

A. THE PLANNING PROCESS

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, OUTREACH, AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Citywide Creek Master Plan effort builds on previous work by citizens, local business, community leaders, elected representatives, agency staff, and countless volunteers devoted to our creeks. Initiated as a grassroots effort, this past work led to the adoption of the Santa Rosa Creek Master Plan in 1993, and a shift in local government policy towards the protection and enhancement of creeks. Today, these creek dreams are becoming a reality as creek restoration projects are implemented along Santa Rosa Creek.

Since the creeks belong to all of us who live and work in Santa Rosa, the Citywide Creek Master Plan must reflect the community's needs and vision. To learn about the community's ideas for local creeks, the City of Santa Rosa partnered with the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to develop a public involvement strategy.

Components Include

- The formation of a Creek Master Plan Committee
- Identification of creek planning goals
- Outreach to the community
- Interpretive walks along a creek restoration reach
- A series of public workshops held around the city
- A public meeting to present the resulting comments
- Compilation of results in *Creek Dreams: Expanding the Vision*

Information, ideas, and concerns gathered from the public during this phase of the project helped shape the Citywide Creek Master Plan.

Technical Advisory Committee. A Citywide Creek Master Plan Committee was formed to assist City staff, National Park Service staff, and consultants, who formed the core project team. The committee consisted of members of the public; elected officials; the Santa Rosa Waterways Advisory Committee; the Committee for Restoring Santa Rosa Creek; other non-profit organizations; federal, state, and local agencies; and staff from the City of Santa Rosa, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and County of Sonoma. The Committee met in January of 2003 to brainstorm issues important for creek planning in Santa Rosa. Attendees recognized the need to collect information about existing and historic creek conditions from the public and the need to share information about the benefits of healthy creeks and flood control considerations with the public. This Committee later became the Technical Advisory Committee for the project.

Community Outreach. To generate excitement about creeks and encourage participation in public workshops, nearly 5,000 copies of an informational pamphlet were distributed throughout Santa Rosa. The pamphlet included a watershed map; described the benefits of healthy creeks; and listed dates, times, and locations of watershed workshops. Pamphlets were distributed to neighborhood leaders, non-profit and environmental groups, schools, businesses, public agencies, and interested citizens. The project team also presented information about Santa Rosa's creeks at scheduled

local events and meetings. Accompanying press coverage included articles in the daily local newspaper, on-air interviews on local radio stations, and calendar listings in both daily and weekly local newspapers.

Creek Explorer Tours. In an effort to increase awareness about local creeks and creek ecology, Creek Explorer Tours were organized as part of the City of Santa Rosa's very popular Rosie Trolley Tour Program. Participants climbed board the trolley at the Downtown Market to visit a restored reach of Brush Creek near Santa Rosa Creek. With hardly a seat to spare, City staff presented an overview of the Citywide Creek Master Plan effort, a guided "question and answer" walk discussing different habitat features along the creek, and information about how to get involved in helping take care of local creeks.

Neighborhood Creek Planning Workshops. To gather citizens' ideas for the Citywide Creek Master Plan, five creek planning workshops were held on weekday evenings at local schools and community centers. Each workshop focused on and was held in a specific watershed area: Roseland and Colgan Creeks, Brush Creek, Piner Creek, Paulin Creek, and Matanzas Creek. Santa Rosa Creek was not included since a Master Plan already exists for that creek.

Opening remarks set the tone for each workshop. This was followed by a presentation of the Citywide Creek Master Plan process, planning goals, and information about the particular watershed. Participants then divided into smaller groups with a facilitator to study maps of the watershed and discuss their vision for the future of neighborhood creeks. Information, ideas, and concerns were recorded directly on the watershed map and on comment sheets.

Presentation of Results. Over 250 people participated in the creek walks and workshops. Comments from many others added to a flood of ideas for protecting and enhancing creeks in Santa Rosa. In October 2003, a citywide meeting was held to celebrate the success of the summer's public involvement efforts and to share highlights of the nearly 700 comments received over three months.

Two types of information were gathered from participants during the workshops: information about the historic and existing condition of local creeks, and ideas and concerns for the future of these same creeks. Some comments were heard during nearly every workshop. These include:

"What we know about our creeks"

Workshop participants provided much of the detailed information needed to assess the history and current status of local creeks.

- An abundance of wildlife lives within our creek corridors, including egrets, ducks, turtles, otters, and steelhead trout
- Pathways are used for walking and biking, but these are disconnected in places
- Restoration projects have improved local creek reaches
- Flooding is a concern in some areas
- Trash and debris are problems in some areas

“What we want to see for our creeks”

An overall vision for the future of Santa Rosa’s creeks began to take shape as certain ideas were mentioned again and again, in all watersheds.

