



Humboldt County Resource Conservation District

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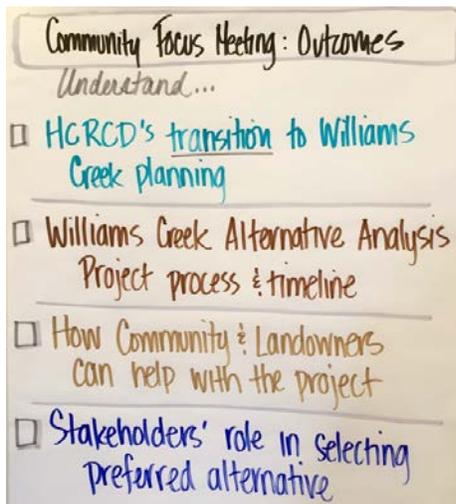
SALT RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Restoring a historic waterway while preserving an agricultural heritage

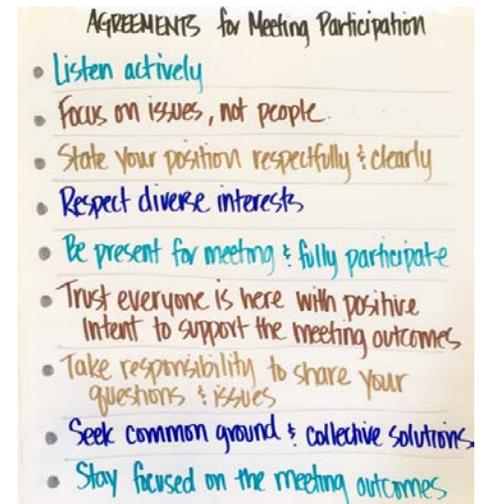
Williams Creek Alternative Analysis Project Community Meeting Report Ferndale City Hall Tuesday, May 23, 2017, 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Purpose, Desired Outcomes, Agenda & Agreements for Participation

A community discussion on Williams Creek restoration planning.



WHAT	WHEN
• Help yourself to dinner!	5:15 - 5:30
• Welcome	5:30 - 5:35
• Intros/ Agenda/Agreements & Outcomes	5:35 - 5:50
• Presentation	5:50 - 6:10
• Q & A	6:10 - 6:20
• Small Group Work	6:20 - 7:25
• Q & A	7:25 - 7:40
• What to expect Next	7:40 - 7:50
• Close & Evaluation	7:50 - 8:00



Welcome

Don Hindley, Mayor of Ferndale and Board Chair of the Salt River Watershed Council welcomed the audience. He stated many people never thought this day would come, yet there is “phenomenal” progress to celebrate over the last three years. Gave thanks to the HCRCD, the residents living on the Salt River who have “put their hearts into it.” This meeting is the start of restoration up Williams Creek.

Jill Demers, Executive Director of the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District (HCRCD) welcomed attendees. She explained that one-year prior, Williams Creek residents, including members of the Salt River Watershed Council and County Supervisor Rex Bohn, attended a HCRCD Board of Directors

meeting and requested help. HCRCD organized this community meeting because of that request and to begin the process of finding solutions to the dysfunction of Williams Creek. This session is to both share information and to get input on the planning process. The first step is to engage watershed residents, then the wider community. This is the first of many interactions over the next several years.

Presentation

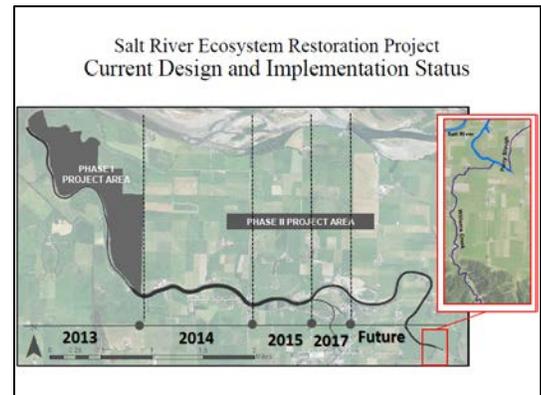
Jill Demers provided a brief presentation that included the following information:

