



**Westside Creeks Restoration  
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting  
San Antonio River Authority  
In-person: 100 E. Guenther St.  
Virtual: GoToMeetings  
April 16, 2024 - 6 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present**

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

Charles Blank, 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  
Albert Salgado, UTSA  
Erwin De Luna, United SA Pow Wow  
Charles Oisten, Woodlawn Lake NA

**Staff and Public Present**

Lourdes Galvan, RA Board Member  
Rebecca Krug, RA  
Brian Mast, RA  
Kendall Hayes, RA  
Agdel Rivera, RA  
Amanda Nasto, RA  
Christina M. Castaño, Ximenes & Assoc.  
Amanda De La O  
Bernard Sanchez  
Brooke Vasquez  
Christopher Davies  
Clay Church

David Garza  
Dr. Cardenas  
Lorena Chavarra Chaux  
Mark Liberatore  
Matthew Elverson  
Micky Clemmons  
Natalie Guerrero  
Reb Mari  
Rebecca Lopez  
Seth Sampson  
Shannon Linney  
Zia Burns

**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. The quorum was met.

**III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 2024 & March 2024**

Both sets of meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

**IV. Calendar Items – Kendall Hayes, RA**

Ms. Hayes provided an overview of all items on the related PowerPoint slide (slide 5).

**V. General Manager Update – Brian Mast, RA on behalf of Derek Boese**

Mr. Mast provided the update on behalf of Mr. Boese.

Mr. Mast reminded the WCROC members to pick up their Fiesta medals at the RA main office. He advised the committee that the San Pedro Creek Culture Park medal was selected as a finalist for the San Antonio Business Journal Fiesta Medal 2024, Government Entity category. Members of the community are being asked to vote on-line. (see slide 7)

Mr. Mast explained that the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was present to provide more information on the "Cultural Research Survey" as requested by the WCROC in February 2024.

Mr. Mast introduced the Supplemental Oral History Project (slide 8), stating that the RA will fund and conduct this project. The RA is in the process of acquiring, through an existing on-call consultant contract, a local and experienced consultant to engage the community for a thorough process. He explained that the plan is to go into the community, beginning with the core group the RA has been working with throughout the years and other groups, to collect and transcribe oral histories about their engagement with the Westside Creeks. The oral histories will be transcribed into English and Spanish and be available in the RA archives in the future. These records will also be used for future Westside Creek work; for example, they will help inform the interpretive signage along the creeks. This is a supplemental project the RA is initiating and is separate from the Cultural Research Survey by the USACE. The RA is in the preliminary stages of this project.

#### **Questions/Comments:**

Michael Lopez asked if this initiative was a result of the robust discussions and Mr. Mast stated, "in part, yes."

Gabriel Velasquez offered the Avenida Guadalupe's studio for recording and stated he would be a proud sponsor of this project. Rick Hernandez also offered his services to assist in this project. Co-chair Ramirez and Dr. Kamala Platt expressed their thanks to the RA staff. Dr. Platt inquired if the consultant contracted to perform the work will be asking the WCROC for their input on names of people to be interviewed. Mr. Mast stated the RA has an initial list of 20-25 people and will require the consultants to practice due diligence in seeking the key additional people that should be interviewed.

Mr. Mast stated there is a separate process the RA is initiating with the consultant: "What is your Riverway?" It is an ongoing opportunity people can engage in if they did not get interviewed for the oral histories project for whatever reason. It is not project specific.

Co-chair Skye Curd inquired if there will be criteria to be considered for the persons who will be interviewed. Mr. Mast responded that at this time, there is not. Those interviewed will be people who have a story they are willing to share. Ms. Lourdes Galvan noted there is a Lanier High School alumni group that would be helpful in this process that she would contact. Mr. Mast will coordinate with Ms. Galvan to get the contact information for the Lanier group.