- Preserve and restore instream and creekside forest habitat for fish and wildlife
- Connect pathways and provide creek crossings
- Keep creeks clean and healthy
- Maintain channel capacity for flood protection

ASSESSMENTS

Goals, Policies, and Objectives. City planning staff compiled policies from existing planning documents including the Santa Rosa 2020 General Plan, Santa Rosa Creek Master Plan, Santa Rosa Waterways Plan, Santa Rosa Creek Design Guidelines, and the Santa Rosa Design Guidelines. The project team reorganized existing policies to integrate with the Citywide Creek Master Plan goal structure. Following the adoption of the Citywide Creek Master Plan, the Santa Rosa Creek Design Guidelines will be revised to apply to all creeks within the project area, and updates to the Santa Rosa 2020 General Plan and Santa Rosa Design Guidelines will be proposed.

Natural Resources. The project team reviewed comments gathered through the Creek Dreams public participation process, as well as past and ongoing studies of natural resources within the Master Plan area. Existing field conditions were assessed for all creeks within the Master Plan area. The Technical Advisory Committee provided guidance and additional information regarding natural resources. The California Department of Fish and Game completed a habitat assessment of Piner and Paulin Creeks. A Natural Resources Assessment Report was prepared and is included as Appendix D.

Recreation, Access, and Transportation. The project team reviewed comments gathered through the Creek Dreams public participation process. Existing field conditions were assessed for all creeks within the project area. The Technical Advisory Committee provided guidance and additional information regarding recreation, access, and transportation. Funding for this component of the project was provided through a Community Based Transportation Planning Grant from Caltrans. LandPeople, a planning consultant firm, reviewed and evaluated data from the existing conditions survey conducted by the project team. Additional data was gathered, incorporated into a Geographical Information System (GIS) database, and a set of approximately sixty 1” to 400’ scale map tiles were created to cover the Master Plan area. A Recreation, Access, and Transportation Report was prepared. Information from this report was integrated into the Master Plan, with detailed information and tables included as Appendix E.

Cultural Resources. Tom Origer and Associates, a cultural resources consultant firm, completed a review of historic and prehistoric resources within the Master Plan area. A Cultural Resources Study Report was prepared and is included in Appendix C. City staff met with members of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria to discuss particular issues and locations of concern and incorporated comments into the Master Plan document.

Hydrologic/Hydraulic Assessment. City staff gathered information about past and ongoing hydrological studies within the Master Plan area. The objectives of this Hydrologic/Hydraulic Assessment included:

- In creek reaches where recommended actions have potential drainage impacts, the current flood carrying capacity was assessed through review of available information (including prior drainage analyses, drainage analyses in process, stream gauge data and observations/records from high water events) and field surveys to estimate current roughness characteristics.
- Analyze recommended actions to determine potential impacts on flood carrying capacity.
- Incorporate changes in recommended actions as needed to retain the current flood carrying capacity of creek reaches where the recommended actions have potential drainage impacts.

Many of the proposed improvements (such as trails on access roads and pedestrian bridges over creeks) will not impact the flood carrying capacity of the creeks. Proposed enhancements to the natural resources (such as removing concrete and adding trees and other vegetation to channels) have the potential to reduce the flood carrying capacity below existing levels.

The proposed enhancements were selected to be self-mitigating with respect to flood conveyance based on a master plan level of hydraulic analysis. When designs of these reaches are developed prior to implementation, a detailed hydraulic analysis must be completed for every project component affecting flood conveyance to identify allowable “roughness” values and to interpret those values in a Vegetation Planting and Monitoring Plan. The detailed hydraulic analyses should be based on the results of any drainage studies currently in process that are completed at that time.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Based on the information from the Creek Dreams public participation process and the results of Assessments, recommendations were developed for each creek reach within each watershed area. Priority projects were identified within each watershed according to a set of developed criteria discussed in Chapter 5 of the Master Plan. The Santa Rosa Waterways Committee will oversee Plan implementation. Preliminary cost estimates for on-the-ground project recommendations were prepared (Appendix L), and potential funding sources for projects are listed in Appendix M. Continued cooperation between the City, County, and Sonoma County Water Agency as well as members of the Technical Advisory Committee will lead to effective implementation. A key part of implementation will be the Creek Stewardship Program, a joint program of the Sonoma County Water Agency and the City of Santa Rosa.

DOCUMENT FORMAT

To facilitate future revisions of the Master Plan, the document is presented in a binder format, with a companion binder of Appendices.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Program Environmental Impact Report was prepared by Nancy Dakin, consulting Environmental Planner, in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. After consulting with staff at the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration Fisheries Service, it was decided that a National Environmental Quality Act compliance document was not necessary at this time, but could be completed later if necessary.