co-Chair Robert Ramirez, called the WCROC meeting to order.

**II. Roll Call – Meera Nguyen, RA**

Ms. Nguyen called the WCROC roll. Committee members who were present are listed above.

**III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – June 20, 2023**

Once a quorum was achieved, the Committee approved the June 20, 2023, minutes as presented.

**IV. Calendar Items – Meera Nguyen, RA**

Ms. Nguyen reviewed the Calendar Items listed on the respective PowerPoint slide, highlighting the September 18-21st WSC 35% Design Information Sessions.

**V. General Manager Update – Derek Boese, RA**

Mr. Boese provided an update on the Bexar County Creeks and Trails Connection. The RA provides project management services to Bexar County for this project. The project is underway

and continues to make progress. Of late, an alternate alignment was being researched to include tree mitigation and trail lighting. An overview of the project schedule included final design next summer, and construction anticipated to start January 2025.

Mr. Boese provided an update on The Link study, which also falls under the Project Management services the RA provides to Bexar County. The study is to identify a connection between San Pedro Creek and the SA River along Savings Street in downtown San Antonio. The study is funded by the County at \$2 million, includes stakeholder input meetings and will result in a preliminary engineering report with a high-level cost estimate. The study is anticipated to be completed in October; a full report will be provided to the county, and public meetings will be held in the October/November timeframe.

San Pedro Creek Improvements project update included news that Phase 2 (Guadalupe Street to South Alamo Street) and 4.1 (Guadalupe Street to El Paso Street) are nearly complete; and both are anticipated to be open to the public in September 2023. Phase 3 (Alamo Street to Confluence with Apache Creek) is estimated to be complete and open May 2024; the biggest challenge is finalizing an agreement with Union Pacific.

Ms. Galvan inquired about lighting on the projects. Mr. Boese responded that city park lights are part of the discussion in the projects.

Phase 4.2 (Cesar Chavez to Guadalupe) of the project did prove to be challenging with the hotels; therefore, the alignment is an at-grade detour. The RA is working with the City for signage and wayfinding so trail users can find their way back to the creek.

Mr. Boese proceeded to inquire if the WCROC had any questions.

**Questions/Comments:**

Mr. Ramirez requested that everyone associated with the Westside Creeks projects be notified when related projects, such as “The Link,” offer opportunities for public input.

Ms. Galvan inquired whether The Link project addressed Commissioner Calvert’s concern. Mr. Boese indicated The Link is an evolution of the Commissioner’s initial concerns.

Mr. Ramirez, regarding the Zarzamora Creek Extension, provided a clarification on the intent and description of the project.

Ms. Curd inquired, that although the RA is doing Project Management for “The Link Study”, once the project is determined, who will maintain it? Mr. Boese stated that it is too preliminary to determine what the project may be, the funding source, and who would maintain the project.

**Ms. Nguyen Noted from the On-line Chat –**

Mr. McMains: Please provide progress on Martinez Creek. Ms. Nguyen replied by providing an update on the Martinez Creek Ecosystem Restoration, providing trails along the creek. Mr. Ramirez stated that RA staff will provide more information under agenda Item VIII.

Ms. Romero: Inquired if the lighting will be harmful to migrating birds or other animals. Mr. Boese expressed, that he understands that lighting is an important topic for the community and knows that the USACE and the City have different views on lighting. The community’s perspective is that lighting is good, as it enhances public safety; however, due to it being a federal project, certain requirements indicate that lighting may be harmful for some birds and other species. Mr. Boese

stated that the RA has been trying to navigate a solution, and it has been very challenging. He believes the USACE will not allow lighting within the federal project footprint, so it will be like the Mission Reach, which does not have lighting. The City can provide lighting on adjacent areas to the footprint of the project, but not directly on the footprint.

Dr. Platt: Stated that there have been discussions about lighting in the Lackland area. She pointed out that perhaps there may be some lessons learned from those discussions that can be applied to the Westside Creeks projects. Mr. Boese says that although they tried to compromise with the City and USACE, they have not come to a resolution on installing lighting onto the footprint of the federal project.

Mr. Velasquez: Stated that the RA should continue the dialogue to help develop a solution for appropriate lighting. Mr. Ramirez noted that because it is a federal project, the USACE has the final say. However, the RA will continue to facilitate this discussion.

Ms. Romero: Suggested the RA should include the City's Office of Sustainability and Planning in this conversation regarding lighting.

Unknown Online User: "I was just wondering if the City could put more bicycle police along the area where the USACE requires no lighting?"