Mr. Mast stated it is the "written word" that is being sought. The consultant will transcribe the audio recordings and translate them to have both English and Spanish records, and RA will work from those to develop interpretive signs and other communications. Mr. Mast stated that by this time next month, they will announce the consultant and the timeframe for this project.

## **VI. Project Status Update, Rebecca Krug, RA** (PowerPoint slides 11, 12, 13)

Ms. Krug stated the design activities are between the last 35 percent working towards the 65 percent milestone. The design team has reviewed the data submitted last month and had some questions on the geotechnical and survey data. Additional information has been provided to the design team.

Requests for betterment/additional work items submitted last fall are still under review by the USACE, and Ms. Krug anticipates getting feedback soon. The design team is coordinating subsurface utility engineering field work and it should be complete within the next two weeks.

For the cultural resource process field activities, the shovel tests should be completed this week and trench tests will begin next week.

Schedule update: the team is halfway through the design process and are on track to reach the 65 percent design milestone. Public information sessions are targeted for the end of June and dates and locations will be confirmed at next month's WCROC meeting.

Next, Ms. Krug provided an update on the Apache Creek Remediation Project. The RA is expecting to get 90 percent plans for design of the remediation project by the end of this month. RA plans to begin soliciting for construction to complete the remediation work by the end of this year. The goal is to have the contaminated soil removed and the remediation project completed before the Apache Creek restoration project begins.

Co-chair Curd asked if the public meetings in June would be seeking public comment. Ms. Krug replied that public comment on the 65 percent design is the main intent of the meeting. Ms. Krug stated that as the team approaches 65 percent design, it will have a better understanding of what the creek design will look like. She stated that during the comment period and at the public meeting there will be the opportunity for one-on-one conversations with the public and the public can also make comments on-line. Kendall Hayes stated the meetings will include a holistic overview of the project to bring new members of the public up to date on the project and where it is in the process. Anna Alicia Romero, offered to host the meeting at any of their SAISD facilities if needed.

## **VII. Presentation on USACE Cultural Resources Process, Chris Davies & Seth Sampson, USACE (PowerPoint Slides 19-27)**

(Virtual attendance) Chris Davies gave a brief introduction of the USACE and its vision and mission statements and introduced himself and Seth Sampson. He stated that Mr. Sampson has been assigned as the Lead Cultural Resources Specialist for this project. Mr. Davies turned the presentation over to Mr. Sampson to go over the Section 106 Process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and how it pertains to the Westside Creeks.

Mr. Sampson provided the definition and goal of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. He highlighted that the 106 Process requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. The process seeks to accommodate historic preservation concerns with the needs of federal undertakings through consultation among the agency officials and other parties with an interest in the effects of the undertaking on historic properties. He pointed out that for the Westside Creeks undertaking, identifying archaeology and architecture within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) is the focus for the USACE.

Mr. Sampson stated the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation (ACHP) has the review process listed from initiation to completion on their website. Currently on this project, they are on the step of identifying historic properties (2nd step after initiation).

Mr. Sampson thanked Ms. Krug, who coordinated with their cultural resource contractor who is surveying the APE for this project. (See slide 21.)

Slide 22: Archaeology: backhoe trenching, and metal detection have been done to identify historic properties, meaning, cultural resources below the surface or ground that the federal agency must determine their eligibility and finding of effect. All backhoe trenching and metal detecting trenching is to find deeply buried deposits that cannot be reached through shovel testing. Photos are not pictures of the actual APE but only representations.

Slide 23: Architectural Survey: USACE's focus is archeology and architecture. They have requested that the Cultural Resources Consultant identify anything over 50 years of age and record and evaluate each finding for eligibility on the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) within the entire APE. Slide 23 shows some of the photos that are on the architectural survey of the APE and are recognizable.

Slide 24: Mr. Sampson stated that USACE must consider any historic districts in the study area; and assess the effects of the project's undertaking, and impacts to each historic district as a whole.

