

CREEK CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Urban Creeks Council
December 2004



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Codornices Creek,
Berkeley, CA:
Restoration and new
life for fish, wildlife,
and us.

Alhambra Creek,
Martinez, CA: Creek
restoration, creek
education.

Wherefore the
Berkeley Creek
Ordinance?

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A stately valley oak is reflected in a new pool at UCC's recently constructed restoration project on Alhambra Creek in Martinez.

Codornices Creek: For Fish and For People

Codornices Creek has been channelized, degraded, and built on for decades. So why do the fish keep returning and flourishing? The answer may simply be: Good neighbors.

By Susan Schwartz

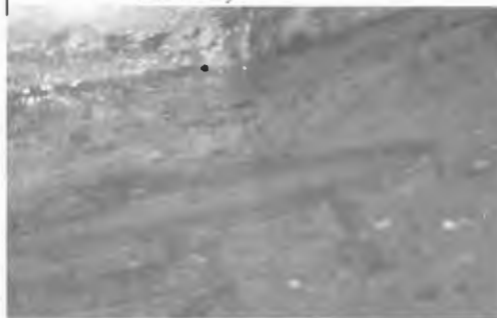
Newly restored Codornices Creek from 5th to 2nd Streets withstood its first test in October's storms. Storm flows surging through the new channel, still bare except for erosion-control matting, did no damage and caused no flooding. By spring, young native plants will green the banks of this urban trout stream. As these grow, kids using the neighboring ballfields should be able to explore and enjoy a creek filled with life.

There's a long way to go. This phase replaced an open concrete channel with a meandering stream above the railroad, widened the railroad undercrossing with five new culverts, and slightly increased the capacity of the channel below the culverts. Still in the future: continuing restoration upstream to San Pablo, with a creekside trail, working with the City of Berkeley to provide a more natural meander downstream, and lessening flood risk with a new bore under the I-880/580 Freeway.

It took seven years to get this far. It may take as much or more -- and several million dollars -- to complete that program. The same can be said of budding efforts to extend trout habitat upstream, above St. Mary's High School. Without belittling the efforts of all who worked and are working so hard on this restoration, I'd like to talk about the unsung -- the creek neighbors who, sometimes deliberately and sometimes unwittingly, have let an urban trout stream flourish literally in their own backyards.

When you find more than 100 trout of varied age and size in a three-sided concrete box -- as happened when the creek was de-watered for construction -- you have to recognize that these fish have been doing pretty well on their own, and somebody must be doing something right. So, why is Codornices one of the few urban trout streams in the Bay Area? Part of the story is historical accident. Codornices likely had no trout or salmon before European settlement. Below today's railroad tracks, the creek

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Left: A trout rests beside a wall in Codornices Creek, Berkeley. Trout continue to return to the creek despite its condition. Right: This photo demonstrates several of the challenges fish face at once: invasive plant encroachment, dumping (in this case, a washing machine), culverts, and interesting bank stabilization methods installed without permits.

Codornices Creek continued

seems to have filtered through a wet grassland with no clear channel, before it reached a tidal slough that carried it north to the Bay behind Fleming Point. The slough remains, though straightened and squeezed between the freeway and Golden Gate Fields race track. Year-round channels may have been created to drain the land to build the railroad in the 1870s, or to make farming possible. These channels may have opened the creek to steelhead -- ocean-going rainbow trout, more pioneering and less tied to their natal stream than salmon.

We know of early examples of neighbors being protective of the creek. In Berkeley in the first decade of the 20th century, for example, neighbors opposed the construction of Berryman Street next to the creek between Oxford and Spruce. The route instead remained a path. Live Oak Park, with Codornices running through it, was Berkeley's first "nature park," created just before

WWI. In the 1920s, conservationists unsuccessfully fought the building of a garbage incinerator next to the creek. (The building, part of a storage facility on Second Street, is now a historic landmark.)

Because Codornices formed the border between Berkeley and Albany, bureaucratic technicalities stood in the way of putting it into a pipe. This may be why Codornices was not culverted as a public works project during the Great Depression of the 1930s, as was the fate of much of Strawberry Creek.