Mr. Boese agrees that the RA works with Park Police and should continue to advocate for additional police presence regardless of lighting.

#### **VI. Vegetation Baseline Study, Lee Marlowe, RA**

Ms. Marlowe provided a thorough explanation of the purpose of the study.

The baseline helps the RA understand the existing conditions while the post study helps to understand how the improvements impacted the existing conditions.

The study attempts to identify the most prevalent types of vegetative cover and capture the areas that have no vegetative cover. The data collected is used to develop maps that display the data spatially.

The result of the initial study identified that the most prevalent cover is "Non-native Meadow."

The intent is to do these studies periodically to understand the changes in the vegetation as the improvements are constructed, and how they impact conditions. Continued coordination with the City's mowing department is essential to ensure the appropriate data can be captured.

Unknown Online User: "Why is the City mowing? What is the purpose?" Ms. Marlowe provided a detailed explanation of why the City mows: directive maintenance is part of the federal project and will likely continue to be mowed as a technique for the ecosystem restoration.

Dr. Platt: Requested that the coordination relationship with City Mowing continue; and that these studies continue.

Ms. Romero: Is concerned about protecting the native and rare vegetation. Wants to ensure arrangements are made with the City to quarter off and protect that area. Ms. Marlowe stated that it would be difficult to quarter off the areas during major construction; but potentially we can salvage some material or seed.

Mr. Abel Ramirez: Inquired if the USACE is participating in the study. Ms. Marlowe responded that this is an RA study. However, it is meant to inform both the design and management process; all information will be shared with the USACE.

#### **VII. Upcoming Design Meetings and Funding Review, Brian Mast, RA**

Mr. Mast provided a high-level presentation on overall cost sharing, cost estimates, secured funding and potential funding. He further explained the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the RA agreements; and finally, local funding. Lastly, Mr. Mast announced the upcoming 35% design public information meetings on September 18-21. He reviewed the meeting format and asked for help getting the word out to the community regarding the meetings.

Messages of gratitude for attendance, volunteerism and assistance in planning and working the meetings went to several board members, namely to Ms. Anna Alicia Romero, SAISD.

#### **VIII. Review of July Public Input Session, Rebecca Krug, RA**

Ms. Krug provided an update on predesign activities, the project timelines and lastly, the input received at the 35% Design public meeting held on July 22, 2023 at Tafolla Middle School. She also highlighted the Apache Creek Remediation project, the findings, status, and target completion prior to the Restoration Construction commencing.

Ms. Krug proceeded to speak to the several comments received from the public regarding desired recreational features at each of the four creeks. Furthermore, she emphasized that all the data received from the public is being shared with the design team and USACE. The RA will work with the City and County regarding funding coordination for extra recreational features that are not federally funded. Ms. Krug emphasized that these additional features are important, as they provide connectivity, and enhance the opportunity for the community to enjoy nature and the built environment and provide educational activities for the schools. Additionally, she added that several other ideas/comments received were outside of the physical project limits or were other types of features that were out of the scope of the plan, such as dog parks. Ms. Krug will be providing all input to relevant agencies, such as the City and County.

Ms. Krug proceeded to inquire if the WCROC had any questions thus far, as she opened Google Earth to illustrate to the WCROC all the public comments and where they were noted on the trails.

#### **Questions/comments:**

Mr. Velasquez: had questions regarding the potential pedestrian bridge at Lincoln Courts. Ms. Krug requested that they meet one-on-one to discuss his questions, so that she may have better understanding and provide a more thorough response.

Ms. Krug introduced the RA Urban Planner, Margarita Saldana. Ms. Saldana explained she identified City plans that fall within the project footprint and provided justification for RA recommendations to be included in the project.

Lastly, Ms. Krug stated that the next steps will include providing a map with new recommended features, justification per the feasibility study, and a complementary narrative along with the proposals of new features to the design team and the USACE.

Questions from members of the audience (*names were not provided*):

- 1) Stated that he noticed safety, and security concerns on the handout. Are there any plans to have markers or signage or reference points on the trails in the event an emergency occurs on the trail? Ms. Krug stated the importance of security and emphasized there will certainly be markers on the trail that will facilitate locating emergency situations.
- 2) Two questions from this audience member:
  - a. To showcase the art and heritage parts, we should put historical signage. Ms. Krug said that although that was not presented today, all the comments were recorded and are being considered.
  - b. Regarding two empty lots near Laredo and I-35, do we know who they belong to and what will take place there? Ms. Krug did address the question and expressed that she captured the comment.

