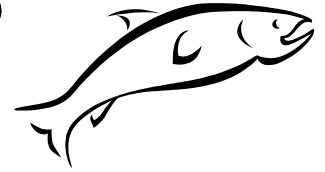




CREEK CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Urban Creeks Council

December 2005



Urban Creeks Council's mission is to protect, preserve and restore urban streams and their riparian habitat.



Bringing Communities Together with Water



Happy Holidays and Happy New Year from the Urban Creeks team! Clockwise from left: Emma Gutzler, Junko Bryant, Carole Schemmerling, Steve Donnelly, Josh Bradt, Kristen Van Dam, Bhodi, Mike Vukman.

There are two things I can think of which consistently bring people together in a community: a creek and a keg of beer. Both things represent a coming together, a common interest of the people. So in thinking of how we should hold our first fundraiser the choice was an obvious one: a casual Oktoberfest-style gathering. In October of 2005 Urban Creeks Council held its first fundraiser and by all measures it was a great success. We customized the name and took advantage of our own brewing skills to throw the first annual UCC-toberfest. With many donations from local businesses and friends, we rolled our kegs into sunny Tilden Park golf course for a day of gaiety, music, laughter, and good times. And at the end of the day we raised some funds to support the work of the excellent staff here at UCC.

If you were able to attend, donate an item, donate your time, or contribute to UCC in any way I want to thank you for your support. If you were not able to attend and you would like to come next year, mark October down on your calendar. We are definitely going to hold the second annual UCC-toberfest next year!

Our funding here at UCC comes largely from our project grants, which allows us to have a direct impact though our design and implementation of restoration projects. Unfortunately, we are struggling each year to find funds to support our outreach and

education activities. With your participation in UCctoerfest we are better able to provide information to the public about natural channel design, work with community leaders and groups to find the best solution to common urban creek problems, and stand up to those who would rather see our creeks encased in concrete.

Progress is being made; for 22 years UCC has been doing demonstration projects and engaging the public and restoration community to better our creeks and watersheds. This year we installed a Rosgen style cross-vane weir on Wildcat Creek. This weir was made using only natural materials, proving that concrete, check dams, gabions, and walls are not the only options on urban creeks. But much work still remains! Many people working in creeks *still* have no idea what a bankfull channel is, have no time for soil bio-engineering practices, and scoff at the idea of natural channel design.

In my travels around the world and through out California, I always see people gather at the water's edge to do their laundry, fish for dinner, splash about with friends and family, or to take a walk and unwind; water is a community resource and a place to share in the enjoyment and celebration of each other. At the same time, the condition and quality of a creek or river is a reflection of the community which surrounds it. As stewards of the land, we all have the responsibility to respect and treat with respect this common resource. In our work here at UCC we are fortunate to have the ability to work with so many of you who love and feel passionately about your creeks. Like so many other communities around the world—communities who meet at the water's edge to enjoy their creek—we too, here in the Bay Area, deserve the right to take enjoyment in our waterways, and with your continued support UCC will be happy to continue to safeguard and restore these waterways. And when the day is done, and we put down our pens, hammers or shovels, let's get together and have a beer!

-Steven Donnelly, Executive Director, Urban Creeks Council

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Urban Creeks Council Activities in 2005, by Watershed

CODORNICES CREEK WATERSHED: Education, monitoring, and action. These are key elements of watershed restoration; without all three effectiveness of the project is compromised. All components are occurring within the Codornices Creek Watershed with funding obtained from CALFED for the Codornices Creek Watershed Restoration Action Plan and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for the Codornices Creek Salmonid Restoration Project.

