



CITY OF ARCATA WETLANDS AND CREEKS COMMITTEE 2021 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

**For Presentation to the Arcata City Council
April 6, 2022**

Committee Members:

*Bob Brown, Chair
Jeremy Svehla, Vice-Chair
Krystle Heaney
Vanessa Metz
Chris McAuliffe
Jack Murphy
Wes Smith*

Staff Liaison:

Emily Benvie, Deputy Director, Environmental Services Department



The Wetlands and Creeks Committee was established in 1992. The Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council, City Manager and City staff in matters related to policies, management and projects affecting creeks, wetland and tideland resources in Arcata.

Additionally, the Wetlands and Creeks Committee considers the perspective of open space and agricultural values since the Open Space and Agriculture Committee has been dissolved. Its seven members, appointed by the City Council, serve overlapping three-year terms and represent various areas of expertise, knowledge/interest. The City's Environmental Services Deputy Director, Emily Benvie, serves as staff liaison for this committee.

The Committee has agreed to bi-monthly meetings. The Committee held six meetings during 2021.

The Committee reviewed and/or made recommendations on the following items:

A. Creek And Wetlands - Policies/Ordinances/Management Plans

1. Committee worked with staff to develop a Jacoby Creek Gannon Slough Wildlife Area (Baylands) Management Plan Outline (5/18/21)
2. Committee received a presentation by Community Development Staff Delo Freitas on the Gateway Area Plan and prioritized top 3-5 wetlands and creek-related implementation measures. (7/20/21)

B. Management of City-owned Creeks and Wetlands

1. The Committee received regular updates from staff on progress of creek and wetland restoration and management projects, including:
 - a. **Janes at Alliance Fish Passage Improvement Project.** This project was completed in August 2020 and the Committee conducted a field tour in September 2021. Work included retrofitting the culvert at the Janes Creek and Alliance Road crossing, with the goal of improving year-round fish passage for all life cycles of salmonids.
 - b. **South Jacoby Restoration Project.** Initial construction was completed in 2018, with the goal of restoring floodplain connectivity to Jacoby Creek, creating off-channel salmonid habitat, and enhancing wetland habitat for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic species. This project has been adaptively managed for three years in response to increased flow volumes and velocities to ensure project goals continue to be met.
 - c. **MS4 Permit Updates.** The Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit is in process of being renewed. Staff has actively been participating in permit update workshops held by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board to provide input on future permit terms and conditions.
 - d. **Jolly Giant Creek Water Quality Sampling.** City staff has been working with North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board staff on additional sampling in Jolly Giant Creek to better understand bacteria levels and potential sources.
 - e. **Aldergrove Marsh.** A pilot restoration project to restore biodiversity and

functional habitat value of the Aldergrove Marsh wildlife area and increase public awareness, use and appreciation of the site. Committee attended a field tour in September 2021

- f. **Thriving Earth Exchange** City Staff has been partnering with American Geophysical Union's (AGU) Thriving Earth Exchange program to select a community scientist to develop a conceptual model to visualize salt marsh habitat transition as sea level rise occurs in Arcata.
- g. **South I Street Boat Launch Project.** The City has received a Department of Boating and Waterways grant to construct a non-motorized boat launch and parking lot improvements at the terminus of South I Street located at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary.

2. The Committee received a presentation by Nick Simpson (CDFW) on potential future stocking of cutthroat trout fishing stock at Aldergrove Marsh to engage local youth. (5/18/21)
3. The Committee provided periodic feedback on scoping AGU's Thriving Earth Exchange community scientist project description associated with Arcata's Sea Level Rise planning efforts.

C. Public Outreach

1. The Committee held one field tour in September 2021 to visit the completed Janes Creek at Alliance Road Fish Passage Retrofit Project and proposed Aldergrove Marsh Restoration Pilot Project. This field tour was open to the public and included a Mad River Union reporter.

D. Measure A Special Tax Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

1. The Committee designated two representatives to serve on the Measure A Ad-hoc Committee to provide oversight of use of Measure A funds
2. The Committee prioritized wetlands and creeks-related projects for use of Measure A funds to be considered for FY 22/23. Habitat stewardship projects that the Ad-Hoc Committee recommended included:
 - Janes Creek fish & water quality monitoring to support future project implementation
 - Invasive species inventory in waterways and riparian areas near Arcata Marsh and Shay Park

E. Committee Goals for FY 2021:

1. Continue to provide policy recommendations on the Local Coastal Plan as necessary
2. Continue stormwater education and outreach
3. Further explore with other committees (Parks & Rec and Forest Management Committees) to develop a protocol on how funds would be equitably distributed between open space, parks, recreation, wetlands and creeks, and forest management for Measure A
4. Continue to review and provide policy recommendations to support habitat, water quality, and climate resiliency
5. Explore HSU partnership opportunities and support staff in development of standard

internship opportunity focused on protection of Arcata's wetlands and creeks resources.

- 6. Support City staff in sea level rise adaptation planning and implementation efforts
- 7. Develop long-term management plan for City-owned Baylands complex
- 8. Improve inter-departmental and inter-committee information sharing and idea exchange with the Wetlands and Creeks Committee