City growth can't have been good for the creek, however. The creek had to cope with silt from bare soil and flash-flood-like runoff from pavement and roofs. These storm flows cut the channel deeper, creating some of today's inaccessible, canyon-like reaches. In some places, this led to a vicious circle of cliff-like, bare, collapsing banks and unsuccessful efforts to fortify them with concrete or rock. In other places, like the beautiful stone work in Live Oak Park, fortified banks have held up well, but at a cost to creekside life -- such as plants, frogs, newts, and insects. It certainly didn't help that in the mid-20th century, the creek at about 6th Street was piped through a chemical plant that literally turned the water various shades, from red to sickly green.

Perhaps it was after the plant closed that some adventurous steelhead -- or a "midnight restorationist" dumping some hatchery fish -- brought trout to Codornices. Wherever they came from, these fish didn't find ideal conditions. But steelhead are tough, and what they found apparently was good enough, at least up to St. Mary's High School. The channel cut so deep by urban storm flows was now heavily shaded by its own walls, backyard trees, and weedy brush. All but inaccessible, the canyon kept most disturbances out -- though kids, of course, always found a way. Tree roots, undercut and broken retaining walls, chunks of concrete, probably even ivy (the bane of restoration) created backwaters and pockets of slower flow when fish could ride out the torrential flows of urban storms. Somewhere, they apparently found gravel where they could build nests, called redds, and lay their eggs.

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Some reaches of Codornices Creek are quite healthy, such as this stretch below the BART tracks at a park on the Ohlone Greenway. This section has been restored and planted by Friends of Five Creeks.

Volunteerism Bill Becomes Law: A Victory for All of Us

In our last newsletter in spring of this year, we asked for your help in supporting our Prevailing Wage Coalition, which was created in response to the prevailing wage conflict in California. You responded with generous donations, which funded the development of A.B. 2690, the volunteerism bill, carried to the state legislature by the Honorable Loni Hancock.

Your support was essential in carrying this bill forward, and as most of you now know, the bill was signed into law by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in August.

We would like to thank all of you who donated for your

generous support, and assure you that your donations were integral in getting the bill passed.

We also would like to thank our excellent environmental policy analyst, Vern Goehring, for his tireless work on the bill, and the truly Honorable Loni Hancock and her Chief of Staff, Hans Hemann, for carrying the bill with such commitment and determination. You all were an essential part of this success! A round of applause for all.



Urban Creeks Council Current and Developing Projects— Fall 2004

Alhambra Creek at Martinez Adult Education, Martinez, CA. Our main project this year, the Alhambra Creek restoration is the product of partnership between UCC, the Muir Heritage Land Trust, the Martinez Unified School District, the City of Martinez, Friends of Alhambra Creek, and the Alhambra Watershed Planning Group. An interactive project in which the students at the school are deeply involved, the plan includes a natural, erosion-resistant channel, a path, and a community garden for the school including a vegetable garden, totem pole, and native plants provided by the Watershed Nursery. Neighbors across the creek also were involved in the project, from the planning process to helping expand the project to both banks. The creek was widened where it meanders through the yard of the school and stabilized with Coir fabric and willow cuttings. Plans for the project include native trees along the banks that will grow into a riparian canopy and improve water quality for the population of native trout in the stream.

Baxter Creek @ Gateway, El Cerrito, CA. UCC is working under contract to develop a Maintenance and Management Guidebook for a high-profile restoration project occurring in the city of El Cerrito.

Codornices Creek Watershed Restoration Action Plan, Albany/Berkeley, CA. The Codornices Creek WRAP by Kier Associates of Sausalito is finally complete and can be seen on the Urban Creeks Council website at www.urbancreeks.org/ccwrap-document.html (5M). The result of years of studies, CCWRAP lays out a plan for restoration of steelhead trout habitat in the creek. Surveying is being conducted now for the design of a restoration project at a reach of the creek with the goal of making the area more habitable for fish spawning and rearing.

Peralta Creek at Cesar Chavez Park, Oakland, CA. This year saw some changes at our restoration site here at Foothill and 38th Avenues. In summer, chorus frogs appeared in large numbers for the first time, according to local sources, in 35 years. An irrigation system was installed and the banks now have a gorgeous array of oaks and alders that will grow and create shade. UCC is holding volunteer planting days with the Unity Council and Americorps to plant riparian species.



