SANTA CLARA BASIN

WMI
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

WMI UPDATE

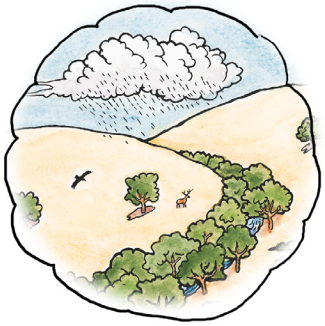
A PUBLICATION FOR THE SANTA CLARA BASIN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE • Autumn 2005

WHO IS THE WMI?

The Watershed Management Initiative (WMI) is made up of federal, state and local regulators; representatives from business and industrial sectors; professional and trade organizations; environmental, resource conservation and agricultural groups; and local public agencies with interests in protecting and restoring the watersheds in the Santa Clara Basin.

WMI's MISSION:

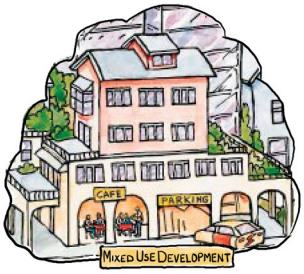
To protect and enhance the watershed, creating a sustainable future for the community and the environment.



FROM PLANNING...

During its seven-year watershed management planning process that culminated in 2003, the WMI produced the Watershed Characteristics Report, the Watershed Assessment Report, and the Watershed Action Plan. The Action Plan's nine strategic policy objectives are:

1. Implementing multi-objective stream restoration projects
2. Integrated multi-use planning of floodplains and riparian corridors
3. Habitat conservation/natural community conservation
4. Expansion of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge
5. Incorporating the WMI vision into general plans and specific area plans
6. Promoting drainage systems that detain or retain runoff
7. Better assessments, TMDLs and discharge permits
8. Integrated water resources planning
9. Watershed education and outreach



Now, as the WMI transitions from planning to implementation, the WMI recognizes that many watershed-focused efforts outlined in the Action Plan will be accomplished by member agencies and other jurisdictions.

The WMI's role will be to continue to serve as a stakeholder forum for watershed initiatives, to facilitate problem-solving processes, and to support and encourage agency actions in the direction of the nine strategic policy objectives.

...TO IMPLEMENTATION

The WMI held a planning workshop in August 2005 in place of its regular Core Group meeting to agree upon priority actions for the next 1-2 years. The Action Plan (described above) describes what all of the interest groups and agencies in the Santa Clara Basin must do if the WMI goals are to be achieved. But what must the WMI itself do? The following five priorities were identified:

1. Conduct education and outreach to planning officials and decision makers.
2. Develop citizen participation in watershed stewardship.
3. Continue the development of watershed health indicators.
4. Pursue on the ground stream enhancement, preservation and restoration opportunities.
5. Foster information sharing among those involved in modifying and implementing local ordinances, guidelines, and standards.

Mercury in the Guadalupe Watershed[1]

The Guadalupe River Watershed is a large (170 sq. mi.) complex hydrologic system, comprised of six major reservoirs and over 80 miles of streams and rivers. The watershed also contains the New Almaden mercury mining district, the largest such district in North America, which from 1846 to 1975, produced over 84 million pounds of mercury, mostly to support the California gold rush. The problem with mercury is that naturally occurring bacteria convert it to a toxic form (methyl-mercury) that bioaccumulates in the aquatic food chain, producing high mercury concentrations in fish.

The WMI's Guadalupe Mercury Workgroup has served as a discussion forum to facilitate information exchange on the sources and control strategies for mercury in the Guadalupe Watershed. This work will help form the basis for agreement on the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) that the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board must develop.

To review or download the reports produced for the TMDL; visit the Regional Water Quality Control Board's website at www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/guadaluperivermercurytmdl.htm. The preliminary staff report will be available for public comment in the summer of 2005.

[1]Guadalupe River Watershed Mercury TMDL Project: Final Conceptual Model Report, May 20, 2005, Tetratech

SUCCESS STORIES

In April 2005, the WMI completed an evaluation to document its progress in implementing the Watershed Action Plan. This evaluation culminated with a Programmatic Report Card (available for download at www.scbwmi.org). This Report Card compiles information on the efforts, outcomes, challenges, and next steps for 17 different actions that the WMI undertook or partnered with others to implement the Watershed Action Plan, and evaluates how well each action met our expectations. Below are the actions that received the highest evaluation scores: these are the programs that exceeded our expectations.