Education

The Codornices Creek Watershed Council has been created and is in the process of hiring a Watershed Coordinator to direct activities and unify watershed efforts. The Watershed Council is a place for homeowners, businesses, regulatory agencies, educators, and organizations throughout the watershed to discuss and collaborate on the use of resources in a consensus-based environment. During the Council's last meeting the group discussed the mouth of Codornices Creek and proposed plans for the shoreline at Golden Gate Fields, the impact of chloramines (used in the treatment of our drinking water) on our creeks, and current restoration activities. Everyone is welcome to join the Watershed Council for our upcoming meeting on the evening of January 19th. Details will be posted on the Urban Creeks Council web site. Students from St. Mary's College High School, Archway School, and Kids for the Bay are involved in the Codornices Creek projects. From growing native plants to measuring water quality to stenciling storm drains, these developing environmental stewards are learning valuable skills while contributing to the health of their watershed. Neighborhoods along Codornices Creek also organized educational "creek walks" this fall. These groups will be hosting workdays led by UCC to complete tasks that will benefit the creek, ranging from invasive vegetation removal to bioengineering techniques.

Monitoring

Due to our Mediterranean climate, chemicals and other pollutants build up on our infrastructure throughout the summer and during the first storm event are all "flushed" into our stormdrains and creeks, causing significant spikes in pollutant levels. "First-flush" water samples were collected during the season's first significant rainfall in October and have been sent to a certified laboratory. This fall UCC staff and volunteers counted and measured pebbles, fish, dissolved oxygen levels, and bank heights. This monitoring will continue in 2006. An electrofishing survey was completed by biologists in September in order to develop a population estimate for *Oncorhynchus mykiss* (rainbow trout/steelhead) residing in Codornices Creek.

Water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and specific conductivity directly affect the quality of life for steelhead. These water quality parameters were measured weekly this fall at five sites downstream of Albina Avenue. This could not have been possible without our faithful volunteers or the help and equipment provided by the State Water Resources Control Board. Thank you. Efforts have also begun to gather all the data collected throughout the years on Codornices Creek and organize it into a Geographic Information System developed for the watershed. All results from monitoring activities described above are currently undergoing analysis and quality assurance procedures and will be posted on the Web. Monitoring is a way to address the ongoing need to better understand our waterways and their inhabitants. In 2006 UCC will be conducting spawning surveys and outmigrant trapping to gain knowledge about the migration of Codornices' steelhead. Volunteers are needed to support these tasks. Contact us to learn more about and experience this threatened species that lives in the Codornices community.

Action

Currently the bridge crossing at Albina Avenue acts as a barrier to steelhead upstream migration. Within the same reach there are several erosion sites that appear to be adversely impacting downstream spawning gravels. UCC is developing designs to address these areas of concern, including a natural series of step-pools will allow fish to navigate the existing barrier. Grading and vegetation will act to stabilize the reaches banks and decrease sedimentation of the channel. Construction is being planned for the summer 2006.

There is a lot of activity occurring within the Codornices Creek watershed. If you would like to get involved in these exciting activities, please contact Emma Gutzler at 510.540.6669.

WILDCAT CREEK WATERSHED: Wildcat-San Pablo Creek Watershed Restoration Action Plan & Priority Projects

Members of the WRAPPP project are gathering information from various geomorphic, fishery, and hydrologic analyses to develop a Master Flood Damage Reduction and Restoration Plan for Wildcat Creek as it runs through the City of San Pablo. Included in this planning process is a restoration project between Rumrill Boulevard and the non-functioning fish ladder downstream. This project is currently under design for planned implementation next summer. The WRAPPP also supports a summer youth employment program and on-going after school environmental education club at Richmond High School.

Rheem Creek at Rollingwood, Unincorporated Contra Costa County:

We organized two well attended volunteer days in November to remove obstructions and pre-cut vegetation blocking winter flows within the Rheem Creek channel right-of-way. Using funds from the County Watershed Program's Community Stewardship Grant, UCC will survey the newly cleared channel and develop a conceptual restoration design for this very disturbed waterway. Poorly designed culverts, excessive deposition (filling), and in-stream vegetation have led to chronic flooding. We hope to develop a design and planting plan to help resolve the creek issues that have affected this small community.