Alhambra Creek at Martinez Adult Education Restoration Project, after construction and with its newly planted willow stakes and native seed mix already blossoming.

Wildcat Creek at Church Lane, San Pablo, CA.

Nestled between the city offices and a senior center, this section of Wildcat has seen better days. Both of its banks are almost entirely artificial and littered with chunks of concrete. The restoration planned for 2005 will set back the banks, create a trail beside the senior center and restore the vegetation with native plants.

Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council, San Pablo, CA. In private and public agency partnership, UCC is developing a flood control/restoration plan for the corridors of Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks. The plan will eventually include a Watershed Restoration Action Plan and two restoration projects.

Rheem Creek at Breuner Marsh, Richmond, CA.

The future of Breuner Marsh is uncertain, but when the outcome is decided, UCC will be ready with a restoration design for Rheem Creek, which flows through the marsh to the Bay. It's now channelized and rip-rapped, but our design will include meanders through the existing marsh where the creek will enter San Pablo Bay. Managed by the Natural Heritage Institute with a grant from the CALFED Watershed Program.

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Creek Aerobics

Creeks are mysterious entities: they may look like a stream of clear water, but a complex geochemical story is being constantly formed inside our creeks—especially creeks in urban areas, where so much effluent is introduced. How does it work?

By Igor Skaredoff

The waters of our Bay Area creeks teem with life. Where there is oxygen, aerobic life: fish and insects, larvae and crustaceans. Where there is little or no oxygen anaerobic life prevails: mainly microorganisms that live where fish would suffocate. Most creeks have some of both. Balance is the key for a healthy creek.

Creeks can absorb oxygen directly from the air. Water flowing turbulently absorbs oxygen better than quiet water in a pool. Cold water dissolves more oxygen than warm. Water in the shade is cooler than water in the sun. So: oxygen-loving fish such as trout, like cold water that is aerated by tumbling over rocks and gravel in riffles, in the shadow of stream-side riparian trees.

Unshaded creeks can compensate by growing their own shade and producing their own oxygen. Aquatic plants can provide some "home-grown" shade and together with tiny bits of plant life known as phytoplankton can also produce oxygen when they photosynthesize. They need sunlight to do this, so photosynthesis stops at night and dissolved oxygen goes down. If it doesn't go down too much, aerobic life lives through the night and the process resumes the next day.

Aquatic plants and phytoplankton are also important parts of the food web supporting life in the creeks. They get eaten by critters, which get eaten by other critters ...etc. When they die, they decompose and release nutrients to the water. This process also consumes oxygen.

Creeks that are shaded don't support much photosynthesis, so they rely on direct aeration for oxygen and on imports for food. Insects and other critters that fall in the creek are eaten. Some insects lay their eggs in the creek, the eggs hatch to become aquatic macroinvertebrates, which in turn morph into insects, and so the cycle re-

peats. Everybody gets eaten by somebody. Some plant-eaters feed on organic material that falls into the creek.

All along the way, whether shaded or sunny, somebody is eating organic matter: plants or critters, living or dead. Different eaters process their food differently. The Aerobics use oxygen, the Anaerobics don't.

Aerobics = Oxidation

Aerobic life converts food into energy, body parts and descendants by metabolizing or "burning" the food with oxygen (O₂). This process is chemically known as "oxidation". Since most of the food is composed of carbon (C) and hydrogen (H), the products of this process are mostly carbon dioxide (one carbon and two oxygens -CO₂) and water (one oxygen and two hydrogens - H₂O). Other nutrients in the food contain elements such as nitrogen (N), sulfur (S) and phosphorus (P) and are also converted.

The key is balance: the right amount of oxygen, supporting the right amount of the right kinds of critters that have the right amount of the right kind of food with the right amount of nutrients all interact to develop into a stable system.

More is not necessarily better.

