

# Draft Management Framework



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## Acknowledgements

In addition to the many individuals who have participated in the watershed council and the taskforce members, special thanks goes to:

Trish Mulvey, CLEAN South Bay  
Debbie Mytels, Foundation for Global Community  
Michael Stanley-Jones, United Nations  
Patricia Showalter, Santa Clara Valley Water District  
Kelley Crowley, Santa Clara University  
Craig Breon, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society  
Marty Seldon, Flycasters, Inc.  
Phil Chang, San Francisquito Watershed Council  
James Johnson, San Francisquito Watershed Council  
Steve Haze, Millerton Area Watershed Coalition  
Richard McMurtry, SFB RWQCB  
Laurel Marcus, Laurel Marcus Associates

Lastly, thanks to Spence Everson, our streamkeeper, whose love for these creeks inspired us to organize this effort.

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## Summary

This document is a progress report and preliminary draft framework for a Watershed Plan, from the Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP) process for the Stevens & Permanente Creeks watershed. It is also an opportunity for discussion about the issues related to the management of these creeks and how stakeholders can work together to implement planning goals.

This document

- describes the CRMP process and who has been involved
- states draft Planning Goals and Proposed Actions to implement these goals
- outlines accomplishments of the CRMP process to date, organized by Task Force
- lists opportunities for the various stakeholders to participate in implementing the Planning Goals.

This draft plan has been created through the efforts of a broad-based planning process, including representatives of all the major stakeholders in the watershed. However, it is a "work in progress," and this draft is being presented to decision-makers and the public for further input and refinement.

For more information, please contact our Watershed Coordinator:

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## **Mission Statement**

**Our mission is to involve all interested stakeholders in protecting, improving, and restoring the Stevens and Permanente Creeks watershed through collaboration and consensus management.**

# Introduction

## **The Stevens & Permanente Creeks Watershed and its Needs**

The Stevens & Permanente Creeks Watershed covers approximately 46 square miles from the ridges of the Santa Cruz Mountains to the San Francisco Bay. This region includes a wide diversity of natural habitats and human land uses, including open space preserves, commercial nurseries and truck farms, grazing land, a biological preserve, commercial shopping centers, suburban homes, business parks, and creekside trails.

These creeks are very different from each other, and although they are now connected together, they need to be treated as separate watersheds to be properly assessed and evaluated.

Stevens Creek, the larger watershed, flows into the South San Francisco Bay and includes: The Bay Marshlands, Heney Creek, Montebello Creek, Swiss Creek, other small tributaries, and the Stevens Creek Reservoir as well as the upper drainage watershed area (refer to maps in the Appendices). The Regional Water Quality Control Board's Basin Plan lists its beneficial uses as fish migration and fish spawning grounds (including one of the few remaining runs of steelhead trout), warm and cold fresh water habitat, wildlife habitat, and potential recreational uses.

On its way from the top of the watershed to the bay, Stevens Creek flows through the cities of Los Altos, Cupertino, Sunnyvale, and Mountain View. Land owners include organizations such as the Santa Clara Valley Water District, Santa Clara County, and smaller private property owners. Numerous neighborhood and environmental groups also have a stake in maintaining the beneficial uses of this creek.

Permanente Creek has its beginnings amid a large gravel mine. It then flows through a large open space preserve on its way to residential and commercial areas, finally flowing into San Francisco Bay. Permanente Creek has been highly modified to prevent flooding and the Santa Clara Valley Water District is currently planning additional flood management work on this creek. An existing partial flood solution is a canal connecting Permanente Creek to Stevens Creek about a half mile south of El Camino Real in Mountain View. Lower portions of the creek contain unnatural concrete-lined channels, and even an underground section exists.

# Introduction

## The Watershed Planning Process

To initiate the watershed planning process, it was necessary to consider all the management questions for the entire watershed (a list of these questions is included in the Appendices). Using this watershed approach and bringing together major stakeholders, in early 2002 we initiated a broad-based collaborative process, the Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP) process, to draft a watershed plan for Stevens & Permanente Creeks.

A steering committee, consisting of representatives from over 30 stakeholder groups, meets bi-monthly to share information, reach consensus, and adopt goals related to watershed issues.

We have created task forces to examine issues and propose solutions in more detail for such issues as:

- Stakeholder involvement
- Fundraising
- Streamkeeper program
- Habitat protection and restoration

The recommendations of these task forces will be compiled into this draft Watershed Management framework for review by the Steering Committee, and eventual adoption.

# Stakeholder Involvement

The watershed council encourages all interested stakeholders to participate in its planning and decision making processes.

## Proposed Actions:

- Maintain website
- Identify and invite stakeholders to participate
- Develop outreach materials
- Publicize meetings



# Fundraising

The watershed council will seek funding, primarily from grants.

In 2003, we applied for an organizational grant from the California Department of Fish and Game, and are expecting notification of an award soon.

Proposed Actions:

- Form a grant task force to seek funds.
- Publicize council activities and goals to grantors.
- Partner with affinity groups.
- Research funding opportunities.