Slide 25: Mr. Sampson reviewed the next steps and stated that once the survey of the APE is completed, a draft report with recommendations of NRHP eligibility and effect is submitted to USACE for review and the contractor edits the report based on USACE comments. The USACE determines the effect of the undertaking and also makes a determination of eligibility for any archaeological site, building structure, or object identified and recorded as part of the field survey. USACE submits the draft report in consultation to the identified consulting parties for review and comment. The contractor makes edits to the draft report based on comments received from consulting parties.

Slide 26: Mr. Sampson stated that any collected artifacts are curated and then fully consulted on for acceptance into the final Section 106 report, which is then filed with the Texas Historic Commission (THC). He pointed out that all steps of the Section 106 process are done in consultation with the identified consulting parties for this undertaking to include the San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation (OHP).

Mr. Sampson opened the floor for questions.

Co-chair Ramirez asked who the Agency Official was, and the response was the Commander of the Fort Worth District, Colonel Calvin E. Kroeger, is the Agency Official for this scenario.

Co-chair Ramirez referred to slide 20 on the Section 106 Review process. He stated that he is glad the process included public participation and stated that all steps state "involve the public." He noted that the final bullet on the first box mandates a plan to involve the public and asked, what the plan is and if it was possible to provide a copy through the RA to the committee. Mr. Sampson confirmed there is a programmatic agreement and that SARA has a copy of it.

Co-chair Ramirez also asked who the consulting parties were. Mr. Sampson stated that when he started the programmatic agreements, they reached out to the State Historic Preservation Office

(SHPO) and the City of San Antonio's OHP and both offices provided 14 consulting parties and has just added one more to a total of 15. Co-chair Ramirez requested a copy of the consulting list and noted that the regulations state the consulting parties review the draft report. The Committee would like to get on the list as individuals or consulting parties or otherwise. Co-chair Ramirez stated that the regulations also provide for information to the public and state the "Agency official shall seek and consider the views of the public." There are two parts to that: first, the Agency Official will provide the public with information about the 106 Review Process, and he recognized that this evening was to provide the 106 Review Process information. The second part is "seeking public comment" and asked if the plan is to involve the public. He asked if there are plans to provide any additional information to the committee and the public. Mr. Davies stated that consultation takes place throughout the process, from the beginning and throughout to the end of the process. Mr. Davies stated that they are not averse to providing the group updates. Co-chair Ramirez asked to schedule those updates and Mr. Mast responded that he would work with USACE to schedule the updates. Co-chair Ramirez requested the updates at milestones.

Co-chair Ramirez pointed out that the regulations also provide that "members of the public may also provide views on their own initiative for the Agency Official to consider." He explained that he was requesting contact information of the Agency Official for people that do not have access to computers or that do not have emails so they can provide their views on their own initiative if they so desire.

Mr. Mast added that on the USACE website for the Westside Creeks Ecosystem Project, there is a link allowing people to provide comments and contact information for the Public Information Officer at the USACE to collect that information as well. Mr. Mast also pointed out that the RA also has a "contact us" email form on the Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration project website where people can log on and provide comments. Mr. Mast pointed out that any pertinent information received regarding this project is shared with the USACE. There are multiple opportunities in that regard.

Erwin De Luna stated that he appreciates the explanation of the Section 106 Review Process but would like an explanation of the acronyms found under each step of the process. Mr. Sampson explained the acronyms: SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office), THPO (Tribal Historic Preservation Office), NHO (Native Hawaii Organization).

Mr. De Luna asked if they are only going to be talking or discussing with individuals who are representing federally recognized tribes. Mr. Sampson preceded his response by stating that he is the Tribal Liaison for the Fort Worth District Corps of Engineers. They are mandated to consult with the sovereign tribal partners that are federally recognized, and they have done that for this project and will continue to do so. Mr. Sampson stated they coordinate and take comments from other groups sometimes referred to as descendant groups or some that have not been federally recognized yet, as part of the national environmental policy act (NEPA) process and they take comments from the general public as well. They take those comments and respond to those comments in writing either in the report or in person or both. He stated they do not consult in the same manner as they consult with federally recognized tribes.

