



**Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
San Antonio River Authority
In-person: 100 E. Guenther St.
Virtual: GoToMeetings
September 17, 2024 - 6 p.m.**

Committee Members Present

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Ana Sandoval, Co-Chair
Mary Ann Valdez-Hernandez,
Historic Westside Residents Assoc.
Rick Hernandez, Los Bexareños
Genealogical Society
Reb Lopez, Martinez Creek NA
Michael Lopez, Opportunity Home SA
Brianna Salas, OLLU
Melinda Gonzalez, Prosper West

Charles Blank, River Aid SA
Patricia Seidenberger, SA Conservation
Society
Anna Alicia Romero, SAISD
Abel Ramirez, SA Wheelman
William Buhrman, St. Mary's Univ.
Kamala Platt, Ph.D., TexasTejano.com

Staff and Public Present

Lourdes Galvan, RA Board Member
Derek Boese, RA
Brian Mast, RA
Rebecca Krug, RA
Kendall Hayes, RA
Margarita Saldana, RA
Anua Reyes
Austin Kelm
Robert Gonzales

Father John Suenram
John Watson
Roberto Rodriguez
Maria Rodriguez
Mark Menjivar
William Troy
Micky Clemmons
Christina M. Castaño, Ximenes & Assoc.

I. Welcome

Co-Chair Robert Ramirez called the WCROC meeting to order. He welcomed new Co-Chair Ana Sandoval to her first meeting; and welcomed other new members to the committee: Student At-Large Maia Woodall, and Martinez Creek Neighborhood Association Reb Lopez. Ms. Lopez said that she was excited to be able to represent the Association and for the neighborhood to have a voice in the conversation. The map of the Martinez Creek Neighborhood Association was shared. There are now 22 members of the WCROC.

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 – August 2024

The meeting minutes were tabled for a later meeting.

IV. Calendar Items – Kendall Hayes, RA

Ms. Hayes provided an overview of all items on the related PowerPoint slide (slide 6-8). Ms. Hayes reiterated that the upcoming public information sessions are planned and shared the draft mail-outs for review. Co-chair Ramirez asked WCROC members to share meeting information

with family, friends, and newsletters. Ms. Hayes will provide electronic copies to members as well for ease of distribution.

V. General Manager Update – Derek Boese

Mr. Boese provided the updates on different items (slides 10 and 11 respectively).

Slide 10: The Water Resources Development Act has now passed both the House and the Senate. The House's language is still preferred, and Mr. Boese feels the Senate will agree with their language and approve it. Note: The House Committee is the correct committee; the slide on a previous presentation was incorrect. Brian Mast noted that the House and Senate staff were reconciling the Bill; both House and Senate committees were given the bi-partisan draft bill; the San Antonio delegation has jointly supported the proposed legislation.

Slide 11: Mr. Boese referenced the supplemental oral history project; United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will meet the minimum requirement; WCROC appreciates that RA is conducting a supplemental, more inclusive effort. A consultant has received an initial list; RA is working with their consultant, Talk Strategy, and the Avenida Guadalupe Association for the use of their recording studio for interviews to collect oral history of the Westside.

Mr. Mast stated that the fiscal year is coming to an end and the oral history project will be kicked off during the upcoming fiscal year, as it's been funded. The USACE will update the WCROC in October as this begins. Mr. Boese invited the WCROC to submit the names of people to be interviewed; Mr. Mast thanked Gabriel Velasquez for offering the Avenida Guadalupe recording studio for these interviews.

Slide 12: Mr. Boese reiterated that as the project comes to the 65 percent design it is critical for the public to come to the public meetings and/or seek digital versions of design materials to review and make comments. After the 65 percent design public meetings, it will be very costly to make design changes, and therefore he hoped the WCROC members would encourage the public to attend the public meetings.

Mr. Boese stated that one of the meetings is also being held during the workday to allow a different market of citizens to attend the meetings. Mr. Boese and Mr. Mast both recognized that afternoon open houses provide opportunities for attendance for those that cannot attend in the evening as evidenced by the Arboretum San Antonio and World Heritage Office open houses. The RA is available to present to other organizations and entities who would like to have their questions answered.

