



# FACT SHEET

NUMBER 1

A PUBLICATION FOR THE SANTA CLARA BASIN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE • Revised August 2003

## MISSION:

To protect &

enhance the

watershed,

creating a

sustainable

future for the

community

and the

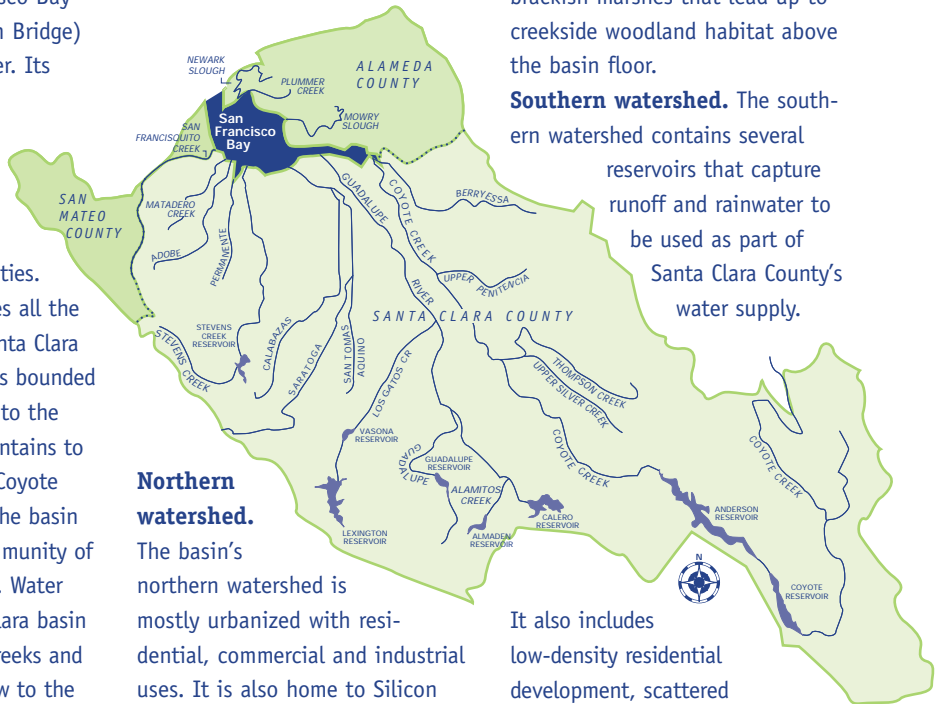
environment.



## REGIONAL SETTING

### The Santa Clara Basin

The Southern San Francisco Bay (south of the Dumbarton Bridge) is a unique body of water. Its shallow depths, limited freshwater inflow and slow currents make it very sensitive to environmental impacts from natural and human activities. The Southern Bay receives all the water runoff from the Santa Clara Basin watershed, which is bounded by the Diablo Mountains to the east, the Santa Cruz Mountains to the south and west and Coyote Reservoir to the south. The basin is home to a diverse community of about 1.7 million people. Water from land in the Santa Clara basin drains to storm drains, creeks and rivers which, in turn, flow to the Bay. Fresh water also flows from the three South Bay wastewater treatment plants in Palo Alto, Sunnyvale and San Jose.



#### Northern watershed.

The basin's northern watershed is mostly urbanized with residential, commercial and industrial uses. It is also home to Silicon Valley, where high-tech industries employ thousands of people. The watershed's edge is lined with sloughs, salt ponds and salt and

brackish marshes that lead up to creekside woodland habitat above the basin floor.

**Southern watershed.** The southern watershed contains several reservoirs that capture runoff and rainwater to be used as part of Santa Clara County's water supply.

It also includes low-density residential development, scattered agricultural and grazing lands, abandoned mines and undeveloped and preserved open space.

## WHAT IS The WMI?

To provide an opportunity for local stewardship of the watershed, the Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative (WMI) was initiated in 1996 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the State Water Resources Control Board and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. In the past, specific issues affecting watersheds have been addressed by separate regulatory actions,

resulting in a "patchwork" approach. The WMI aims to coordinate existing regulatory activities on a basin-wide scale, ensuring that problems are addressed efficiently and cost effectively.

**Stakeholders.** In addition to federal, state and local regulators, the WMI also includes representatives from business and industrial sectors; professional and trade organizations; environmental,

resource conservation and agricultural groups; and local public agencies. These stakeholders have a vested interest in future watershed management and health and are committed to maintaining an open dialogue for improving basin conditions. Stakeholders help manage the WMI through monthly Core Group meetings to determine priorities and apply resources to meet agreed on goals (see Goals on back).

## GOALS

Recognizing the importance of sustained dialogue and a community-supported process, WMI stakeholders developed the following goals:

- Ensure that the WMI is a broad, **consensus-based** process.
- Ensure that **necessary resources** are provided for WMI implementation.
- **Simplify compliance** with regulatory requirements **without compromising** environmental protection.
- **Balance the objectives** of water supply management, habitat protection, flood management and land use to protect and enhance water quality.
- **Protect and/or restore** streams, reservoirs, wetlands and the Bay for the benefit of fish, wildlife and human uses.
- Implement the **Watershed Action Plan** and ensure that it is continuously improved with current scientific information.