Salt River Update

- Construction footprint
- Timeline to completion—proposed
- Current status—construction
- Images of completed project channel
- Future Williams Creek connection

End of Salt River project and transition zone to Williams Creek Alternatives Analysis

- *Why Williams Creek Alternatives Analysis is happening now*
 - Williams Creek community has been waiting for a solution to prevent impacts from flooding and sedimentation.
 - Funding has been secured to begin collecting data through studies for the first steps towards restoration planning.
 - The Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project will connect to the Williams Creek confluence. Performing the proposed studies for the planning process will help inform how Williams Creek currently functions, what the watershed will look like into the future, and how to best to connect the Salt River.
- *Purpose of project: Identify feasible alternatives that will...*
 - Address flooding impacts to neighboring properties and agricultural lands,
 - Improve Williams Creek flows to Salt River
 - Enhance fish and wildlife habitats
 - Improve water quality
- *Alternatives Analysis Process*
 - Role of property owners in process
 - Landowner cooperation/partnership and input throughout the entire process
 - Robust community engagement
 - Understand the feasibility and constraints of process
 - Provide property access to RCD staff and consultants for data collection
 - Share concerns respectfully and ask questions for clarification
 - Share historical information to inform design of project
 - Data collection to occur – sediment loads, stream surveys
 - Create conceptual 10% Designs for 1 to 3 alternatives
 - Stakeholders select preferred Alternative



- *A Successful Restoration Project Requires...*
 - Landowner cooperation – project will occur entirely on private lands and a partnership should be built between landowners, the HCRCD, and SRWC
 - Funding – grant applications required for public funds
 - Engineering designs – Engineers and HCRCD will work with landowners to consider flood protection, agricultural production, and habitat restoration and create a feasible design
 - Permit agency approvals – any proposed project must obtain permits and work with several different agencies to obtain project permits
- *Williams Creek Alternatives Analysis timeline*
 - 2017 Hold community meeting(s) to discuss project feasibility & gather landowner input
 - 2017 Gain access to private lands adjacent to Williams Creek
 - 2017/18 Collect data, conduct field work
 - 2017/18 Hold meetings with stakeholders
 - 2018/19 Develop alternatives (options) for restoration
 - 2018/19 Community selects desired alternative

Next Steps towards Williams Creek Restoration

Once a preferred project design has been selected, HCRCD and partners will work to:

- Secure funding source(s)
- Obtain landowner agreements
- Obtain all necessary permits
- Finalize design plans
- Secure funding for implementation
- Proceed to construction
- Develop on-going maintenance & adaptive management plan

Stay Involved!

- Salt River Watershed Council meetings
- HCRCD Board Meetings
- Provide HCRCD feedback
- Provide access for studies through Assessment & Entry Agreement

Ways to Stay Involved

Salt River Watershed Council

- ✓ Attend the next public meeting on July 18th or future meetings (every other month, 3rd Tuesday, 3pm @ Ferndale Fire Hall)
- ✓ Visit <https://saltriverwatershed.org/> for updates & newsletters



- ✓ Visit <http://humboldtcrd.org/> for updates
- ✓ Attend Board of Directors meeting on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 8am
- ✓ Stop by our Ferndale office at Scout's Hall or our Eureka office at the Agricultural Center
- ✓ Call us at: 707-442-6058 x 5 (general line)
- ✓ Email us at hcrd@yahoo.com

- ✓ **Provide us your email/phone number**
- ✓ **Provide access for studies** – Assessment & Entry Agreement
- ✓ **Attend future meetings** to provide input on alternatives!

