

Pilarcitos Creek Integrated Watershed Management Plan

Scope of Work

Approved January 10, 2007

Project Description

The Pilarcitos Restoration Workgroup will develop an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) for the Pilarcitos Creek Watershed to be adopted after it is completed in June 2008.

Pilarcitos Creek watershed is a significant environmental resource, rich in native plant and animal species. Pilarcitos Creek is a coastal stream that originates on the eastern side of Montara Mountain and flows about 12 miles to the Pacific Ocean near the City of Half Moon Bay in California (see map, Appendix A). It is the principal watercourse draining a coastal watershed of 17,922 acres in San Mateo County. Five major tributaries contribute to its flow- Nuff Creek, Corinda Los Trancos Creek, and Apanolio Creek from the north and Madonna Creek and Arroyo Leon from the south. The creek originates on land owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, then passes through Coastside County Water District land; private, residential, and agricultural lands; and lands owned by other public entities including the City of Half Moon Bay, State Parks, and Sewer Authority Mid-Coastside before draining into the Pacific.

Dams, diversions, and loss of habitat due to channelization and rural and urban residential, agricultural, and commercial influences have significantly altered Pilarcitos Creek. Past studies have identified loss of riparian habitat, migration barriers, sedimentation of stream channels, proliferation of non-native vegetation, and competition for water between agricultural, domestic and environmental uses as the principal problems in the watershed. Pilarcitos Creek is identified as critical habitat for the recovery of Steelhead trout, federally listed as threatened. An important component of the IWMP is a strategy for addressing the actions necessary for the protection and restoration of this species and other species of concern that depend on aquatic and riparian habitats throughout the watershed.

The development of this local IWMP will involve stakeholders to determine how to more effectively manage the Pilarcitos Creek watershed to promote balanced solutions that satisfy environmental, public health, domestic water supply, and economic interests. The IWMP will be developed by the Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Workgroup (Workgroup), consisting of participants representing a wide range of diverse interests, including local, state and federal agencies, and local community and advocacy groups. The Workgroup will seek input from all affected stakeholders in the process, including local utilities, the agricultural community, public and private landowners, state and federal regulatory agencies, advocacy groups, local residents, and elected officials.

The IWMP will build on the 1996 Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Plan prepared on behalf of the California Department of Fish and Game and the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board and the 2005 Water Summit, which brought together key stakeholders to

discuss restoring the watershed and how to more effectively manage the competing uses of water from the creek. There is broad interest in the community to resolve these issues. The development of a local integrated watershed management plan will inform decision-making and promote balanced solutions that are broadly supported by environmental, agricultural, public health, water supply, and economic interests.

The objectives of the planning process are to:

- 1) Establish the Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Workgroup to provide input and oversee the development and eventual implementation of the IWMP;
- 2) Develop the Pilarcitos Creek IWMP; and
- 3) Adopt the IWMP with a schedule for implementation by June 2008.

Anticipated project outcomes include:

- 1) a Memorandum of Understanding that describes the purpose of the new Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Workgroup and its operating procedures;
- 2) an assessment/characterization of the Pilarcitos Creek watershed and critical issues that need to be addressed that is agreed upon by the Workgroup; and
- 3) a completed Pilarcitos Creek IWMP-with implementation goals, strategy, and a schedule for adoption- that is broadly supported by the Workgroup participants.

Structure

Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Workgroup

The Workgroup will broaden and expand on the foundation established by the Pilarcitos Creek Advisory Committee, which provided input into the development of the 1996 Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Plan. A Memorandum of Understanding will define the membership of the Workgroup, detail the partnership agreements and corresponding roles of Workgroup members, and identify the decision-making process. Representatives in the Workgroup will be at the General Manager/ Executive Director/ senior staff level of participating agencies and organizations or their designees.

Other Stakeholders and General Public

The San Mateo County Resource Conservation District (RCD) will notify public and private landowners in the watershed of the effort to develop an integrated watershed management plan and will invite them to ask questions and provide input at regularly scheduled meetings of its Board of Directors. The broader general public will be able to participate at the public Board meetings as well. The RCD will work with the Workgroup to host three workshops for the general public, as described in Task 5 of the work program below.

Work Program

The Plan and associated work items are to be completed by June 2008.

Task 1: Establish the Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Workgroup (February 2007).

The Workgroup will be established by developing a Memorandum of Understanding among participants (attached Appendix A). The purpose of the Workgroup and its operating procedures will be described in the MOU.

Deliverables:

- Signed MOU by February 2007

Task 2: Administer and Manage Project (ongoing).