Ms. Hayes mentioned that mail-outs are being sent to more than 7,000 households.

Co-chair Ramirez asked if the oral history project's consultant could also provide a mobile unit and Spanish interpretation for citizens who need those accommodations for interviews. Mr. Mast said ability to conduct both Spanish and English interviews is in the effort's scope of work and will work with the consultant, Talk Strategy, on remote availability. There is currently an opportunity for citizens to record their history on the SARA website as part of a RA effort across the SA river basin; citizens may be chosen from that archive to be interviewed. Mr. Ramirez did state that other oral history collections such as the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, the American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions (AITSCM), and UTSA, may be a resource and hopes to capture those as well.

Ms. Lopez asked what a “major change” is as referenced when speaking of the 65% design approval. Mr. Boese responded that any major additions or any changes to the footprint would be considered major.

Mary Ann Valdez-Hernandez asked how the RA chooses the people to give oral histories. Mr. Mast stated that RA staff is requesting suggestions from WCROC members. At this time the RA has a starter list of about 30 people and others can be added. Lourdes Galvan suggested the author of the book “Laredito” be contacted as his book is a history of Laredo Street, documenting oral histories of San Pedro Creek. The book includes names, and she hopes to have that added to the oral history project.

Kamala Platt was pleased that the RA is consulting with Graciela Sanchez at the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center as their work meshes well with the WCROC’s work on oral history. Dr. Platt also mentioned that she is most impressed with the “images” that are part of the Esperanza Center’s visual history. Mr. Mast notes adding visual and audio recordings to the permanent history online is an advantage of using the Avenida Studio.

Co-chair Ana Sandoval asked staff to explain the exact language the RA is trying to get into the Water Resources Development Act. Mr. Boese stated that the full restoration is what is currently being asked for as opposed to the partial restoration of Martinez Creek which is what was authorized more than 10 years ago. Since that time, many of the issues that drove the complications with the full restoration have been taken care of in Martinez Creek, and it has made the costs of full restoration more affordable. Therefore, the RA seeks Congress’s authorization to direct USACE to move forward with the full restoration. This is the bill’s new language the RA is currently seeking approval on. The funding would reflect 65 percent federal and 35 percent local funding, consistent with the project’s local match. Co-chair Sandoval also asked if there was a virtual component to the upcoming public meetings. Mr. Mast stated that all presentation materials will be published to the website in English and Spanish and citizens can make comments online and those will be reviewed and documented by RA staff. Co-chair Sandoval also asked what amount of people are expected to attend the public meetings. Mr. Mast provided past historical numbers of attendance, and predicted similar attendance, noting that they’re doing a large mailout hoping to get better attendance.

Anna Alicia Romero asked about the split funding. Mr. Boese explained the cost-sharing of the 35 percent is county funding; there is some offset for work in-kind by the RA.

Michael Lopez asked if the ¼ mile notice for mailers included multi-family units. He noted several properties are off the creek system and wanted to ensure those families were invited. Mr. Mast stated that yes, they were being mailed meeting notices.

VI. Project Status Update, Rebecca Krug, RA

Ms. Krug provided updates on the project (slides 14-17 respectively).

Slide 14: Ms. Krug provided an update on the Ecosystem Restoration Design. She noted that the additional betterments are still awaiting approval from USACE. Additional features include pedestrian bridges, vehicular and pedestrian trailheads, and other recreational features. The cultural resources-targeted field work has been completed. The Martinez Trail Extension to Farias Park’s design is at the 65 percent plans but some areas are subject to change, per USACE feedback.

Slide 15: Ms. Krug reported that real estate acquisitions are ongoing and are estimated to go through summer 2025; and that at this time agreements have progressed with Opportunity Home, SAISD and CoSA.

Slide 16: Ms. Krug pointed out the upcoming public information sessions scheduled and encouraged WCROC members to spread the word. She also noted that RA staff will attend a LULAC Family Health Fair as requested by Ms. Galvan. Ms. Galvan remarked that the event is free and other agencies that will be in attendance, include the Food Bank; there will be a “walk”, free mammograms, vision screening, and other health-related opportunities. The event targets the Westside Districts 5 and 7 on September 21 at Rosedale Park 9am-3pm.