Post-Presentation Questions & Answers

Q: With the hills and mountains being young, and the river being much higher in elevation and things in valley much lower...is this a geologic issue or man-made? Are the ridges still rising? As in a geologic issue still occurring? (adds complication)

A: The creek is in a floodplain; when the creek spills out of its banks the sediment gets deposited on the lands next to the creek, which increases the elevation.

Q: How much cooperation do you expect to get from a landowner that was sued before? Do you have any legal grounds to enforce cooperation?

A: The RCD does not sue people or force cooperation. We want and need partnership. We are not a regulatory or enforcement agency. The RCD & Salt River Watershed Council want to work with landowners to create a bridge to work together. We want to honor your concerns and find a way to reach compromise.

Q: This is a centralized, centralized-coordinated and funded project? We need everyone to get on board, give access for study...then we can move into implementation?

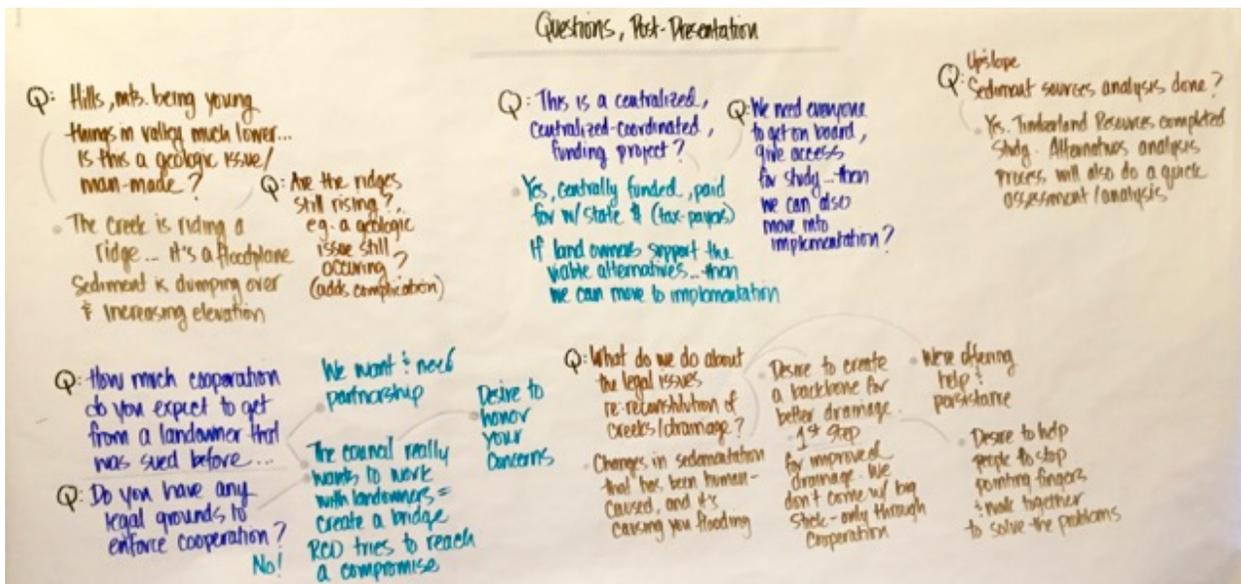
A: Centrally funded in that this phase is paid for with state grant money, allocated through bonds, and ultimately the tax-payers. HCRCD raised funds because the community requested assistance. If landowners support a viable alternative, then HCRCD can fundraise for implementation. HCRCD can provide centralized coordination and support, but it needs to also be a community project. There needs to be a level of community support and ownership to continue forward.

Q: What can be done about the legal issues regarding reconstitution of creeks/drainage?

A: Some changes in sedimentation have been human-caused, and have resulted in others to experience more flooding. The HCRCD is offering help to help address the dysfunction in the Williams Creek area that is causing some of the flooding. The larger Salt River project can be thought of as creating a "backbone" for better drainage and is a critical first step for improved drainage. The HCRCD doesn't come around with a big stick; we work only through cooperation, and we have a desire to help people stop pointing fingers and work together to solve the problems.

