

STAFF REPORT
COUNCIL MEETING DATE
October 8, 2012

ITEM FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

Briefing on the status of the City of Carpinteria's Creeks Preservation Program implementation.

Report prepared by:

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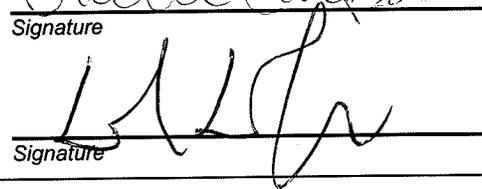

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Report reviewed by:

Jackie Campbell, Community Development Director


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Dave Durlinger, City Manager


Signature

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Action Item ; Non-Action Item

Recommendation:

- a. Receive presentation on City efforts to protect and restore City creek resources as part of the City's Creeks Preservation Program.
- b. Receive an update on the City's participation in the Santa Barbara Creek Week events held September 15-23, 2012.

I. BACKGROUND

In September 2005, the City adopted its Creeks Preservation Program (CPP) as an implementation program to the General Plan/Local Coastal Land Use Plan (LCLUP). The goal of the program is to guide the preservation and restoration of the four creeks

located within the City of Carpinteria: Carpinteria Creek, Franklin Creek, Lagunitas Creek and Santa Monica Creek.

The program contains a series of Objectives, Policies and Implementation Policies that are used to implement the Creeks Program and associated objectives and policies found in the General Plan/LCLUP. Examples of the Objectives, Policies and Implementation Policies include a requirement for the City to adopt a Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP), implement and enforce special development standards/mitigation measures for new development in or near creek buffers, provide annual notification to property owners adjacent to creek buffer areas on the special status of the creeks, promote/participate in environmental education/community outreach events, coordinate with other government entities/stakeholders who work within the creeks, conduct creek/environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA) surveys, and encourage/explore opportunities for future creek restoration projects.

The Program also requires that updates be annually provided to the City Council on the status of the Creeks Preservation Program and efforts to improve and protect City Creeks. The Council was last updated in September of 2011.

II. DISCUSSION

Since last year, City staff has continued to participate in efforts to protect and restore Carpinteria Creek. Some of these activities are normally recurring events that are undertaken on an annual or ongoing basis, while others are project-specific efforts, or projects that the City lends its support to as a member of the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition (CCWC). Below is a brief summary of projects and activities completed since the last annual update as well as a description of projects/events that are proposed to be undertaken in Carpinteria creeks within the next year.

Development Review and Resource Protection

CDD staff continues to review development proposals for new construction/remodels adjacent to City creeks. Recent projects reviewed under the Creeks Program include the Maulhardt Residential Remodel/Addition at 5481 Calle Ocho and review of the environmental document for the Carpinteria State Beach Nature Education Facilities (NEF) project which includes, among other improvements, an expansion of the CCWC's creek mouth restoration project at Carpinteria Creek.

City staff continues to also work closely with other agencies including Santa Barbara County Flood Control District and the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office to review and permit routine creek maintenance projects and noxious/invasive weed removal including the ongoing eradication of Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*) from the Carpinteria Creek watershed. In fall of 2011, Flood Control staff completed the routine clearing of limited vegetation from the active channel of Lagunitas Creek; this year, Flood Control staff is working in Carpinteria Creek. The vegetation and soil removal is necessary to maintain adequate flow capacity in City

creeks for winter storm events. The Agricultural Commissioner's Giant Reed removal project is in its final stages; at this time all major patches of *Arundo* have been removed and treated and only annual re-treatment of new sprouts is required in isolated areas.

The City's Public Works Department has continued to work with the Regional Water Quality Control Board on the review and adoption of the joint effort hydromodification standards for central coast municipalities. The Water Board recently approved the post-construction stormwater management requirements and the City will have a year within which to adopt these requirements into the Municipal Code. The new requirements will govern stormwater management practices for all new development in the City. As part of the ongoing SWMP implementation, City staff has continued the Business Education Program to train business owners on illicit discharges, standard best management practices and water quality issues. The City has also held public workshops providing an overview of the SWMP, developed informational brochures related to the various aspects of the SWMP, and continued work on the City's Illicit Discharge Program.

The City's Biological Consultant, Vince Semonsen, and various City staff completed annual creek walks of the City's creeks to look for sources of illicit discharges, unpermitted development and other threats to the well being of the creeks as well as to monitor the progress of various development and restoration sites and gauge overall creek health. A copy of the City Biologist's annual report is available at City Hall for review.