**WMI Watershed Management Plan.** Since its inception, the WMI has prepared three documents comprising the Watershed Management Plan:

1. The "Watershed Characteristics Report" describes land use, natural resources, water management and the cultural, organizational and regulatory setting of the Santa Clara Basin. (Updated Summer 2003)
2. The "Watershed Assessment Report" describes selected beneficial uses and stakeholder interests based on existing data in three watersheds (Guadalupe River, San Francisquito Creek and Upper Penitencia Creek). Its appendices include technical memoranda on segmentation, limiting factors and suspected causes of limiting factors, and "lessons learned." (Completed March 2003)

3. The "Watershed Action Plan" discusses environmental protection programs in strategic objectives for the Santa Clara Basin and next steps for the WMI, described in the context of a vision for the Basin. (Completed August 2003)

These documents are available from the WMI project coordinator or on the WMI website: [www.scbwmi.org](http://www.scbwmi.org)

## WATERSHED-BASED STEWARDSHIP PLANNING

One of the challenges the WMI addresses is navigating across political boundaries and embarking on watershed-based stewardship planning. The Santa Clara Basin faces constant challenges to preserving or enhancing creekside habitat and protecting floodplain areas. The miles of stream ecosystems disconnected from their floodplains are increasing, while opportunities for preserving natural creekside habitat and recreational corridors are decreasing.

The WMI is beginning to use Watershed Stewardship Planning to provide the framework for a scientific-based approach to assess watershed needs: systematically addressing multiple objectives and promoting a better understanding about the trade-offs/balances in planning, designing and constructing projects within each watershed. The ultimate goal is to bring the wisdom of local groups together to optimize protecting beneficial uses in each stream and watershed, considering the limited resources available.

Geographically based Watershed Stewardship Plans will assist local land use planning efforts in protecting watersheds and water resources. These plans are intended to identify areas of the watershed that are particularly sensitive, from either an environmental or water resources management perspective. The Plans will also identify projects that will help protect these sensitive areas and manage our water resources. Identifying opportunity areas will ensure that the restoration efforts that are part of a specific project mitigation can be located in places that maximize the resource benefit to the watershed as a whole, not just the project footprint itself.

**A fresh approach. The WMI is a new way of doing business that will effectively coordinate a variety of agencies and stakeholder interests. This effort is vitally important because of the many jurisdictional boundaries that overlie the basin. The WMI will meet these challenges to preserve and protect our unique environmental heritage.**

For more information on the Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative, please contact the WMI Project Coordinator at 650-494-3819, or check out our web site at [www.scbwmi.org](http://www.scbwmi.org)

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## WMI SIGNATORIES

### PUBLIC AGENCIES

*California Department of Fish & Game*  
*City of Cupertino*  
*City of Palo Alto*  
*City of San Jose*  
*City of Santa Clara*  
*City of Sunnyvale*  
*Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District*  
*San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board*  
*San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority*  
*Santa Clara County*  
*Santa Clara County Open Space Authority*  
*Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority*  
*Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program*  
*Santa Clara Valley Water District*  
*US Army Corps of Engineers*  
*US Environmental Protection Agency*  
*USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service*

### BUSINESS/TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

*California Restaurant Association/Dairy Belle Freeze*  
*Home Builders Association of Northern California*  
*San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce*  
*Santa Clara County Cattlemen's Association*  
*Santa Clara County Farm Bureau*  
*Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group*

### ENVIRONMENTAL AND CIVIC GROUPS

*Audubon Society, Santa Clara Valley Chapter*  
*CLEAN South Bay*  
*Greenbelt Alliance*  
*Leagues of Women Voters of Santa Clara County*  
*Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Group*  
*San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory*  
*San Francisquito Watershed Council*  
*Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter*  
*Silicon Valley Pollution Prevention Center*  
*Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition*  
*Western Waters Canoe Club*





# FACT SHEET

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## SANTA CLARA BASIN

## Watershed Action Plan

**Context.** In August 2003, the Watershed Management Initiative (WMI) team concluded its seven-year Watershed Management Planning process, and produced three key documents:

1. The updated "Watershed Characteristics Report" describes land use, natural resources, water management and the cultural, organizational and regulatory setting of the Santa Clara Basin.
2. The "Watershed Assessment Report" describes selected beneficial uses and stakeholder interests based on existing data in three watersheds: Guadalupe River, San Francisquito Creek and Upper Penitencia Creek. Its appendices include technical memoranda on segmentation, limiting factors and suspected causes of limiting factors, and "lessons learned."

3. The "Watershed Action Plan" discusses environmental protection programs in seven areas and outlines eight strategic objectives for the Santa Clara Basin and next steps for the WMI, described in the context of a vision for the Basin.

