



DATE: March 25, 2008

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Ann Van Leer for the Rose Creek Watershed Alliance

**SUBJECT: Recommended Amendments to the Draft Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment**

The Rose Creek Watershed Alliance (Alliance) presents these recommended amendments to the draft Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment (Assessment) for your consideration and adoption. The Alliance is a 13-member stakeholders group formed to help guide the Assessment. Alliance members include public and non-profit organizations working to improve the quality of life in the Rose Creek Watershed, which includes most of MCAS Miramar and parts of Clairemont, University City, Pacific Beach and Mission Bay.

**Background:**

The Rose Creek Watershed contains great natural beauty, recreational opportunities and biological diversity. Unfortunately, the watershed suffers from many of the same ills as other watersheds at the edge where wild lands meet urban development. Invasive non-native species have overrun many areas, and urban problems such as crime and vagrancy are acute in the lower watershed. While the overall health of the watershed is better than many urban-wildland watersheds in Southern California, portions of lower Rose Creek, in particular, are unhealthy, unsafe and a detriment to water quality in Mission Bay and the ocean. Approving the Assessment, and working to implement its recommendations, will help bring about the changes this watershed needs.

This Assessment includes recommendations to enhance the watershed, to make it a safer and healthier place for residents and visitors alike. We hope the Assessment will engage and inform the public, guide volunteers and professionals, and build policy level support within the appropriate public and private agencies to enhance and preserve the watershed.

**Appreciation:**

We are grateful for the support, advice and guidance we have received from Councilmembers and City staff especially Councilmembers Frye, Peters and Faulconer, Park and Recreation Department staff, Environmental Services Department staff and Northern Division Police Chief Boyd Long and his staff especially officers Conti and Vinson and the officers of the HOT team.

We know there are many pressing concerns before the City and are appreciative of the time City staff took to review the Assessment and make comments; the suggestions were helpful and we have incorporated them into these amendments. On approval of the Assessment by the full City Council, an updated final Assessment will be created that will be made available to the City and posted at [www.rosecreekwatershed.org](http://www.rosecreekwatershed.org). Our hope is the City and other entities, private and public, will use the Assessment as a guidance document for activities in the Rose Creek Watershed.

Our suggested amendments are organized below into two attachments that follow: Policy Amendment and Minor Amendments. Thank you for your support of the Rose Creek Watershed.

Sincerely,

Convener for San Diego Earthworks

Friends of Rose Creek

Friends of Rose Canyon

Marian Bear Natural Park Committee

Rose Canyon Recreational Council

Clairemont Town Council

San Diego Audubon

Clairemont Mesa Planning Group

Nobel Recreation Council

Friends of Stevenson Canyon

San Diego County Bicycle Coalition

Discover Pacific Beach

Mission Bay Park Committee

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**ROSE CREEK WATERSHED OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT**  
**PROPOSED POLICY AMENDMENT**

Discussion:

The draft Assessment includes a recommendation, 2.1, to encourage pro-active conservation in the watershed including the creation of a Conservation Bank to restore watershed lands proactively and at watershed scale. Conversations with City staff regarding this item have illuminated concerns that the City should first revise its policies regarding the restoration of City-owned lands, especially the impact of restoration on the City's future needs for mitigation. We understand the City's concerns and are in agreement that these are important policy questions that require additional consideration.

The goal of this recommendation was to encourage discussion and, we hoped, action on large scale restoration of City and other watershed lands including urban canyons like Rose and San Clemente. That policy discussion has begun and its resolution will have potentially wide positive implications for other City-owned lands in all watersheds and for enhancement of the MSCP. This discussion is better held with consideration of all City lands and accordingly, we recommend removal of the current text in Section 2.1.2 and replacement with the following text. In addition, the Supplemental text included in 4.2 will be updated to reflect this additional revised language.

**New Section 2.1, Recommendations for Pro-active Conservation in the Rose Creek Watershed**

- Work with the City of San Diego and other public agencies to implement policies that will encourage the comprehensive restoration and management of watershed lands for conservation and other public purposes.
- Pilot projects in the Rose Creek Watershed that will result in the comprehensive restoration and management of watershed lands.
- Assign one City department lead responsibility for coordinating all City activities in the Rose Creek Watershed.