Mr. De Luna stated there are several federally recognized Indians in his group and wanted to point out that none of them have been contacted or reached out to nor any other groups in San Antonio (American Indians of Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions, etc.)

Mr. Sampson thanked Mr. De Luna and stated he will get in touch with him and pointed out that the oral interviews were a separate enterprise by the RA. USACE will follow up with Mr. De Luna to reach other tribal units that are not federally recognized.

Co-chair Ramirez stated that the project would be remiss if we did not use the Texas Heritage Project run by the American Indians of Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions (AITSCM), who have a lot of information, as a resource.

Mr. Mast stated that the American Indians in Texas (AIT) is on the list to be consulted.

Co-chair Ramirez stated that although some tribes are not federally recognized, they should be contacted because they have a wealth of information.

Mr. Velasquez stated that his understanding is that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) does not separate the federally recognized tribes from those that are conducting tribal business. He referred to Mr. De Luna's comments, adding that we need to push the envelope of what is required and what qualifies as the most extreme example of those requirements. He also stated that we are aware in San Antonio that we have reached a level of sophistication to understand that there is a massive population of indigenous people living in San Antonio and it would be disingenuous for us not to include the opinions and the guidance of tribal nations that are native to this region. He further asked for clarification on NHO.

Mr. Velasquez added that it is also important to understand that when we talk about outreach on the Westside there is a digital divide; the westside is a side of town that does not have significant access to the internet, and most do not have fiber yet. He stated we need on-the-ground outreach efforts that are going to signify an effort equal to someone having the internet and the weight should be equal.

Mr. Davies responded to the request of Mr. Velasquez to provide a clarification on NHO. He said that the NHO is referring to Native Hawaiian organizations. It is a separate legal term and there are none in Texas. He also mentioned that there are two statutes NHPA (National Historic Preservation Act), which was on today's presentation, and the NEPA (National Environment Policy Act). He stated that under NHPA, the USACE is mandated to consult with federally recognized tribes, and it is a lengthy process. They do consult with those non-federally recognized tribes and members of the public and other stakeholders and partners; and further explained that this means they take into account NHPA, descendant groups and other folks' opinions and comments on things like indigenous knowledge and historic ecosystems and things of that nature.

Mr. Davies also highlighted the term NEPA, that was brought up today during the presentation. NEPA is the National Environmental Policy Act. It is an umbrella law that is a disclosure law and planning law. They take comments from those descendant groups both in the NHPA process and in the NEPA process. If you provide comments in the NEPA process, you'll probably get a response to it that will probably be printed in an appendix in that report. They take all comments seriously and emphasize the indigenous knowledge and reach out to locals and residents and communities that have lived in these areas for a length of time and that can help them understand the area environmentally and culturally. They take descendants' comments but are mandated to take comments from federally recognized tribes because they have sovereignty, they have more weight, but all comments are taken seriously.

Ms. Galvan thanked the USACE for the presentation and answering the questions. She inquired regarding if the WCROC would get a report on the findings presented by the contractor when the draft report is complete (referring to Slide 25, Next Steps).

Mr. Davies responded that these reports have a lot of sensitive information, so it could be available, but it would be heavily redacted. He stated that they do provide a copy to the RA and they will continue to provide the report to the group but may not be in a large detailed specific report format.

Ms. Galvan restated that she does appreciate the information and believed that the WCROC is at a safe spot in the process.

Mr. Mast reiterated that this is a process that is intended to protect those historical resources in the APE. And the RA intends to protect the resources as best as they possibly can. He also stated that USACE is a precious resource for the community.