Q: Has an upslope sediment sources analysis done?

A: Timberland Resources completed the study examining erosional hazards and USDA-NRCS continues to work in the area. The alternatives analysis process will also do a quick assessment/analysis.



Graphic recording of Q & A taken during meeting

Specific Topics for In-Depth Conversations

Participants then had a large-group conversation about two self-identified topics:

- 1) Flooding, sedimentation & erosion impacts to lands
- 2) Providing access to the RCD for data collection. A sample Landowner Assessment & Entry Agreement was shared with the participants for review and discussion.

Access: What does it entail?

Q: Concern about government coming onto property [can't talk to Dad and family]. We've got some spots of serious erosion... After I grant access...is California Department Fish and Wildlife going to come and tell me I have to fix something? Am I at risk to lose my house because I can't fix it? We're dealing with a property and an older generation of family members who say "That's the way we've always done it."

A: The HCRCD needs to work cooperatively with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and other agencies in order to plan, permit, and implement projects. HCRCD has no regulatory authority; we work in partnership with landowners and government. Occasionally, agencies may ask to visit a site, and HCRCD will contact the landowner to request access and accompany the agency representative to the location. HCRCD has never had CDFW or other agencies report anything on any property they've visited with the HCRCD.

Discussion: Some landowners noted that they've had good experiences with CDFW. CDFW sees it as a privilege to work on private lands.

Q: What's the term of the Assessment & Entry Agreement?

A: The draft Assessment & Entry Agreement includes a term of 5 years. The agreement provides the landowner's permission to the HCRCD (and consultants) to access the property to perform studies and surveys and notes that the HCRCD will contact the landowner at least 24 hours prior to any visit. The agreements may be individualized based on the property location and information that needs to be collected. The agreement also asks that the landowner provide access for monitoring purposes to CDFW. An example of this is that CDFW collects data on fish in the Salt River project footprint.

Discussion: Landowners discussed experiences of working with HCRCD as well as NRCS. Others noted that it is an opportunity to spend time with the HCRCD on property and can help HCRCD staff understand what's changed (water flow, sediment, etc.)

Q: What data would be collected on my property?

A: Data collection will include:

- Landowner input (historical conditions, current water flow and erosion/ sedimentation patterns)

Several participants asked for clarification about the process for addressing the dysfunction of Williams Creek—asking if a preferred alternative had already been drafted, if HCRCD had a preferred project plan, and how many years it would take until they see construction and flooding relief.

HCRCD, at the request of the community, is currently starting the Alternatives Analysis process to identify feasible restoration designs for Williams Creek. A preferred project plan (or alternative) has not been identified at this time, but will be with the successful completion of this phase of the project.

It is critical that HCRCD works with landowners to 1) obtain access to collect data and 2) collect their input to identify possible design alternatives.

- Topographic landscape data
- Stream flow data and sediment data in channel
- Vegetation and soil data
- Landowner suggestions (e.g. upslope/downslope solutions)

Q: What about my neighbors who don't want riparian vegetation along the creek?

A: Funding and permits require certain design elements. The HCRCD will work in close coordination with landowners to find the best solution to satisfy each party.

Q: Is my name used, in connection to data collected on my land?

