



CITY OF ARCATA WETLANDS AND CREEKS COMMITTEE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

**For Presentation to the Arcata City Council
April 16, 2025**

Committee Members:

*Justin Hawkins, Chair
Steven Railsback, Vice-Chair
Bob Brown
Emma Held
Chris McAuliffe
Jeremy Svehla
Nathanael Pope (Started March 2024)*

Staff Liaison(s):

Morguine Sefcik, Environmental Programs Manager, Environmental Services Department



**32 Years
1992-2024**

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. The Committee meets every two months and held five regular meetings and one special meeting during 2024. At the November 19, 2024 meeting, the Committee approved the Council Chamber as the new meeting location and adopted a new regular meeting schedule where meetings are on the 4th Thursday of every odd month.

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

A. Developed the Following Committee Goals for Fiscal Year 2024/25:

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.
 - a. Review and provide input on the Local Coastal Program update.
4. Explore Cal Poly Humboldt 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 implementing Thriving Earth Exchange research:
 - a. Research and identify potential funding opportunities for a salt marsh accretion pilot study.
6. Provide support for development and updates to local restoration plans, e.g., Jacoby Creek Gannon Slough Wildlife Area complex and Jolly Giant Creek Rehabilitation Plan.
 - a. Pursue funding for a Jolly Giant Creek Rehabilitation Plan.
 - b. Focus efforts on removal of high/"A" rated invasive plant species, such as South American spongeplant populations at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary and the Aldergrove Marsh. Implement the invasive plant removal project at Sunny Brae Park.

- c. Engage Committee and solicit feedback on the concept designs for the Jacoby Creek Enhancement Project.
 - d. Better define restoration opportunities in Janes Creek through continued data collection partnerships with Cal Poly Humboldt.
- 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 Arcata Municipal Code Title V Ch. 4.5 pertaining to pest control and discussed potential updates to the code. (05/21/24)

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. South I Street Boat Launch Project construction updates and ribbon cutting ceremony in February. (01/16/24)
 - b. City management strategies and efforts, such as the early detection rapid response (EDRR) management tool, to control/remove invasive plant populations on City property. (01/16/24)
 - c. Sunny Brae Park invasive plant removal project, funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with work performed by the Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA). (05/21/24, 09/17/24)
 - d. USFWS funded Bayland improvements over the summer and fall which included interior fencing around ponds and new bridge decking on two bridges over Fickle Hill Creek. (09/17/24, 11/19/24)
 - e. An application to the CalOES Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for flooding in Janes Creek. (03/19/24, 05/21/24)
 - f. Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project (10/17/24, 11/19/24)
 - g. Volunteer workdays led by Friends of the Arcata Marsh (FOAM) to remove invasive South American spongeplant from the Log Pond. (11/19/24)
 - h. Arcata Wastewater Treatment Facility (AWTF) Feasibility Study update. (11/19/24)

D. Public Outreach

1. Committee member Hawkins updated the Committee on progress with the Jolly Giant Creek rehabilitation planning efforts, including concept proposal and draft budget status. (01/16/24, 03/19/24, 05/21/24)
2. Community member, Scott McBain, shared his observations and data from the 1/13/24 storm event that resulted in flooding along Jolly Giant Creek. (01/16/2024)
3. The Committee received a presentation from Cal Poly Humboldt Fisheries Professor Darren Ward and graduate student, Colton Dixon, on their fish and water quality monitoring studies in Jolly Giant Creek and Janes Creek, which is funded by Measure A. (03/19/2024)
4. Staff shared information about a public meeting organized by the Community Development Department on the Local Coastal Program update with a presentation on climate adaptation scheduled for May 23rd at the D Street Neighborhood Center. (05/21/24)
5. The Committee received a presentation from Michael Love and Jeremy Svehla on the Jacoby Creek Sustainability and Anadromous Fish Habitat Enhancement Feasibility Study. (09/17/24)
6. The Committee participated in a field trip at the City's Happy Valley property and received an update on the Arcata Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project and the potential wetland mitigation ideas for this project. (10/17/24)

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

1. The Committee received a report on the Open Space, Parks, and Trails Special Tax (Measure A) Ad Hoc Group on the Fiscal Year 2024/25 priorities discussed at the Ad Hoc Group meeting on January 24, 2024. (3/19/2024)
2. The Committee received updates on efforts by City staff and community member, Scott McBain, to identify a location in Jolly Giant Creek for installation of a data logger to measure water level, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and conductivity. The data logger equipment would be purchased with Measure A funding. (01/16/24, 09/17/24)
3. The Committee received a report from staff that highlighted Measure A funds being used to hire the part-time Arcata Marsh Groundskeeper position (11/19/2024).