Mr. Velasquez reiterated that he appreciates the work of USACE and that consultation means a lot, so to the extent of the law, as far as it triggers a need to consult with descendant organizations, please consider that to the maximum level.

Co-chair Ramirez thanked USACE.

### **VIII. Citizens to Be Heard**

Bernard Sanchez – from the Westside of San Antonio; thanked the WCROC for listening to him about the springs at Cassiano Park. Through research and with the help of Rena Gonzales, and Homer Garcia, Director of San Antonio Parks & Recreation, it was determined that the spring was an artesian well and in 1927 was redirected into the Apache Creek. He added that for the oral history project the RA will be undertaking, perhaps his sister, Graciela Sanchez from Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, who has been collecting oral histories for over 35 years now might be a resource. Some of it is written and some are already on video. The Esperanza Center has been trying to save our history, our buildings, and the culture for many years. He and his sister studied under the Smithsonian institute and UTSA library on how to conduct interviews and if interested maybe he can convince his sister to open interviews.

And lastly Mr. Sanchez stated that he will be collecting seeds of “Queen Anne’s Lace” from the Alazan Creek area by Lanier High School and Tafolla Middle School, and it is blooming at his house. If anyone would like seeds to reseed in the creeks, he will have some seeds in about 60 days.

Mr. Mast stated that the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center is on the list of resources the RA has and will be directing the researchers toward it. They will include Esperanza and other entities on the Westside. Mr. Mast stated that the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center is also on the USACE list.

Dr. Platt asked that the Westside Preservation group also be added to the list.

## **IX. Miscellaneous Items**

Co-chair Ramirez requested an update on the Roberto Rodriguez Westside Creeks Ecosystem Project naming process.

Ms. Galvan stated that the WCROC previously voted and passed a motion to work on naming and recognizing Roberto Rodriguez for his work on the Westside Creeks Ecosystem. She stated that she has consulted with RA for direction and has since contacted Councilwoman Teri Castillo to request her help to navigate the process. She also contacted Commissioner Justin Rodriguez, and as of yesterday, Commissioner Rodriguez told her he was working on getting information together and planning to meet with Councilwoman Castillo to discuss the process to get the project under Mr. Rodriguez's name. She stated that she will make another report once she has more information. She expressed everyone's appreciation for Mr. Rodriguez's work on the Westside. She also pointed out that she was informed that once the project is complete, the Westside Creeks project will belong to the City of San Antonio.

Co-chair Ramirez stated that he noticed in last month's meeting minutes that there was a request made from the Martinez Creek Neighborhood Association for a presentation. Ms. Hayes stated that the meeting is scheduled, and she has been in communication with them since the meeting.

## **XI. Adjourn**

Co-chair Ramirez adjourned the meeting at 7:18 pm.



# Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee – April 2024

April 16, 2024 · 5:48 PM · ID: 449619517

## Chat

sent a chat · 6:08 PM

Thank you for joining us online. Please complete this online sign-in  
<https://forms.office.com/r/SGKdnYekuW>

sent a chat · 6:13 PM

Thank you for joining us online. If you have not already done so, we ask that you please complete this linked online sign-in <https://forms.office.com/r/SGKdnYekuW>

**Amanda** sent a chat · 6:22 PM

Whoo hoo!

**Amanda** sent a chat · 6:23 PM



**Reb Mari** sent a chat · 6:25 PM

Great question. The Martinez Creek Neighborhood Association is very excited to be able to be part of the conversation and input around the design on Martinez Creek.

sent a chat · 6:29 PM

Thank you for joining us online. If you have not already done so, we ask that you please complete this linked online sign-in <https://forms.office.com/r/SGKdnYekuW>

**Reb Mari** sent a chat · 7:18 PM

Thank you!!!

sent a chat · 7:18 PM

Thank you for joining us tonight. If you have not already done so, we ask that you please complete this linked online sign-in and have a great rest of your night  
<https://forms.office.com/r/SGKdnYekuW>