Anaerobics = Reduction

If there is an excess of organic matter, the critters can't eat it all, so it accumulates and starts to chemically decompose. The decomposition process absorbs oxygen from the water. As the oxygen is depleted, the aerobic critters die off and are replaced with anaerobic microorganisms. These life forms metabolize their food in the absence of

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Events & Announcements

The Alameda Creek Alliance has just received a permit from the Department of Fish and Game that will allow members of the public to aid in relocating stranded steelhead upstream during the winter season. Fish get stranded at a weir in the creek and cannot proceed upstream to spawn. If you would like to help rescue steelhead, contact Jeff Miller at jmiller@biologicaldiversity.org. SPAWN also conducts fish rescues in Marin during the summer; visit www.spawnusa.org.

January 13-16, 2005: "Conversations About Watersheds": East Bay Watershed Center's Conference on Volunteer Stewardship at Merritt College in Oakland. To find out more, contact the Watershed Center at ecomerritt@sbcglobal.net.

March 30-April 2, 2005: 23rd Annual Salmonid Restoration Conference—Fortuna, CA The Salmonid Restoration Federation's 23rd annual conference includes full-day workshops on water conservation planning and implementation, instream flow requirements, estuary restoration, and permitting and funding processes. Field tours, concurrent sessions on biological, physical, and policy issues that affect salmonid habitat restoration and recovery of native fish populations. Enroll at www.calsalmon.org or contact CRF at 707.923.7501.

May 1, 2005: Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour. 10 AM to 5 PM. A variety of gardens landscaped with California native plants will be open to the public. Free passes to 50 gardens, five of which have creeks flowing through them. Register online at www.BringingBackTheNatives.net. Sponsored by the Urban Creeks Council and Kathy Kramer Consulting.

The Watershed Project: Spring Workshops Learn about garden design, composting, pest management, and other innovative gardening techniques. View the schedule and sign up at www.thewatershedproject.org/upcoming.html.

Also coming in spring: UCC's Bioengineering Workshops! Check for them online at www.urbancreeks.org.

Codornices Creek, continued

It would be interesting to know when neighbors first noticed the trout. The first written report I've seen was in 1995, when authors of Albany's watershed plan noted, rather skeptically, that neighbors reported large trout in the creek. In 1998, when Friends of Five Creeks volunteers noticed the trout in the course of doing restoration under the BART tracks, "experts" clearly didn't believe us, arguing that the creek was just too degraded, or just declining to come and look. We had to find someone with a permit to stun a fish with electricity, so we could photograph it.



Neighbors, however, knew. They watched the fish, and sometimes even fed them. Pepperoni and peanuts are not preferred foods for steelhead, but the trout survived them. (If you must feed the fish, please use fish food.) By not spraying, fertilizing, watering, or "cleaning" the creek too much, they were able to see the numbers grow. They began protesting when mud or concrete waste from construction turned the creek all but white. Neighbors joined in work parties to improve habitat. They began seeking information on what they should plant near the creek. They supported political efforts, like Albany's bond measure that provided the local match needed for the current major Codornices restoration.

I've lost count of calls from Codornices neighbors, concerned about possible threats to the fish, wanting advice on erosion or what to plant, or just wanting to point out some interesting trout behavior. One of my regrets, as volunteer head of Friends of Five Creeks, is that I haven't been able to respond to many of these as I should. Our group has focused on public, visible restorations. Maybe that lies in the future. But for now, I'd just like to thank all the creek neighbors who have made possible this stream teeming with trout in the middle of a city.

Susan Schwartz is president of Friends of Five Creeks, an all-volunteer group working to protect and enhance the watersheds of the creeks of Albany, North Berkeley, Kensington, and south El Cerrito and Richmond. Contact Friends of Five Creeks at 510 848 9358, f5creeks@aol.com, or www.fivecreeks.org.

Spotlight on Codornices Creek Watershed Restoration Action Plan

By Emma Gutzler

For the past month we have found ourselves crawling through Codornices Creek's culverts and up its ivy laden and often concrete-reinforced banks. We have seen and photographed trout, from 2-12 inches in length. We have heard about water cresting over 10-foot walls, flooded basements, and heron, fish, frog, and raccoon sightings from neighbors. This is Codornices Creek: a small urban creek flowing literally through Berkeley and Albany backyards and thriving with life. And our traipsing in the culverts is part of the continuing Codornices Creek Watershed Restoration Action Plan, or CCWRAP.