# Streamkeeper Program

The watershed council will establish and maintain a citizen streamkeeper program, modeled after the San Francisquito Creek Watershed Council's successful program. Streamkeepers will be responsible for ongoing monitoring of the creek.

## Proposed Actions:

- Secure funding
- Develop educational materials
- Research baseline data
- Recruit and train volunteers
- Monitor creek and collect data
- Conduct monthly streamkeeper meetings
- Compile and share information
- Alert authorities to situations as appropriate

# Habitat Protection and Restoration

The watershed council will initiate or participate in activities that provide habitat protection and restoration in the watershed.

Proposed actions:

**Identify critical wildlife species and their habitats.**

Establish baseline data to facilitate monitoring of changes in the status of plant and animal species, habitat characteristics, etc.

Determine and map the location of plant and animal species, with particular attention to the first upstream location of exotic invasive plants that might migrate downstream.

Expand information collected by the Coyote Creek Riparian Station on Stevens and Permanente Creeks to include their tributaries.

Establish a riparian station to monitor future changes in biological resources and water quality throughout the watershed.

**Maintain current levels of biodiversity.**

Protect wildlife species and the native riparian vegetation that provides their habitat.

Protect steelhead habitat characteristics, including in-stream water flows, spawning gravels, shade, appropriate temperatures, in-stream shelter elements, etc.

Control exotic vegetation.

Control or eliminate poaching.

**Identify sites with potential for restoration to an ecologically healthier, more natural riparian environment.**

Where possible, restore habitat to foster rehabilitation of species formerly native to the watershed.

Identify barriers to migratory fish passage, assess their value, and remove or modify them as appropriate.

# Watershed Participants

## The Planning Group

Even though the Stevens Creek watershed is entirely within Santa Clara County, we anticipate that there will be many stakeholders to consider. A partial list includes:

Santa Clara County  
City of Cupertino  
City of Los Altos  
City of Sunnyvale  
City of Mountain View  
City of Saratoga  
City of Palo Alto  
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD)  
Guadalupe Coyote Resource Conservation District  
The Greenbelt Alliance  
Committee for Green Foothills  
CLEAN South Bay  
Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative  
Santa Clara Valley Water District  
Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program  
Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation  
California Department of Fish and Game  
California Native Plant Society  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Friends of Stevens Creek Trail  
League of Women Voters  
Neighborhood groups  
Landowners  
Agricultural Interests such as wineries in the watershed  
Nurseries  
California Trout  
Federation of Fly Fishers  
California Fisheries Restoration Foundation  
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society  
Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter  
Alliance for a new Moffett Field  
Community Colleges or Universities  
Schools  
Children's Discovery Museum  
Environmental Volunteers  
Other watershed residents and interested parties

# Definitions

## **Riparian Corridor:**

Vegetative and wildlife areas adjacent to perennial and Intermittent streams and other freshwater bodies, such as lakes, ponds and reservoirs. Riparian corridors can be delineated by the existence of riparian vegetation .

## **Buffer Zone:**

A strip of land zoned to protect one type of land use from another with which it is incompatible. Where a commercial district abuts a residential district, for example, additional use, yard, or height restrictions may be imposed to protect residential properties. The term may also be used to describe any zone that separates two unlike zones such as a multi-family housing zone between single family housing and commercial uses.

## **Note:**

It is important to keep in mind that sensitive habitats, such as riparian corridors and wetlands, are not usually zoned accordingly. Formal identification of sensitive habitats is an instrumental first step in protecting these resources. Developing policy language to regulate development near sensitive habitats is the best step to protect the resource.

# Management Questions

At the beginning of the CRMP process, stakeholders met to discuss and define the key issues to consider for our watershed. This section lists these management questions.

## **Habitat & Wildlife Issues**

- Interface with biological population
- Proliferation of some species
- Feral cats
- Free-roaming house cats
- Feral pigs
- Establishment of protected fish refuge areas
- Bridge effects upstream
- Preserve good habitat and restore areas that need it
- Barriers to fish passage: clogged sediment harms habitat
- Fire
- Steelhead needs:
  - shade to keep water cool enough
  - appropriate volume of seasonal flows
  - good water quality
- Critical habitat for endangered species
- Loss of habitat
- Wildlife corridor for mammals, birds and fish – from the Montebello Ridge and the Santa Cruz Mountains to the San Francisco Bay – needs sufficient continuity and width to be healthy
- Riparian zones: need for contiguous riparian habitat
- Creekside habitat and wildlife corridor
- Restore wetlands (both salt- and fresh-water)
- Create passage for fish from ocean to hills to permit reproduction

# Management Questions

## **Invasive Species**

- Exogenous (exotic) species
- Revegetation
- Non-native plants and animals
- Non-native foxes
- Fish stocking

## **Storm Drain Run-off**

- Urban run-off
- Storm water quality
- Impervious surfaces
- Pesticides from golf courses
- Need buffer zones
- Non-point source pollution
- On-site retention
- Contractors
- Illegal dumping
- City responsibility (public education)