Slide 17: Ms. Krug provided an update on the local project in partnership with the City of San Antonio that is locally funded, separate from the federal project on Apache Creek. This locally funded remediation project must be completed prior to the beginning of the federal project. RA staff is working closely with CoSA to ensure this project is kept on schedule and in budget. Ms. Galvan inquired if trees were going to be planted and Ms. Krug explained that eventually yes, trees would be planted.

Slide 18: Dr. Platt inquired who will be maintaining the project. Mr. Mast explained that at this time the City of San Antonio is mowing the area at a federal prescriptive measure and post construction it would be a tri-party agreement, currently being established between the RA, the County and CoSA for maintenance. The agreement will call for project maintenance activities, all of which are determined by federal requirements. The goal is that the RA will be doing the maintenance post construction.

VII. 65 percent Design Draft Presentation Review, Rebecca Krug, RA

Mr. Mast noted that the information being presented today by Ms. Krug is in a very DRAFT form. The design team is in the process of developing a much more concise presentation for public consumption at the upcoming 65 percent Design Information Sessions on October 8, 9 and 10. That being said, the purpose of this item is to provide committee members with an understanding of the material that will be presented to the community.

Ms. Krug proceeded to guide a discussion through the slides. She preceded her presentation by highlighting that even though the slides would cover information on all four creeks, the actual information being presented at the public meetings will be specific to separate creeks relative to the meeting location. And finally, she reiterated that the slides are extremely draft and are not the actual slides that will be provided at the public sessions (slides 21-39).

The presentation provided a design overview of each creek, and the following items were covered:

- Vegetation Value
- Examples of Cross Vanes, J-Hook Vanes, Vanes and Geolifts
- Slackwater
- Recreation Amenities
- Design Considerations
- Proposed Creek Layouts
- Typical Sections
- Proposed Designs

At the conclusion of the presentation, Ms. Krug took questions, addressed them, all while noting several considerations for the public presentation as it evolves into final form.

VIII. Citizens to Be Heard

John Watson stated that he was happy to hear that the RA will maintain the project after construction. When asked about the timetable of when that would begin, he was told it would be from the end of construction to perpetuity. USACE will have annual inspections. Mr. Watson stated that the current maintenance is less than desirable.

Mr. Anua Reyes, invited by Ramon Vasquez, says the place is named “yanaguana” which means “land of living spirit waters” He encouraged more coordination between the American Indians of Texas and RA. He stated he appreciates the oral history coordination with Rudy DeLaCruz of AITSCM. He raised the concern that there was a group of native people living on Alazan Creek historic sites, the Alazan Bird people, that are being forgotten in the renovations. The lack of relationships and consultation is erasing the native stories. The river was stewarded by natives for thousands of years and he hopes the voices/oral histories are taken into consideration. Dr. Platt said that perhaps he can be invited to be on the committee and thanked Mr. Reyes for his comments.

IX. Miscellaneous Items

Co-Chair Ramirez shared that on September 5, 2024, at the Westside YMCA, CoSA Public Works considered a proposal for the naming of the area as “Roberto Rodriguez Westside Creeks Ecosystem.” The vote was taken, and the name passed. The next steps include moving a vote to City council. Mr. Mast said once RA staff learn when the vote will occur, he will advise the WCROC. Co-Chair Ramirez thanked RA staff who worked on this initiative.

Dr. Platt stated that once it’s named, we’ll have the first named ecosystem in the county.

Ms. Romero thanked the RA for being present at the Sam Houston Back To School Fair.

X. Adjourn

Co-Chair Sandoval adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

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September 17, 2024 · 5:54 PM · ID: 415543213

Chat

Kendall Hayes sent a chat · 6:04 PM

Thank you for joining us tonight. Please sign in using this form:
<https://forms.office.com/r/swPtNmLDDm>

Kendall Hayes sent a chat · 6:16 PM

Thank you for joining us tonight. Please sign in using this form:
<https://forms.office.com/r/swPtNmLDDm>

Athena Santos (RASA) sent a chat · 6:36 PM

Ok perfect! Thank your clarifying! Will do!