The goal of the CCWRAP is to evaluate and improve habitat, water quality, and migration for steelhead/rainbow trout, a threatened anadromous fish. CCWRAP, funded by the RWQCB and CALFED, began in 2001 and is preparing to move into its second phase-implementation-with the new year.

During the first phase of the project, fish and habitat surveys were conducted over two years. After much time and effort, an action plan was developed for this narrow channel from San Pablo Avenue to Albina Avenue. This plan notes existing fish populations, areas of excessive erosion, migration barriers, and possible remediation actions. The plan is posted on the UCC

website at <http://www.urban creeks.org/CCWRAP.html>.

The second phase of CCWRAP will include culvert remediation efforts to improve migration at identified barriers, two bank stabilization projects and decrease sedimentation, and hands-on workshops with Codornices' neighbors on how to create a "fish-friendly" corridor in their own backyards. The survey measurements we are currently gathering of the channel and banks will aid in the design of the culvert remediation and bank stabilizations measures. We are meeting with homeowners, talking and learning about their interactions and experiences with the creek. This process has been valuable to UCC and we are beginning to identify possible locales for the community demonstration workshops. In the coming months our survey will be complete and the planning and design of proposed culvert remediation, bank stabilization, and workshops will begin. A community meeting for all citizens interested in this exciting project is planned for February. Look for meeting announcements in the mail, on our website, and in local papers.

This is an amazing restoration opportunity for Codornices Creek and a great watershed model for other restoration concepts. With a restoration project just completed at 5th Street this fall

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Creek Aerobics, continued

oxygen by "reduction" - a process chemically "opposite" of oxidation.

The carbon gets converted to methane—a molecule made up of one carbon and four hydrogens (CH₄). This is the main component of natural gas, such as used in home heating systems and stoves. It is unlikely that enough methane would be generated in this way to pose a serious fire or explosion hazard. Its presence is a good indicator of the existence of an anaerobic condition, however.

The sulfur gets converted to hydrogen sulfide (two hydrogens and one sulfur - H₂S). This is a gas that has a characteristic "rotten egg" smell at low concentrations and at higher concentrations numbs the sense of smell and at yet higher concentrations is toxic. It is unlikely that anaerobic decomposition in a creek will result in a toxic concentration of hydrogen sulfide for humans.

Sources of Organic Overload

In the Bay Area, creeks typically get overloaded with excess organic matter in one of two ways: direct dumping or over-stimulation of aquatic plant growth by excess nutrients.

Direct Dumping

If excess organic material such as leaves, grass clippings, yard waste or manure gets into the creek, the capacity of the aerobic system can be overloaded and the anaerobic condition can be triggered. Organic materials should never be dumped into creeks or into storm drains. (Storm drains lead directly into creeks). Instead they can be composted for recycling as soil amendment or disposed of via the yard waste disposal system. Most waste haulers now compost yard waste and make the composted material available for landscaping.

Overstimulation

Runoff from over-fertilized landscaping and lawns introduces high levels of nutrients into creeks. These excess nutrients stimulate "blooms" of aquatic vegetation.

As these unsustainable growth spurts overload the system and the excess vegetation dies off, the creeks are pushed into the anaerobic mode, with all its attendant ill effects.

Other sources of excess nutrients are failed septic systems, leaking sewer lines, gray water drains, and water leaching from manure piles. These sources not only contribute to overstimulated plant growth, but also introduce pollutants into streams such as fecal bacteria and detergents.

Fecal Contamination

Creeks are not systematically tested on a routine basis for fecal contamination. Some testing has been done on some creeks. In some cases, fecal bacteria levels greatly exceeding EPA limits for even infrequently used recreational streams have been found. Creeks contaminated at this level are unsuitable for even infrequent contact by humans, according to the EPA. Systematic monitoring for water quality such as being done for beaches may help define the extent and severity of fecal contamination of creeks. When in doubt, play it safe.

Well-designed and well-maintained sewer systems are rarely sources of stream pollution. However, they do carry sewage, typically near streams, and leaks or breaks should they occur, can readily find their way into creeks. Sometimes they are difficult to find, but if presence of sewage is suspected, the effort to correct the problem can yield significant benefits to the creek. Sanitary sewer system operators have teams whose job it is to check for leaks and breaks, and should be contacted if such problems are suspected.