## **Public, Youth and Agency Education**

- Public awareness needed
- Fire — brush clearance
- Community “stewardship”
- Educate employees of public agencies (retraining)
- Educate children
- Educate about the issues listed here (create a public relations committee)

# Management Questions

## Public Policy

- Homeless folks living in the creek bed
- Fire management
- Tree removal
- Construction management
- Enforcement of regulations
- Government budgeting priorities

## Land Use

- Home ownership into the creek
- Creekside encroachment
- Flood plain
- Recreation and parks issues
- Agricultural issues
- Forest and logging issues
- Road construction
- General construction, for example: pipelines
- Scenic amenities
- Trails
- Permit process: city and county planning
- Easements

## Water Supply

- In-stream flow
- Minimum scheduled water flows for fish
- Water supply dams and management
- Groundwater recharge through the stream
- In-stream percolation dams
- Recycled water augmenting stream flows
- Wells
- Lawn/landscape water consumption
- Water consumption [in general]
- Imported water



# Management Questions

## Water Quality

- Water temperature
- Water in creek too warm in lower reaches for native fish
- Cold water flows
- Water quality
- TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Loads)
- Recycled water salts
- Septic issues
- Trash
- Superfund clean-up flows to Stevens Creek: chemical integrity and attraction flow concerns
- Single point source – businesses

## Sediment/Erosion Issues

- Sediment
- Substrate
- Erosion/Erosion control
- Historical logging scars
- Sediment from Permanente Creek
- Quarry gravel issues
- Restoration of upper watershed stream gravels (lower watershed also)
- Permanente Creek's artificial flood control connection to Stevens Creek
- Sediment: generation, transfer, deposition
- Vegetation
- Road erosion (path across dam – part of Rim Trail)

# Management Questions

## **Geo-Morphological Issues**

- Sinuosity (ability of the waterway to meander)
- Setbacks sufficient for meander and evolution of creek stability and equilibrium – so trees don't fall in
- Stream morphology
- Bank armoring
- Bank re-vegetation as a solution
- Under-sized bridges
- The down-cutting nature of Stevens Creek
- Removal of unaesthetic, dumped, large concrete in creek (some is bank armoring, some is not)
- Evaluation of exogenous debris in creek

## **Specific Sites**

- Restoration of fresh water marsh at mouth – salt pond impacts
- Moffett Field
- Wetlands
- Fish migration barriers

## **Flood Issues**

- Flood control
- Additions to stream from Permanente Creek
- Channelization
- Daylighting – Permanente Creek
- Flood plains

## **Air Quality Issues**

- Emissions
- Industrial output
- Spraying

# Management Questions

## **Cultural Resources**

- Native American resources
- Other historical resources
- Early California settlers

## **Intergovernmental Agency Issues (Generic)**

- Lack of inter-jurisdictional cooperation
- Conflicting solutions and priorities
- Conflicting permits and mandates
- Agency linkage/coordination
- Bifurcated responsibilities (SCVWD vs. cities)
- Redundant efforts
- Need clear lines of inter-agency communication
- Dealing with Federal and State agencies: Calif. Dept. Fish & Game, and Environmental Services Agency
- Dealing with City and County governments – land use, planning, regulations
- Dealing with homeowners and associations about land use

## **Specific Policy Issues**

- County Planning Department and County Parks
- Liaison with County Fish and Game Advisory Commission
- Habitat Conservation Plan process: [is it] driven by the County and San Jose? (and SCVWD ?)
- Interagency & community disagreements re: Moffett, Site 25
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Cupertino/Stevens Creek Corridor Master Plan
- U.S. National Park Service (NPS)

# Management Questions

## **Community Empowerment**

- Getting all the stakeholders to participate
- Community/neighborhood involvement
- Neighborhood-drive projects
- Identify volunteer leaders in the community
- [Create a] Stream Keepers program
- Citizen monitoring
- Integration of community monitoring [into management plans]
- Rigorous public review of environmental documents (EIRs etc.)
- Collaboration with businesses

## **Enforcement**

- Ensuring successful mitigation
- Poor or no mitigation monitoring
- Enforcement
- Developers', businesses' and residents' habitat protections
- Landowners (public and private) upholding habitat protection
- Illegal structures on/around creeks (bridges etc.)

## **Basic Issues**

- Problem ownership: direct vs indirect effects
- Property ownership
- Preventing encroachment
- Good science vs. "good politics"
- Residential vs. wildlife conflicts
- Water use priorities
- Use conflicts
- Re-training traditional bureaucrats, engineers, planners, etc.
- Environmental justice (equity of treatment for all people/neighborhoods in the watershed)

# Management Questions

## Public Education and Communication

- Public education
- Early public buy-in
- Community outreach/education
- Watershed Council public relations and advertising
- Testing the effectiveness of public education efforts
- Keep all stakeholders informed
- Add appropriate stakeholders