Upper Penitencia/King Road Bridge Stakeholder Group

What do you get when you mix a 100-year flood management project, a bridge widening project, property development and endangered Steelhead Trout habitat? Multiple permitting agencies, competing interests and missed opportunities to communicate more effectively: in other words, the "perfect storm" of projects. To resolve the differences, move the Upper Penitencia projects forward, and establish better strategies for future stream-related projects, the WMI convened the Upper Penitencia Creek/King Road Bridge Stakeholder Group, comprised of representatives from local government, the Water District, State and Federal Resource Agencies, and the environmental community. The group not only compiled a list of "lessons learned" from the experience, but also a set of recommendations that were formally adopted by the San Jose City Council and the Santa Clara Valley Water District Board of Directors in February, 2005. Some of the highlights of the group's work include:

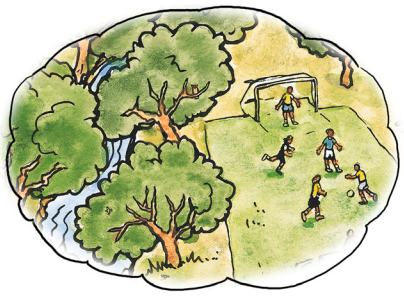
- Development of a locally preferred alternative design for the Upper Penitencia Creek Flood Control Project
- Inter-agency early notification guidelines
- Screening criteria for permitting agency jurisdictional requirements
- A series of training sessions to help stakeholders better understand regulatory and technical issues

Watershed Friendly Site Design

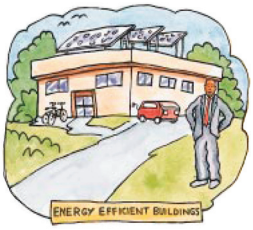
The WMI Land Use Subgroup, in partnership with the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program, hosted a series of dialogues and workshops around the topic of site designs to reduce runoff and protect water quality. The response was overwhelming: a total of 288 individuals attended one or more events, and presenters came from a wide cross section, representing five municipalities, two resource agencies, and over ten businesses and community groups. Many outcomes resulted from this series, including:

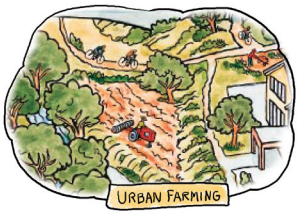
- An improved understanding of issues and conflicts that hinder implementation of better site designs.
- Information on underlying issues and innovative site design elements as solutions.
- A report titled "Developments Protecting Water Quality: A Guidebook of Site Design Examples" (available for download from www.scvurppp.org).

The WMI will continue its efforts to compile solutions, conduct outreach on proven designs, and support demonstration projects for designs that detain or retain urban runoff.



WORK IN PROGRESS





Development of Watershed Health Indicators

The Watershed Action Plan included a next step to develop watershed health indicators to assess the condition of the health of the Basin's watersheds. In collaboration with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and the Water Resources Protection Collaborative, the WMI began development of indicators that will be used to evaluate and report on watershed health, to increase the effectiveness of environmental programs, and to improve environmental planning. The goal of the first phase of this effort is to develop three to five pilot indicators with a focus on in-stream and riparian habitat in the Santa Clara Basin and produce an initial report card by June 2006. Later phases of this effort would include a larger geographic scope, such as the Bay and Baylands and additional indicators.

Watershed Stewardship Plans

The Santa Clara Valley Water District is developing stewardship plans for the Guadalupe, West Valley and Lower Peninsula watershed areas. Sponsored in part by CALFED's Watershed program, the goal of these plans is to provide a strategic approach for watershed management, promote the District's stewardship responsibilities, create a systematic and dynamic tool to suggest project ranking as a basis for budgeting, and to identify high-priority projects requiring outside funding assistance.

The District has been working with the WMI's Stewardship Planning Advisory Group on developing visioning, ranking and implementation chapters for the plans. Potential water resource restoration projects will be identified and ranked to help guide future District activities and/or programs. For further information, please visit www.valleywater.org/_wmi/ and click on "Stewardship Plan" to browse through the work products.

Information on Emerging Contaminants

The WMI's Emerging Contaminant Workgroup is drafting its third information paper on contaminants recently discovered to have adverse impacts. The latest document will be a White Paper on Triclosan, an antibacterial agent widely used in many everyday household products.