When he was a boy, Igor Skaredoff spent several summers with his family on Austin Creek in Sonoma County. He spent all day every day fishing, turning over rocks and swimming in the creek. Later when he "grew up" he worked for 35 years as a chemist, retiring in the year 2000. Now he spends almost every day almost all day doing creek stuff again - still occasionally turning over a rock or two.

TOP TEN... Strangest Items Found in Creeks

10. Discarded Tele-Tubby (San Pablo Creek, San Pablo)
9. 2 full cans of paint (Peralta Creek, Oakland)
8. 6-inch long tarantula (Alhambra Creek, Martinez)
7. Pineapple, 3 oranges, 2 grapefruit (Peralta Creek, Oakland)
6. Giant resident goldfish schooling with native fish (Peralta Creek)
5. K2 ski (Peralta Creek)
4. 2 starter motors (Peralta

Creek)

3. Bicycle (Peralta Creek)
2. Washing Machine (Codornices Creek, Berkeley)
1. 35 oil filters and 4 gallons of oil (San Pablo Creek)

How can I help keep strange items out of my local creeks? Call 1-800-NO-DUMPING to report illegal dumping, and recycle your used motor oil and filters for free at your local recycling center or auto parts store.

CCWRAP, from page 5

and the CCWRAP going forward, organisms (trout, frogs, insects and humans) that call this creek home will be able to enjoy this natural resource for coming generations.

If you live along Codornices Creek and have erosion, flooding, vegetation concerns, or think that your backyard would be a good site for a community workshop, please give us a call. We would love to meet and talk with you. Also, please contact us if you would like updated information on this project as it advances. To be included on the Urban Creeks Council's monthly email newslist announcement, please send an email with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to friends-request@urbancreeks.org.

Berkeley's Creeks Ordinance Headed for an Update

By Juliet Lamont

Berkeley's long-standing Creeks Ordinance is headed for review and updating by a citizen-based Creeks Task Force, thanks to a recent decision by the Berkeley City Council. After several months of lively hearings and City Council meetings, the Council approved a proposal, introduced by Mayor Bates and Councilmembers Miriam Hawley and Linda Maio, to establish a Council-appointed Creeks Task Force comprised of Berkeley citizens, with additional members from several Berkeley Commissions. The Task Force will have until April of 2006 to come up with recommendations about revisions to the ordinance, as well as other aspects of Berkeley's creeks-related policies. The Task Force's mandate includes looking at issues such as stormwater pollution prevention, possible incentives for homeowners to restore or "daylight" creeks, how to deal with sections of creeks that are in underground culverts, improvement in the protection and enhancement of natural riparian conditions and fish habitat, and long-term funding ideas for creek restoration. The hoped-for outcome of this Task Force is a more effective ordinance, to the benefit of creeks, wildlife, and the community overall.

The Berkeley Creeks Ordinance, passed in 1989, was one of the first of its kind in the nation. The ordinance was primarily designed to prevent further culverting of creeks, which at that time was still an all-too-frequent occurrence. Restored creeks and their associated vegetation filter pollutants out of the water, carry more water than culverts, and provide habitat for fish, birds, and animals. For these reasons, state and federal agencies have updated their directives, which now strongly advocate for restoring natural creek conditions as one way to improve water quality and control flooding.

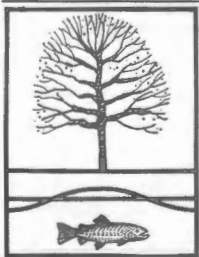
Failing culverts throughout Berkeley have added another dimension to homeowner concerns, because of associated hazard, liability, and repair issues. Most of Berkeley's creeks were put into underground culverts more than 70 years ago, when the creeks were literally used as sewers. Also, culverting the creeks allowed developers to build over them. Now, many decades later, these culverts are starting to fail. Failed culverts undermine homes, buildings, and roadways, costing the City – and property owners – huge sums of money, whether through legal battles, or massive repair bills.