Most of the undeveloped land that is the focus of the Assessment is publicly owned. The largest land owner in the watershed is the military which owns MCAS Miramar. The use of that land is governed by the military; the natural resources of the base are overseen by the base's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP). The primary purpose of the INRMP is to integrate Marine Corps Air Station Miramar's land use needs, in support of the military mission, with the management and conservation of natural resources. The plan covers the entire base and the military is currently pro-actively comprehensively managing the natural resources of the base.

In contrast, there are multiple public agencies, with various missions, that own the watershed lands outside MCAS Miramar. For those undeveloped watershed land areas

outside MCAS Miramar, the largest property owner is the City of San Diego. The City's ownership and responsibilities to the watershed are split between multiple departments and divisions including Park and Recreation, Streets, Storm Water Pollution Prevention and Metropolitan Wastewater. Park and Recreation owns and manages the natural open space parks in the upper watershed including San Clemente (Marian Bear) and Rose and Mission Bay Park in the lower watershed. Streets Division owns and manages the flood control corridor that ties the upper watershed's open space parks to Mission Bay Park. The City's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Division has responsibilities for implementation of the Municipal Storm Water Permit and enforcement of laws to prevent and prohibit runoff from storm water from polluting creeks, bays and the ocean, including the Rose and San Clemente creeks and Mission Bay. The Metropolitan Wastewater Department has responsibilities for the wastewater distribution system that uses the Rose Creek Watershed to transport wastewater for treatment and disposal.

Two other public agencies own important watershed lands. Caltrans owns the freeway rights of ways for highways 5 and 52. Also, North County Transit District (NCTD) owns the railroad line corridor and rights of way that largely parallels Rose Creek through the watershed.

In contrast to MCAS Miramar, which is actively and comprehensively managing its ownership of natural lands in the watershed, other than City Park and Recreation lands, the other public lands in the Rose Creek Watershed are managed, if at all, in isolation. In some parts of the watershed, such as the City, Caltrans and NCTD-owned section that connects the two upper watershed open space parks with Mission Bay Park; there is a suite of public problems including infestations of non-native invasive species which are increasing fire risk, reducing flood carrying capacity and reducing habitat for native species. Those same areas have included, at times, illegal encampments leading to water pollution, trash accumulation, graffiti and use of the creek as a base for illegal activities elsewhere. A more comprehensive approach to managing these areas is required.

### **New Section 2.1.1 Implement Policies to Encourage Comprehensive Restoration and Management of Watershed Lands**

Unfortunately, the problems of the Rose Creek Watershed are not unique. Wherever responsibilities are split between multiple owners and multiple departments and divisions, comprehensive natural resources management on a watershed scale is unlikely *unless* actions are taken to make watershed protection a priority. The first action that should occur is the development of policies to encourage comprehensive management of watershed resources, both MSCP and non-MSCP lands, in watersheds like Rose Creek. Those policies should encourage intra-governmental cooperation between City of San Diego divisions and departments and inter-governmental cooperation between the City of San Diego, Caltrans, NCTD and other watershed property owners. Such policies should encourage partnerships with other governmental and non-governmental agencies to help extend public agency resources which have been reduced by funding cutbacks in recent years.

### **New Section 2.1.2 Pilot Projects in the Rose Creek Watershed that Demonstrate**

## **Progress towards the Comprehensive Restoration and Management of Watershed Lands**

The Rose Creek Watershed is a perfect venue to pilot projects to encourage new approaches to comprehensive restoration and management of urban watersheds. Relatively small at 37 square miles, a large part of the watershed, on MCAS Miramar, is already under active management. Remaining undeveloped areas are largely in public ownership with the two main open space canyons owned by Park and Recreation, included in the MSCP. While problems exist, especially in the lower watershed, they could be addressed with focused attention by the governmental entities and public and private partners to great benefit, both for the local public in enhanced water quality, reduced fire risk and decreased crime and for the wildlife that live in the watershed. Additional benefactors are the 15 million plus people that visit Mission Bay each year and swim in its waters.

