



**Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
San Antonio River Authority
In-person: 100 E. Guenther St.
Virtual: Gotomeetings
February 20, 2024 - 6 p.m.**

Committee Members Present

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Skye Curd, Co-Chair
Gabriel Velasquez, Avenida Guadalupe
Rita Maria Contreras,
Bexar Audobon Society
Mary Ann Valdez-Hernandez,
Historic Westside Residents Assoc.
Michael Lopez, Opportunity Home SA
Briana Salas, OLLU

Melinda Gonzalez, Prosper West
Athena Santos, River Aid SA
Rick Hernandez, SA Conservation Society
Anna Alicia Romero, SAISD
Abel Ramirez, SA Wheelmen
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
Rebecca Krug, RA
Brian Mast, RA
Kendall Hayes, RA
Reuben Bazan, RA
Margarita Saldana, RA
Nicole Marshall, RA
Christina M. Castaño, Ximenes & Assoc.
Amanda De La O
Bernard Sanchez
Chris Ryerson
Joshua Owens

Lindsey Carnett
Lorena Chavarro Chaux
Maria Rodriguez
Mariah Delaye
Mark Liberatore
Reb Lopez de La O
Robert Gonzales
Roberto Rodriguez
Sarah Picken
Wallace
Yaw Bangolame

I. Welcome

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

II. Roll Call – Kendall Hayes, RA

Ms. Hayes called the WCROC roll. Committee members who were present either in person or online are listed above. A quorum was reached.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – August 15, 2023 & October 17, 2023

Both of the meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

IV. Calendar Items – Kendall Hayes, RA

Ms. Hayes provided an overview of all items. The next WCROC meeting will be Tuesday, March 19th at 6:00 PM. (See slide 5 of the meeting presentation available on the Westside Creeks website)

V. General Manager Update – Derek Boese, RA

Regarding federal agency meetings, Mr. Boese reported that he, other RA staff and Board Members, including Lourdes Galvan, went to Washington, DC with the San Antonio Greater Chamber of Commerce's annual visit to DC, and met with several federal agencies to discuss the Westside Creeks and related cost estimates as the primary topics. (See slides 7 and 8.) Additionally, the RA has been working with the Congressional Delegation to continue support for Alternative 6 (full restoration of 3 creeks and partial restoration of Martinez Creek); and support of Alternative 7 which is the full restoration of Martinez Creek.

Next, Mr. Boese provided an update on the San Pedro Creek Culture Park (See slide 11) – emphasizing the progress being made with Union Pacific and the groundbreaking for the bridge in two to three weeks; with completion slated for September 2024.

Questions/Comments:

Ms. Galvan complimented staff and community that represented the SARA in Washington, DC.

Co-Chair Skye Curd sought clarification as to what would happen if the new proposed budgets were not approved. Brian Mast provided a thorough explanation, which included the point that higher project costs are occurring across the nation; and it did not come as a surprise that our project costs are increasing. If the new proposed budget is not approved, RA staff will work to seek additional funding avenues to make the project budget whole.

VI. Project Status Update, Rebecca Krug, RA

Ms. Krug provided an update on the predesign activity (slide 14) with emphasis on the completion of the geotech borings now under review by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Additionally, she mentioned more public comments will be sought during the 65% design in late spring or early summer 2024.

Design updates shared (slide 15) that USACE began the cultural resources survey field work which will continue through the construction phase. Additionally, the design team began the subsurface utility engineering (SUE) with field work in progress.

Lastly, Ms. Krug, provided a summary of the current project design timeline (slide 16) and a summary update on the Apache Creek Remediation project (slide 17). Regarding the remediation project on Apache Creek, excavation will begin in Spring 2025, and construction is slated to begin late Spring 2025.

Mr. Lopez inquired as to the type of hazardous materials that had been found, and ownership of properties.

Mr. Velasquez requested an explanation of what the cultural resource report is. Together Ms. Krug and Mr. Mast provided an explanation, noting the intent of the report is to alert the RA if there are cultural resources underground that need to be protected during construction. A conversation regarding the report requirements, opportunities for pertinent stakeholders to provide oral history and other details ensued. Co-Chair Ramirez wrapped up the conversation requesting staff do more research on the requirements of the cultural resource report and report back to the WCROC to further the committee's understanding and potentially assist in the report. Additionally, he suggested the RA request the USACE come to the WCROC meeting to provide a thorough explanation of why the cultural resource report is conducted. Dr. Platt agreed with the

comments made by the WCROC members and provided more rationale on why additional information is needed. She inquired further about National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. Mr. Mast explained that NEPA requirements were completed during the feasibility study conducted by USACE in 2011-2014.