A major concern for homeowners revolves around the question of who is responsible for paying for repair of these crumbling culverts on private property. While the City Council agreed this is a critical issue, it is addressing it separately from the Task Force process, since the issue is currently being debated in the courts. However, the City Council took an immediate step to allay another major homeowner concern by re-affirming the right of property owners along creeks to rebuild after an earthquake or disaster – an action that was fully supported by the Urban Creeks Council and other creek advocates.

The Creeks Task Force faces several challenges as it moves forward: how to bring varied interests together to resolve complex issues; how to research and define the best-available science to establish the basis for new regulations; and how to best work to protect natural resources in a dense urban environment. Despite these challenges, there is great promise for this process to work towards resolving homeowners' concerns, while improving citywide creek policies. It also provides an opportunity to explore incentives for property owners to restore natural conditions along creek banks – an aspect that is absent in the current ordinance. Finally, it presents a chance to work on innovative funding strategies that may help homeowners to deal with bank failures, erosion, and culvert hazards, while improving natural creek conditions over the long term – a win-win for creeks and property owners alike.

The Berkeley community has a real asset in its history of citizen participation and environmental awareness, which can be turned to great advantage in this critical time for our creeks, while benefiting both current and future generations of Berkeley residents. Task Force meetings will be open to the public, with at least one major public hearing scheduled as well. Future issues of Creek Currents will provide updates on the Task Force progress.

Juliet Lamont is an environmental planner and creek advocate living in Berkeley.



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Letter from the Executive Director

Growing up in central Pennsylvania, I spent a good deal of my time in the creeks in and around my hometown of Bellefonte. I have wonderful memories of taking off on my bike, my fishing rod across my handlebars, and pedaling to the creek to meet my buddies for an afternoon of trout fishing. As I got older, I replaced my can of red-worms with a fly rod and learned the exhilarating challenge of landing a big brown trout using artificial flies. The gentle sound of these spring-fed streams, the smell of their limestone waters, and the image of their forested surroundings have all trickled into me on those long days, to form a lasting impression, an expectation, of what a stream is. To this day I approach any creek with the sound of my grandfather's voice in my ear telling me to crouch low so as not to spook the fish.

The creeks of the San Francisco Bay Area are a long way from Bellefonte, PA, and since I have been working at UCC I have had the opportunity to wade up and down many of these waterways. I have been very fortunate to find a job that allows me to spend much of my time pulling on hip waders and jumping in a creek. I now carry a survey scope and data book instead of a fly rod because I am more likely to find shopping carts where there once were fish, rip-rap where there once was cobble, and concrete where there once were trees. The state of our urban creeks has historically not been a priority when pitted against development. Fortunately, restoration efforts are swiftly gaining ground here, where we highly value our natural environment. And gradually things are turning around for our waterways. Once in awhile, we are given a chance to hover breathlessly above a pool as a pioneering steelhead trout

emerges from beneath the shadow of a culvert. These same concrete banks that once threatened the migration of these fish are slowly becoming natural habitat. And all of this just beyond our backyards. This is what restoration is really about: by looking a little closer, we can see beyond what our urban creeks sometimes appear to be. Hidden beneath the rock walls and culverts, there are living things that deserve protection and clean water just as much as we do. And we have seen this year that we are capable of bringing them back to the places that we once thought were devoid of life. We are very thankful that we have been given the chance to make this possible, and we'll continue our work as long as there are channelized creeks to restore.

The talented and hardworking staff at Urban Creeks Council continues to change yet manages to stay the same! Josh Bradt (former Executive Director) has returned to take the position of Restoration Director, and Emma Gutzler (former intern) has returned after getting married and spending a year in Pennsylvania to work as Project Coordinator. Presently on maternity leave from the office is Junko Bryant, who gave birth to her baby girl Hana on October 9. Junko intends on keeping in touch with us and will likely contract with UCC on short projects as she enjoys her new responsibilities of being a mom. Mike Vukman (Project Manager), Kristen Van Dam (Intern) and Carole Schemmerling (volunteer) complete the office, which adds up to a great team who day-in and day-out give all they have towards restoring and protecting our urban streams.
-Steve Donnelly

The mission of the Urban Creeks Council is to preserve, protect, and restore urban streams and their riparian habitat by conducting advocacy and education activities, providing technical support to community groups, and implementing restoration projects through the use of soil-bioengineering techniques.