Public Education and Outreach

The City once again sent annual notification to property owners and occupants adjacent to City creeks notifying them of the creek's special status and additional restrictions that apply to development near creeks. Approximately 350 notices were sent out this year to property owners and residents adjacent to the City's creeks.

The City has also been involved in various outreach/educational efforts, including helping to host/organize creek cleanups four times a year in coordination with the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition (CCWC), teaching watershed-based curriculum at the local elementary schools once a month as part of an after-school program, installing an ocean-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall, and once again sponsoring and participating in the Santa Barbara County Creek Week events. This year, the City affiliated events included tours of the Carpinteria Salt Marsh, habitat planting/restoration (along the Palm to Linden Trail) and at Higgins Spring within Tar Pits Park, and trash pickup events in conjunction with California Coastal Clean-up Day at Tarpits and Jellybowl Beaches (which had approximately 40 volunteers and collected 56.5 pounds of trash), as well as at Franklin Creek (one volunteer and 8.5 lbs of trash). The City also participated in the 11-year anniversary celebration for the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition on September 15th at Linden Field, adjacent to the Tomol Park play area, which saw approximately 70 attendees.

Carpinteria Creek Restoration Efforts

As a member of the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition, the City has opportunities to interact with various stakeholders and aid in the planning and development of various creek restoration efforts throughout the watershed. In the last year, the Coalition has completed the construction of the final remaining fish passage project on the Gobernador branch of Carpinteria Creek, thereby opening up the entire Gobernador Creek drainage to fish passage for the first time in decades. The removal of this final obstruction allowed fish to access an additional 1.7 miles of natural stream habitat in the Carpinteria foothills and Santa Ynez Mountains.

The Coalition also completed the replanting/revegetation efforts for several previously constructed projects and is presently completing the permit process (with Santa Barbara County) for the removal of another manmade fish passage obstruction on Carpinteria Creek. The City also partnered with South Coast Habitat Restoration and the California Conservation Corps (CCC) to complete an ongoing weeding and revegetation project at the Eighth Street Pedestrian Bridge.

All told, since the adoption of the Creeks Preservation Program in 2005, the Watershed Coalition has removed or modified eight manmade obstructions in the Carpinteria Creek watershed to allow for fish passage. With the completion of these eight projects, approximately 2.7 miles of creek habitat have been made accessible to steelhead migration once again. Within the same timeframe, the County Agricultural Commissioner's office has removed approximately 140,000 square feet of *Arundo* (giant reed), from Carpinteria Creek, equivalent to roughly 34 tons of invasive plant material. Presently it is estimated that there is less than 100 square feet of isolated re-sprouting clumps remaining. Sufficient funding is available to re-treat in upcoming years to eliminate the infestation.

Upcoming Projects and Endeavors

In the coming year, City staff anticipates continuing work on a variety of creeks-related projects including:

- Initial design and scoping for the Carpinteria Avenue bridge replacement project;
- Adoption of the RWQCB's post-construction stormwater requirements for development projects as part of the City's Municipal Code;
- Pursuing a habitat restoration and homeless encampment cleanup project on Carpinteria Creek at the Carpinteria Avenue bridge;
- Pursuing grants for several stormwater projects including the Ash Avenue Water Quality Control and Drainage Improvement Project and the Via Real Stormwater Project; and
- Developing a Citywide Low Impact Development strategy for public parking lot retrofits.

Additionally, the City will continue to lend its support to the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition which anticipates moving forward with the removal and replacement of one of three remaining manmade obstructions to steelhead migration with a new free span bridge on Carpinteria Creek (upstream of City limits) and continuing efforts to gain permission/approval for the removal of the (then) remaining two obstructions. The CCWC will also continue its support of Santa Barbara County Flood Control District's ongoing multi-year project to modify the Lillingston Debris Basin to allow for fish passage as well. Once the remaining obstructions have been removed/modified, the entire historic limits of the Carpinteria Creek watershed will again be opened up to Steelhead fish passage.

The City intends to continue to work towards protecting and preserving creek resources within the City and working collaboratively with other organizations and agencies in the Carpinteria Valley to implement a watershed-based approach to creek protection and restoration.

III. PRINCIPAL PARTIES EXPECTED AT MEETING

- Erin Maker, Public Works Department Environmental Coordinator
- Mauricio Gomez, Director of South Coast Habitat Restoration and Chair of the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition
- Representatives of the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition and the Carpinteria Creeks Committee