The San Mateo County Resource Conservation District (RCD) will act as the Project Administrator for the project. Project administration includes coordination of the Workgroup, solicit and contract with consultants, manage contracts, work with consultants and Workgroup on development of project process and products, participate in committees and public meetings, and report and administer grant.

Deliverables:

- Grant reports and invoices
- Completed contracts with consultants
- Bi-monthly Workgroup meetings
- Budget tracking

Task 3: Prepare Initial Report (June 2007).

Task 3A: Assess implementation and progress of 1996 Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Plan by updating and/ or confirming.

Deliverables:

- Written review of available information to confirm or update existing watershed conditions, including hydrology, geomorphology, vegetation, water quality, land use, and wildlife.
- Written review of available information to confirm or update critical watershed issues, including reduced streamflow, degraded habitat, loss of riparian habitat, watershed erosion and sedimentation, exotic and invasive vegetation, and landowner concerns.
- Summary of the status of implementation of the 1996 Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Plan
- Description of constraints and opportunities to implementation of the 1996 Plan.
- Assessment of the status and performance of project recommendations from the 1996 Plan.
- Oral histories that pertain to the IWMP.
- Written review of historic presence and distribution of steelhead trout.

Task 3B: Develop and prioritize specific objectives for the IWMP.

Deliverables:

- Identification of specific constraints and opportunities to protect and recover aquatic and riparian habitats and the species that depend on them, including steelhead trout,

- while incorporating current and future water supply issues and related economic issues.
- Examples of cost effective, broadly supported alternative water supply projects, including the development of cooperative projects between the SFPUC and the CCWD that could result in enhanced instream flows in the upper watershed while minimizing loss of yield to consumers. Note that cooperative projects between SAM and other local water districts could also be developed that may result in enhanced instream flows in the watershed.
 - Articulation of specific objectives for the IWMP based on this analysis.

Task 3C: Identify information gaps and suggest options to fill those gaps.

Deliverables:

- Scope of work, timeframe, and estimated costs to fill selected data gaps.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative methods of providing drinking water to CCWD from the SFPUC in a manner that also provides additional aquatic and riparian habitat, including that for steelhead trout, while not adversely affecting the quantity and quality of water delivered to CCWD.
- Update of the habitat characterization of the Pilarcitos Creek main stem and its tributaries, including instream and riparian habitats, and the quality of the lagoon, including the effect of non-native vegetation on the local hydrology.
- Identification of cost-saving opportunities for data collection.

Task 3D: Where funding allows, conduct research and/or field work to fill the gaps.

Task 4: Prepare Draft IWMP (December 2007).

Overlay the review of the 1996 Pilarcitos Creek Restoration Plan with the identification of data gaps.

Deliverables:

- Prepare a draft IWMP based on the objectives outlined in the Initial Report and which meets the requirements Section 79078 of the California Water Code. Specifically, the plan will set forth a strategy to achieve an ecologically stable watershed, and will : (1) define the geographical boundaries of the watershed; (2) describe the natural resource conditions within the watershed; (3) describe measurable characteristics for water quality improvements; (4) describe methods for achieving and sustaining water quality improvements; (5) identify any person, organization, or public agency that is responsible for implementing the methods for achieving and sustaining water quality improvements; (6) provide milestones for implementing the methods for achieving and sustaining water quality improvements; and (7) describe a monitoring program designed to measure the effectiveness of the methods for achieving and sustaining water quality improvements.
- IWMP implementation strategy that articulates the role of each Workgroup participant during implementation.
- Draft monitoring plan and specific performance measures to track implementation of IWMP and specific projects.

Task 5: Conduct Public Outreach and Community Participation (ongoing).

Solicit interested groups to sign the MOU and participate as members of the Workgroup. Notify public and private landowners in the watershed of the effort to develop an integrated watershed management plan and provide opportunities for their input to be incorporated into the planning effort.

Deliverables:

- At least three publicly noticed workshops to solicit input and feedback on the development of the IWMP. The first workshop will focus on the scope of the effort, the second on comments on the draft IWMP, and the third presenting the final recommendations and priorities of the final IWMP.
- Summary documents of key issues

Task 6: Prepare Final IWMP (June 2008).

Integrate feedback received on draft IWMP into draft document. Produce Final IWMP for public distribution. Update as necessary.

Deliverable:

- Final IWMP.
- Milestones and timeline for implementing the methods to achieve specific water quality objectives and the parties responsible for meeting these objectives.

Task 7: Development of Implementation Goals and Strategies

Pursue all opportunities to implement IWMP or IWMP elements.