Mr. Mast stated there still is time for the public to provide comments on the 35% design.

Dr. Platt requested that all the comments be archived and available for the public to see and access; and requested there be a more dynamic way for the community to access the information. Mr. Boese responded that all information is available online for consumption and public input; and they would continue to seek opportunities to reach out to the community with the different phases of design. Furthermore, they will find the best way to post the comments received to the website.

Ms. Kurd – Inquired if restrooms have been added to the project. Ms. Krug stated that at this time, restrooms are not included in the project, but she would recommend the City consider providing these amenities.

In closing, Ms. Galvan recognized Mr. Roberto Rodriguez, who was present in the audience, as the “Godfather of the Westside Creeks. Additionally, she stated that his name would be utilized as part of the Westside Creeks restoration project. She will personally work on this issue and come back to the Committee to report on progress with this issue.

Mr. Velasquez – Requested that the comments made by Ms. Galvan and him are listed in the minutes. His comments included that the WCROC did vote and passed a motion unanimously that “Roberto Rodriguez Westside Creeks Ecosystem Project” would be the name of the full initiative of the WCROC; and that it is much more than just naming a physical monument.

#### **IX. Citizens to be heard**

Mr. Roberto Rodriguez: Stated he was very humbled to have served for many years at the RA; and had never had a self-interest but rather the community’s interest in seeing this project through. Further, he made several comments about the success of the project with the Committee, staff, and community. And finally, he looks forward to the creek being restored to its original habitat. His final comment was a request to “bring the crawdads back to the creek.”

#### **X. Miscellaneous items**

None.

#### **XI. Adjourn**

Ms. Curd thanked everyone for their attendance and input. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20 p.m.

# Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee – August 2023

August 15, 2023 · 4:46 PM · ID: 397427357

## Chat

**Unknown Online User** sent a chat · 6:06 PM

I saw clapping, but it looks as though the conference room is still muted.

**Unknown Online User** sent a chat · 6:06 PM

Agreed

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 6:06 PM

Good evening, Everyone. Anna Alicia Romero of San Antonio ISD here. aromero4@saisd.net

**Unknown Online User** sent a chat · 6:08 PM

Still no audio on the conference.

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 6:10 PM

Hello. Not sure if the audio is working. Has the meeting begun?

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 6:11 PM

Yes

**Charles O (WLCA)** sent a chat · 6:11 PM

yes

**Meera Nguyen** sent a chat · 6:14 PM

Hello Everyone, non-committee members. Please sign in to our meeting this evening through this link - <https://forms.office.com/r/JXypLBQvmD>

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 6:23 PM

Would all the lighting be harmful to migrating birds or other animals?

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 6:34 PM

Thank you. I understand that dark skies are preferred for flora and fauna to thrive.

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 6:36 PM

Can we talk to the CoSA Office of Sustainability along with Planning? Or has that been done?

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 6:41 PM

Hmm.... It might be good to include the other departments. I've found that it's exponentially more frustrating to work with CoSA when departments are not talking to each other,

**Meera Nguyen** sent a chat · 6:42 PM

Hi Anna Alicia & Rita Maria, I just noticed your hands up. One moment.

**Meera Nguyen** sent a chat · 7:12 PM

If you are just joining us, Please sign in to our meeting this evening through this link - <https://forms.office.com/r/JXypLBQvmD>

**Rita Maria Avery** sent a chat · 7:18 PM

Meeting at Tafolla was excellent. Absolutely excellent.

**Rita Maria Avery** sent a chat · 7:19 PM

Thank you to all responsible parties !

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 7:20 PM

Thank you, Meera, for your collaboration. Very happy with SARA going out into the community and trying get input from all communities impacted.

**Anna Alicia Romero, San Antonio ISD** sent a chat · 7:20 PM

yes

**Rita Maria Avery** sent a chat · 7:25 PM

Hopefully, natives can be planted when soil is replaced with clean soil? Before the non-natives fill it in.

**Rita Maria Avery** sent a chat · 7:39 PM

Will that section been Fred Rd. and Cincinnati have native plants to replace non native grasses?

**Meera Nguyen** sent a chat · 7:40 PM

Hi Rita Maria, yes with the ecosystem restoration. The entire project area is intended to remove the current vegetation and re-plant native vegetation.

**Rita Maria Avery** sent a chat · 7:44 PM

Dog parks near water seem like a very bad idea as far as water quality is concerned

**Robert Reyna** sent a chat · 8:20 PM

sent!