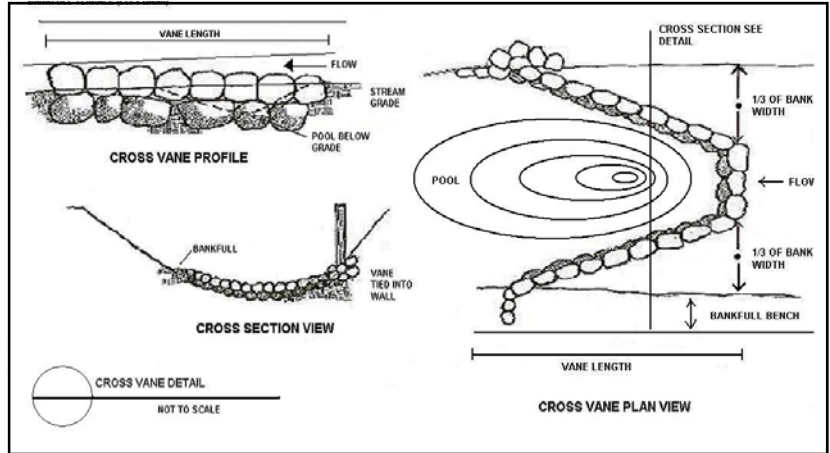
WILDCAT CREEK: PROJECT 2005: INSTALLATION OF A CROSS VANE ROCK STRUCTURE

This summer, UCC had the unique opportunity remove a check dam on Wildcat Creek. This check dam was causing some localized erosion that was severely undermining the base of a particular piece of urban infrastructure. For various reasons, check dams are inherently unstable. They tend to violate the dimension, pattern, and profile of a stable river. Because the check dam was serving as a form of grade control, we needed to replace it with a similar type of structure. We determined that a cross vane rock structure could not only provide us with a form of grade control, but it could provide the creek with many new and additional benefits, as indicated below.

This structure was designed and applied in order to:

1. Establish grade control
2. Reduce streambank erosion
3. Facilitate sediment transport
4. Enhance fish habitat
5. Maintain width/depth ratio
6. Maintain river stability
7. Dissipate excess energy
8. Withstand large floods
9. Maintain channel capacity
10. Be compatible with natural channel design
11. Be visually acceptable to the public

We are looking forward to monitoring this particular cross vane's effectiveness in the coming storms.



A design plan view used to create the Wildcat Creek cross vane.

RHEEM CREEK WATERSHED: Lower Rheem Creek and Breuner Marsh

UCC is continuing our partnership with the Natural Heritage Institute, the Community Health Initiative, the North Richmond Neighborhood House, the Parchester Village Neighborhood Council and the West County Toxics Coalition to further promote the restoration of Rheem Creek within Breuner Marsh. Our third and final community meeting/field trip to discuss shared visions for the marsh will take place in early 2006. The exciting news is the potential acquisition of the property by the East Bay Regional Parks District. (A developer has proposed a large scale residential housing project, which would require a change to the Richmond General Plan.) While we await the outcome of this acquisition attempt, we are developing design charettes to show desired features including a restored riparian corridor, tidal wetlands, interpretive center, as well as trails and boardwalks—so that everyone can enjoy this community treasure.

Thank You to Our Generous Ucctoberfest Sponsors!!

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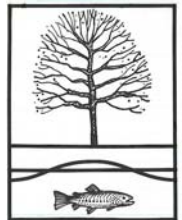
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Please send an Urban Creeks Council T-shirt (donation of \$35 or more) Size: Medium Large X-Large

Please send A.L. Riley's book "Restoring Streams in Cities" (donation of \$100 or more)

Please don't send me a gift; I just want to donate.

Please send donations to: Urban Creeks Council, 1250 Addison Street #107C, Berkeley, California 94702



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