



CITY OF ARCATA WETLANDS AND CREEKS COMMITTEE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

**For Presentation to the Arcata City Council
April 3, 2024**

Committee Members:

*Bob Brown, Chair
Justin Hawkins, Vice-Chair
Emma Held (Started May 2023)
Chris McAuliffe
Vanessa Metz (January – March 2023)
Steven Railsback (Started March 2023)
Wes Smith
Jeremy Svehla*

Staff Liaison(s):

*Morguine Sefcik, Environmental Programs Manager, Environmental Services Department
Emily Benvie, Deputy Director, Environmental Services Department (Until March 2023)*



**31 Years
1992-2023**

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 was dissolved. The Wetlands and Creeks Committee has seven members, appointed by the City Council, that serve overlapping three-year terms and represent various areas of expertise, knowledge, and interest. The City's Environmental Programs Manager, Morguine Sefcik, serves as the staff liaison for the Committee. Environmental Services Deputy Director, Emily Benvie, served as additional staff liaison for the Committee until March 2023. The Committee meets bi-monthly and held six meetings during 2023.

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

A. Committee Goals for FY 2023/24:

1. Support City staff in implementation of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit as updated, including stormwater education and outreach.
2. Maintain presence on the Measure A Ad-Hoc Group and revisit priority funding list twice per year.
3. Continue to review and provide policy recommendations to support habitat, water quality, and climate resiliency, including Local Coastal Program update, Strategic Infill Redevelopment Program, and General Plan Elements.
4. Explore HSU partnership opportunities focused on protection of Arcata's wetlands and creeks resources.
5. Support City staff in sea level rise adaptation planning and implementation efforts, including review of Thriving Earth Exchange research.
6. Provide support for development and updates to local restoration plans, e.g., Jacoby Creek Gannon Slough Wildlife Area complex, Creeks Management Plan, Jolly Giant Creek Rehabilitation Plan.
7. Explore options for inter-committee information sharing and idea exchange with the Wetlands and Creeks Committee, e.g., share goals with other Committees, invite other Committee members, and/or provide updates to other Committees.
8. Explore subcommittee formation to support staff as needed and feasible, e.g., grant proposals.

B. Wetlands and Creeks - Policies/Ordinances/General Plan Elements

1. The Committee reviewed the Resource Conservation and Management Element of the General Plan and provided further feedback on the wetlands and creek-related policies and

implementation measures in the Element. (1/17/2023)

C. Management of City-owned Wetlands and Creeks

1. The Committee received regular updates from staff on progress of creek and wetland restoration and management projects and programs, including:
 - a. Jolly Giant Creek restoration/rehabilitation strategy concept proposal (1/17/23, 3/21/23, 5/16/23, 7/18/23, 9/19/23)
 - b. Progress on the City's application for a California Coastal Commission LCP grant to fund a sea level rise vulnerability assessment and capital improvement project adaptation plan for Arcata's shoreline (3/21/23)
 - c. Spartina treatment at South I Street Marsh scheduled for June (5/16/23)
 - d. Long term monitoring activities at South Jacoby Creek Restoration Project (7/18/23)
 - e. New funding agreement from USFWS for riparian enhancements at South Jacoby project site (7/18/23)
 - f. South I Street Boat Launch Project construction updates (3/21/23, 5/16/23, 7/18/23, 11/28/2023)
 - g. Fish and water quality monitoring updates in Janes Creek and Jolly Giant Creek throughout 2023
 - Efforts to obtain access permission from private landowners along Jolly Giant Creek (3/21/23)
 - Efforts to add sampling sites in North Fork Janes Creek to Darren Ward's Janes Creek monitoring contract (11/28/2023)
 - h. New "revised" draft MS4 Permit updates from the State Water Resources Control Board (7/18/23)
 - i. Drainage maintenance permitting efforts (7/18/23)
 - j. Beith Creek livestock crossing bridge project completion (11/28/2023)
 - k. Aldergrove Marsh trail and public access amenity improvements (11/28/23)
 - l. The Committee discussed concerns about invasive plant populations on City property and brainstormed the idea of a city-wide high-level inventory of invasive plants. (11/28/23)
 - m. Thriving Earth Exchange research project progress on sea level rise and salt marsh habitat (11/28/23)

D. Public Outreach

1. Community members published three articles in the Mad River Union about the Wetlands and Creeks Committee in January, September, and December 2023.
2. Committee member, Justin Hawkins, and community member, Scott McBain, updated the Committee on progress with the Jolly Giant Creek Rehabilitation Plan as they are reaching out to grant funders and Cal Poly professors to gauge interest in research projects about this topic. (3/21/2023)
3. The Committee received updates and provided input on the contracts between the City and HSU Sponsored Programs Foundation to allow Cal Poly Humboldt Fisheries Professor Darren Ward and his graduate student, Colton Dixon, to conduct fish and water quality monitoring in Janes Creek and Jolly Giant Creek. This effort is funded by Measure A, which was a top

priority of the Committee. (Throughout 2023)

4. Committee member, Steven Railsback, shared information and requested input on Cal Poly environmental resources engineering student capstone projects. (5/16/23, 7/18/23, 11/28/23)
5. The Committee received a presentation from Cal Poly Environmental Resources Engineering professor Margarita Otero-Diaz and students Ben Hung & Andrew Rodriguez on the results of a Janes Creek water quality sampling project. Darren Ward and Margarita Otero-Diaz are collaborating on water quality sampling parameters and site selection. (5/16/2023)
6. The Committee participated in a walking field trip along Jolly Giant Creek starting at 14th Street and ending at Samoa Boulevard. The Committee followed the path of the Creek through urban Arcata and observed the daylighted and culverted sections of the Creek. (9/19/2023)
7. The Committee received a presentation from Cal Poly Humboldt Master's Thesis student, Maddie McNerthney, on her project about saltmarsh retreat and sea level rise in the Arcata Marsh and discussed her findings. (11/28/2023)

E. Measure A - Open Space, Parks, and Trails Special Tax Updates

1. The Committee received a report-out from Open Space, Parks, and Trails Special Tax (Measure A) Ad Hoc Group representative, Jeremy Svehla, on the Fiscal Year 2023/24 priorities discussed at the Ad Hoc Group meeting on January 9, 2023. (1/17/23)
2. The Committee received a report on the progress of the Open Space, Parks, and Trails Special Tax (Measure A) priorities and outcomes for Fiscal Year 2023/24 and staff recommendations for Fiscal Year 2024/25. (11/28/23)
3. The Committee supported the staff recommended funding priorities for Fiscal Year 2024/25 for wetlands and creeks-related projects including, continuing to advance a restoration grant application for Jolly Giant Creek, rehabilitation of a portion of Baylands grazing lease area, Arcata Marsh groundskeeper position, and continuing to grow funding reserves. (11/28/23)
4. The Committee nominated two representatives (Justin Hawkins and Bob Brown) to serve on the Measure A Ad Hoc Group to provide oversight of the use of Measure A funds for Fiscal Year 2024/25. (11/28/23)