### Process for Creating the

**Watershed Action Plan.** The Santa Clara Basin WMI team started Watershed Action planning at a retreat in January 2002 and by August 2002 had compiled a working draft of the Watershed Action Plan (Plan).

To create the Plan, subgroups of stakeholders first developed 112 "Action Worksheets." The Action Worksheets defined the WMI stakeholders' universe of common concerns and represented preliminary consensus on what is to be

done to protect and enhance Santa Clara Basin watersheds. A Technical Advisory Group, composed of stakeholder technical staff, helped prepare the Plan, with funding jointly provided by the Santa Clara Valley



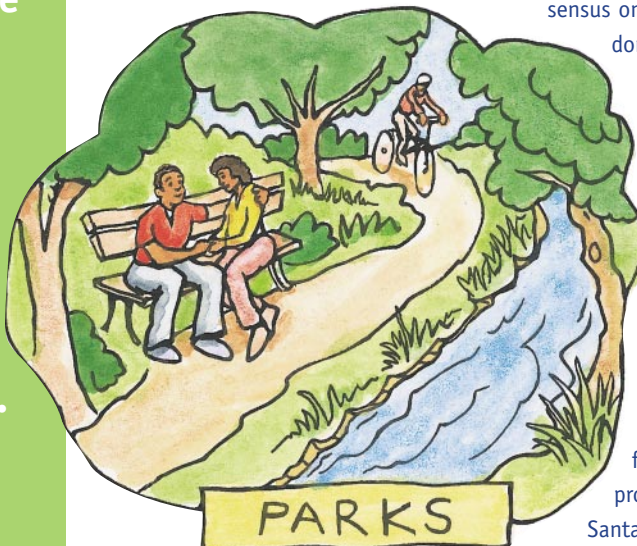
Water District and the cities of San Jose, Palo Alto and Sunnyvale.

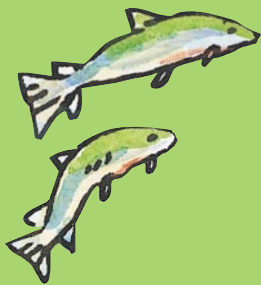
**Content.** The Plan has four goals:

- Outline a comprehensive approach to preserving and enhancing the watershed and communicate this to WMI stakeholders, decision-makers, potential funders and the public.
- Provide guidance to the WMI by coordinating and phasing actions the WMI is doing or can do to protect and enhance the watershed.
- Identify specific actions that agencies, organizations and individuals are doing and can do to protect and enhance the watershed, and describe these in the context of the comprehensive approach.
- Describe a process and criteria for phasing implementation of actions.

The Plan also proposes "strategic objectives" for aligning, coordinating, and integrating

*continued on back*





## A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

The WMI is laying the groundwork for “adaptive management” of Santa Clara Basin watersheds. Adaptive management is the process of implementing policy decisions as scientifically driven management experiments that test predictions and assumptions in management plans, and then use the resulting information to improve the plans. The WMI will focus on three general tasks:

1. Provide a stakeholder forum for watershed related issues for the Santa Clara Basin
2. Bring consensus-based recommendations to decision-makers
3. Provide a forum for watershed outreach and education, and encourage public support and action to preserve and enhance watersheds.



the programs in each area. It lists “next steps” that the WMI may undertake to promote each strategic objective.

These objectives include:

1. Incorporate the WMI Vision into General Plans and a Specific Area Plan to protect and enhance watersheds.
2. Promote drainage systems that detain or retain runoff to protect streams from flash runoff, erosion and pollutants, and to protect from downstream flooding, while preventing groundwater pollution.
3. Integrate planning of floodplains and riparian corridors to affect the future Santa Clara Basin landscape.
4. Integrate water resources planning to focus and coordinate local water conservation and recycling policies and programs.
5. Develop Habitat Conservation Plans/Natural Community Conservation Plans to protect and enhance habitats for endangered,

threatened and special status species, focusing on creating and maintaining protected habitat areas.

6. Promote a comprehensive, integrated, stakeholder-based planning process for expanding the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
7. Use integrated multi-objective planning and adaptive management for in-stream projects and programs to continue to develop and improve watershed stewardship planning processes.
8. Coordinate water quality assessments and regulatory requirements to support an iterative process



## FROM PLANNING To Implementation

Formal presentations for adopting the Watershed Action Plan to governing bodies of the signatory entities are scheduled to begin in the fall of 2003. As the WMI transitions from planning to implementation, the WMI stakeholders are reviewing their organizational structure to determine what would best allow them to complete their new implementation mission. They are also reviewing their connection and linkage with other regional efforts within the watershed. To begin implementing the strategic objectives, the WMI team has identified priorities and current opportunities and is now developing a one-year workplan.

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responsive to addressing priority pollution problems.

These strategic objectives were extracted from 112 action worksheets developed by the stakeholders in the planning process. Stakeholders will be able to access these action worksheets from the website for future references.

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Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program  
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US Environmental Protection Agency  
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