Emerging Contaminant Workgroup (ECW) members are exploring the degree to which Triclosan and other antibacterial agents are being discovered in surface waters. Evidence of their toxicity and efficacy are also being reviewed and will be discussed in the upcoming white paper. The paper will be designed to initiate regional discussions on next steps and actions.

Previously, the ECW had completed an Information Sheet on Endocrine Disrupting Compounds which described the growing body of science on chemicals that interfere with the normal function of hormones that control growth and reproduction in animals and humans.

The ECW also (completed in 2005) disseminated a Discussion Paper on Pharmaceutical Disposal to Sewer Systems. Produced for regional and local government staff and the staff of non-governmental organizations, its purpose was to provide a starting point for discussion regarding pharmaceutical waste disposal. There is increasing concern that pharmaceuticals detected in surface waters could cause adverse environmental effects, including endocrine disruption in aquatic life and/or increased antibiotic resistance.

The paper provides an overview of the problem and potential pollution prevention solutions that will allow interested parties to consider possible action items or next steps. The potential actions specifically address the issue of surplus pharmaceutical disposal to the sanitary sewer and ways to avoid their entry into the sewer system. Municipal agencies and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to review this document and consider participating in regional solutions in nine specific areas.

WMI SIGNATORIES

The following is a list of organizations who have signed the original WMI Signatory Document. The Signatory Document outlines a commitment to working with other stakeholders towards the long-term sustainability of the watershed.

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 Cattlemen's Association
Santa Clara County Farm Bureau
Silicon Valley Leadership Group

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CIVIC GROUPS

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
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter
Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition
Stevens and Permanente Creeks Watershed Council
Western Waters Canoe Club

For more information on the Watershed Management Initiative, please contact Ken Davies at kendavies@sanjoseca.gov or visit ***www.scbwmi.org***

Printed on recycled paper using soy-based inks. Available in large-print and audio formats upon request.

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FOSTERING WATERSHED COUNCILS

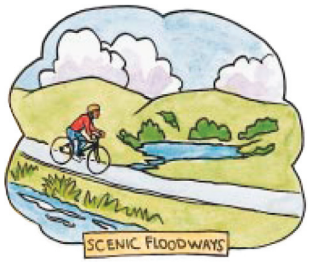
Successful Support for the Stevens & Permanente Creek Watershed Council

The Stevens-Permanente Creeks Watershed Council (SPCWC) has become a reality! Hard work by an amazing group of volunteers and a little help from the WMI has resulted in the newest group in the Santa Clara Basin devoted to the stewardship and restoration of the Stevens and Permanente Creek watersheds. One of the WMI action items in its current work plan is to foster local watershed organizations. The WMI has sought to help ensure the success of the SPCWC by increasing agency participation in the Council, providing meeting space, and assisting with securing funding from federal, state, and local sources to enhance its Volunteer Streamkeeper Program.

Money from three grants is being used to coordinate the efforts of volunteers who are walking reaches of the creeks, monitoring and observing, and reaching out to others to increase the base of concerned residents. Water quality monitoring and global positioning equipment had been purchased with earlier funds, and the program is now in full swing.

Recognition for the San Francisquito Watershed Council

The "oldest" local watershed council — the San Francisquito Creek Watershed Council (SFCWC) — is also focusing on its volunteer streamkeepers. Special funding from the Santa Clara Valley Water District is allowing an expansion of the number of people and stream reaches involved in training, observing, and monitoring creeks. Sites along Matadero, Barron, and Adobe Creeks — where a watershed council does not exist — have been added, and new energy from an expanded base of volunteers has been tapped.



The SFCWC has just finalized its "Vision for the San Francisquito Watershed (2005)" using a consensus based process to involve people from all walks of life inside and outside the watershed. The Council found continuing strong support for balancing natural resource protection, flood management, pollution prevention, and land use management, while fully considering social issues and public involvement with in the watershed.

Another exciting project of the SFCWC is the Stormwater Retrofit Demonstration Project — a State-funded effort to pilot ways of keeping rainwater on-site at one residential and one commercial pilot site. The sites will be used to show others how percolation and appropriate plant selection can protect creeks from increased flows as development occurs.

SFCWC's Fish Passage Project is also at an important milestone — the design for the removal of the old flashboard dam on Los Trancos Creek is 50% complete! Everyone is looking forward to the removal of this barrier to assist the migration of steelhead in San Francisquito Creek.