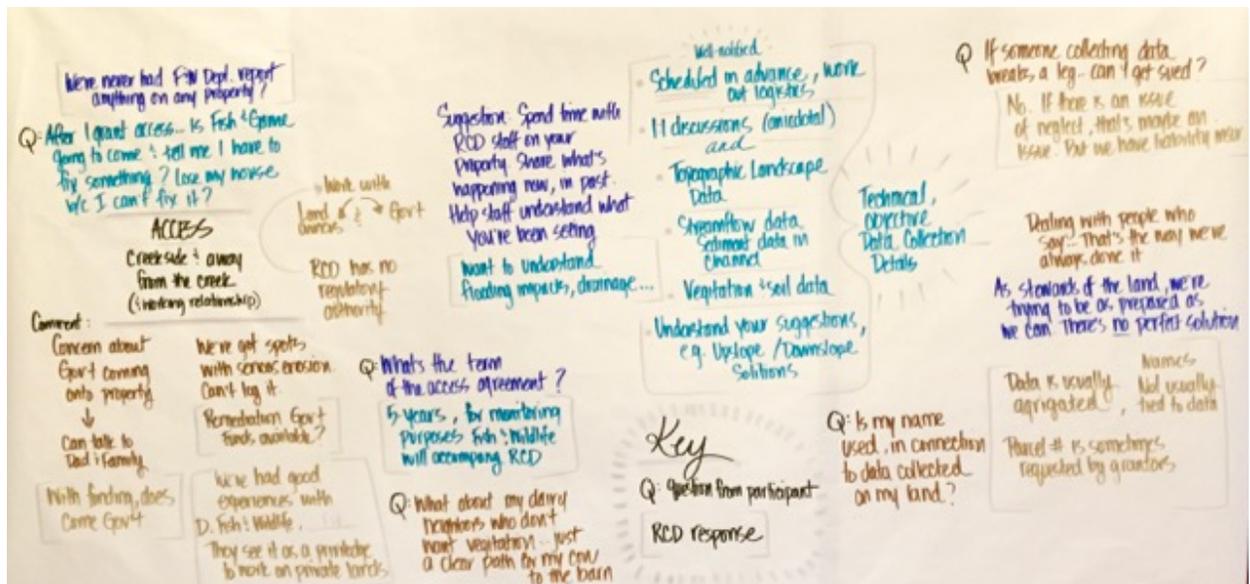
A: Data is usually aggregated and names are not usually tied to data, although grantors sometimes request the parcel number.

Q: If someone collecting data breaks a leg...can I get sued?

A: This is unlikely. The HCRCD carries liability insurance for staff and consultants.

Flooding Impacts – General Discussion from Participants

- I pay taxes on my property, but it's worthless. I can't sell it (nothing on Ambrosini can sell)
- I'm losing my land! Or I'm gaining land! Sediment is moving...
- Reduced tax liability is given to property owners and that should help with federal funding
- No FEMA designation yet
- Is what's good for me also good for my dairy neighbors?
- How does my needs impact my neighbors' needs?
- I'm 73 years old and have to crawl over a fence to get out of my yard
- As stewards of the land, we're trying to be as prepared as we can. There's NO perfect solution.



Graphic recording of discussion taken during meeting

Closing Comments

Most participants provided a brief though on today's meeting or the William Creek planning process:

- It was the first step. Its good.
- Excited
- We all need to work to get landowners involved. Talk to your neighbors.
- Glad we didn't break out into small groups.
- Keep it simple and direct.
- Shorter meeting would be good.
- Nice to meet more of my neighbors and the people involved.
- It was fine.
- Thanks for the food.
- Sure we will be seeing each other again.
- Continue to do evening meetings. Many of us work long days—we can make these evening meeting, and share the information with our neighbors.
- Gave us more ideas to ponder as a board (Humboldt County RCD Board of Directors)
- Encourage you to trust the process.
- Look forward to getting out to properties.
- The city is your neighbor-part of family, keep building coalition of neighbors (solution).
- It wasn't what I thought it would be, but I liked it. I'll need to talk to my family and neighbors.
- Glad to ground truth it. Lots of knowledge to be taken in. Thanks to RCD. The Watershed Council is all volunteer run. They get a lot of grief. We have been held up before and we worked it out. We have an opportunity to make it better.
- We just want to be better neighbors, and this project is a big job.
- Doing a great job.
- Shared common goal to fix this problem on the landscape.

Thanks for respectfully sharing your views. Desire to keep this rolling.

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- Provide access for studies – access agreement
- Attend future meetings to provide input on alternatives!