VIII. Update on Dedication: The Roberto Rodriguez Westside Creeks Ecosystem

Robert Ramirez & Lourdes Galvan

Co-Chair Ramirez spearheaded the discussion, requesting the minutes reflect “Update on Dedication: The Roberto Rodriguez Westside Creeks Ecosystem.” Ms. Galvan provided an update of communications with City of San Antonio Council Member Teri Castillo, District 5. Ms. Galvan stated that Council Member Castillo requested a biography of Roberto Rodriguez (Attached: biography provided by Mr. Ramirez) and a history of what had transpired in the “Dedication of The Roberto Rodriguez Westside Creeks Ecosystem.” She also requested staff to research past minutes and provide her with the information. Discussion ensued supporting this effort of dedication and gratitude to Roberto Rodriguez for all the years of work, passion, and perseverance to the Westside Creeks Ecosystem and the WCROC.

Mr. Velasquez requested that the agenda item be clarified to reflect “Update on Dedication: The Roberto Rodriguez Ecosystem.”

Mr. Ramirez called a motion of the WCROC to amend the agenda item as noted. Mr. Lopez seconded the motion. No one had an objection, and the motion passed.

VIII. Citizens to Be Heard

Bernard Sanchez, Historic Westside Residents Association, requested the WCROC include the restoration of the natural springs at Cassiano Park as part of the project. Discussion ensued amongst the WCROC members.

IX. Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Velasquez: commented in response to Mr. Sanchez’s comments. He requested RA staff consider it as a future agenda item for the WCROC. Ms. Galvan said staff should do some research and consider it for the agenda in two months.

XI. Adjourn

Co-Chair Curd adjourned the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee – February 2024

February 20, 2024 · 5:50 PM · ID: 406665165

Chat

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 6:05 PM

I filled out the form, am here. Rita Maria

Kendall Hayes sent a chat · 6:07 PM

Hello! Please fill out the sign-in form for our online participants. Thank you!

<https://forms.office.com/r/UwBmaxVHpH>

sent a chat · 6:19 PM

Where's that 5 acre wetland on Martinez Creek?

Kendall Hayes sent a chat · 6:19 PM

Thank you all for dialing in to this month's meeting. If you have not already, please sign in here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/UwBmaxVHpH>

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 6:20 PM

Re: Martinez Creek modifications, is natural rock used for riffles and other features which imitate natural water movement?

Brian Mast sent a chat · 6:23 PM

The 5 acre wetland on Martinez Creek is a small 5 acre backwater area where during rain events it would get water flow, but in drier times would likely go dry. It will provide a different type of habitat for birds and other species. We have a few along the Mission Reach that hold water post rain events for a week or so and slowly dry.

Brian Mast sent a chat · 6:26 PM

Yes, natural rock will be used in all the creeks. There could also be opportunities where large fallen trees can be used to provide habitat and direct water in the project. Natural rock will be dominant resource.

sent a chat · 6:26 PM

Thanks Brian for the response. Is the 5 acres near Woodlawn? Cincinnati or Culebra? Or have the 5 acres not be designated yet? We live right off the creek so wondering where those 5 acres are located :)

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 6:29 PM

Thank you, Brian

sent a chat · 6:32 PM

Also as of last year we have established a Martinez Creek neighborhood association. We have sent an email to y'all but never got a reply back. Who can we email to get a response?

sent a chat · 6:32 PM

Hi All - I'm also on Martinez Creek, we are the only house in our area in the flood plane, at the southern corner of Mistletoe & West - is there any information on the possibility of any houses in the imminent flood plane being raised for the restoration work?

Kamala Platt sent a chat · 6:35 PM

Is there a NEPA required for their work? Environmental Justice concerns include community cultural concerns that are being ignored might fall under NEPA.

Kamala Platt sent a chat · 6:36 PM

and NEPA requires community input.

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 6:38 PM

Mariah, where can I find information re: the Martinez Creek NA? We own a home/office a block from there.

sent a chat · 6:39 PM

mtzcreekna@gmail.com

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 6:39 PM

Thank you!

sent a chat · 6:40 PM

Yes how will our oral tradition be honored?

sent a chat · 6:42 PM

Hello Chris Hi. We meet every 2nd Thursday of the month at Lemon Girls off Zaramora 6:30-8pm

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 6:47 PM

Kendall, did you count me in? Rita Maria Avery

Kendall Hayes sent a chat · 6:50 PM

Hi Rita, yes I have you marked as present!

sent a chat · 6:51 PM

Thank you Lourdes for you stories and for advocating for the Westside creeks

sent a chat · 6:51 PM

*your

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 6:52 PM

Thanks, Kendall!

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 7:01 PM

If this is possible, restoring springs at Cassiano Park is an excellent idea. Climate has so much to do with it.

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 7:01 PM

Springs flowed into Woodlawn Lake in around 1999 or 2000 after lots of rainfall.

Kamala Platt sent a chat · 7:02 PM

Were the Springs closed/ covered or did they depend on water level. I suggest we speak with someone like George Rice who is a hydrologist. (I think that is the name for what he does.)

Rita Maria Avery sent a chat · 7:03 PM

Likely water level; yes we need a water hydrologist.

sent a chat · 7:07 PM

Agree listen to the citizens :) off and on the record.

sent a chat · 7:11 PM

Want to lift up that Martinez creek is looking so good after Basura Bash!

Kendall Hayes sent a chat · 7:12 PM

Link for the online sign in <https://forms.office.com/r/UwBmaxVHpH>

Biography for Roberto Rodriguez: Civic Leader, Advocate, and Public Servant

Roberto Rodriguez has lived an extraordinarily full cycle of Westside San Antonio residency, going from a favorite son to affectionately earning from Westside residents the title of “godfather of the Westside Creeks.”

Roberto was born on January 10, 1942, to parents whose heritage included Hispanic, Native American, and Jewish roots. Raised on the banks of the Alazan and Apache creeks, he was educated by his mother on Native American medicinal and nutritional herbs, plants, and roots growing on the banks of the creeks, along with insights on selecting the appropriate creek wildlife, such as crawfish, bullfrogs, and turtles, along with fish, for consumption. His childhood included witnessing and surviving the devastating floods that later in life would drive his ardor in addressing the condition of his beloved creeks.

Following his formal education that extended to attendance at San Antonio College, Roberto embarked on a professional career that included federal service and private investigation. But his altruistic nature soon became evident with his service as board member of the M.H. Calderon Branch of the Boys & Girls Clubs of San Antonio, dedicated community service including appointment to the board of the city’s Parks and Recreation Department, and serving on the city’s Linear Creeks Parkway Advisory Board, during which he successfully advocated for inclusion of the Westside Creeks by name – the Alazan, Apache, Martinez, and San Pedro – in the bond funding for creekway improvements approved by voters in 2010.

Seeing the need for much-needed attention to his neighborhood creeks, Roberto successfully ran for election to the San Antonio River Authority’s Board of Directors, where he served for two terms. His tenure was marked by unrelenting effort to raise community awareness and support for projects that would improve the water quality, habitat, and access to the creeks, while maintaining the flood control capability enabled with the channelization of the creeks three decades prior, and enhancing the quality of life for the residents of the Westside. Upon assuming office, he immediately advocated for restoration of all four of the Westside creeks, with his efforts leading to the formation of the Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee to oversee the engagement of the community in the development of a comprehensive stake-holder based vision for the restoration of the creeks.

Roberto’s advocacy for the Westside and its creeks was the catalyst that led to the selection of the Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project as a pilot ecosystem restoration project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2011. Though personal considerations led to his retirement from the River Authority’s Board in 2013, Roberto’s vision continues to influence the efforts that resulted in full federal funding of the restoration project in 2022. Along with contributory funding from the county, the restoration project’s initial planning phases are now currently underway, with completion of the restoration of all four Westside creeks currently scheduled for 2029.

Of significant note, is that along with the anticipated restoration of the creeks, Roberto’s efforts have contributed to the completion of the hike-and-bike trails along all four creeks leading to the San Antonio River, providing recreation and connectivity of the Westside community to the city’s extensive trail system, and the renovation of Elmendorf Lake Park that was re-opened in January, 2017, with its splashpad and state-of-the-art new swimming pool serving community residents.

From favorite son to godfather, Roberto’s passion and dedication have been the hallmarks of his life of service dedicated to the enhancement of the natural environment and quality of life for San Antonio’s Westside and its residents. Thus, the natural environment ultimately blessed by, and benefitting from, the restored creeks, will stand in perpetuity as the culmination and crowning achievement of his efforts, and can rightfully and proudly be referred to as “The Roberto Rodriguez Westside Creeks Ecosystem.”

RR/2-8-24