### **New Section 2.1.3 Assign One City department Lead Responsibility for Coordinating City activities in the Rose Creek Watershed; Comprehensively Manage Public Lands**

The function of the watershed does not change when you leave one ownership and enter another but currently the on-the-ground-physical condition of the watershed does change because of inconsistent management practices. Better coordination between City of San Diego departments and divisions and other watershed property owners such as Caltrans and NCTD, and private owners, could result in more comprehensive and effective implementation of governmental plans and programs in the Rose Creek Watershed. One coordinating department, and Park and Recreation is suggested, would be able to help facilitate more strategic and comprehensive actions in the watershed.

**ATTACHMENT 2**  
**ROSE CREEK WATERSHED OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT**  
**PROPOSED MINOR AMENDMENTS**

**Proposed Changes to Recommendations' Section**

**Introduction to Action Recommendations**

It will be noted that all City departments with management responsibilities within the Rose Creek Watershed have budget and staffing issues.

**2.2.1 Recommendations for Enhancing the Connection to Mission Bay**

It will be noted that the area referenced in this section are currently under a lease agreement that does not terminate until 2017. It will also be noted that the west to east bicycle and pedestrian connection across the north end of the bay is critical to public safety and the enhancement of the Mission Bay visitor experience. Currently trail users must backtrack up to Grand Avenue to cross Rose creek. Creating a trail connection from the west end of Pacific Beach Drive in the north end of the bay, compatible with other watershed and Mission Bay improvements, is an essential component of enhancing the connection of the watershed to Mission Bay.

**2.2.5 Recommendations for Land Management and Ownership**

It will be noted that the City has approved MSCP land acquisition areas and these areas would have to be added to the list if they contribute to the MHPA preserve.

**2.2.7 Recommendations for Environmental Education**

It will be noted that it's important to coordinate environmental education efforts, including those of the City (which can include multiple departments) and those of other municipalities in the region.

**2.3.2 Recommendations to Assess Potential Effects on Cultural Resources by other actions**

It will be noted that city departments are required to conduct cultural resource assessments for habitat restoration projects. If the project has the potential to impact cultural resources, they are required to mitigate those potential impacts through monitoring, testing, or data recovery as necessary. It will also be noted that any signs on City Park land must be approved by the Park and Recreation Department.

**2.4 Recommendations for Public Safety**

Recommendation 2.4.1.1 will be updated to include the brush management section of the open space division, which does do on the ground brush management of City owned lands within open space. The last sentence of the second paragraph should be updated to

read “Brush management on private property, shall be performed consistent with City regulations and standards.”

## **2.5 Recommendations for Recreational Trails**

It will be noted that new trails should be analyzed within the Trails Master Plan and are subject to staffing and funds for implementation and management, maintenance and enforcement.

### **2.5.2 Recommendations for Improving Access within the Open Space System**

It will be noted that MWWD’s Long Term Access Plan for San Clemente Canyon has been reviewed and approved. The plan for Rose Canyon is currently being prepared.

### **2.5.3 Recommendations for Creating Regional Recreation Connections**

It will be noted that the Boat and Ski Club lease agreement referenced in 2.5.3.C.2 is on holdover.

It will be noted that the area referenced in section 2.5.3.C.2 is listed in the Mission Bay Master Plan Update as the De Anza Special Study Area and the Master Plan Update suggests that the area might be used as a new location for an RV and campground.

It will be noted that use of pervious materials for trail improvements, where feasible, will allow for infiltration of runoff into the ground and reduce impervious surface in the watershed.

## **2.6.1 Recommendations for Hydrology and Hydraulics**

It will be noted that this work will be coordinated with similar efforts being implemented by the municipalities in the region per the Municipal Storm Water Permit (i.e., Hydromodification Management Plan).

## **Other Sections**

### **Proposed changes to Watershed Overview Section**

#### **3.3.6 Impervious Surfaces**

It will be noted that infiltration projects (which the City is currently in the process of piloting) throughout the watershed, where feasible, may help meet water quality goals.

#### **3.5.2.6 Park Accessibility**

It will be noted that the official use of University City HS can not be endorsed by the City as a designated parking lot for the canyon without a joint use agreement.

### **3.8.1 Sewer Overflows**

Page 3-54, 3.8.1 – Sewer Overflows – In addition to the information provided on the number of sewer flows through 1997, the following paragraph will be added regarding MWWD’s sewer cleaning program:

*In response to an Administrative Order from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and in an effort to reduce sewer spills and beach closures, the City of San Diego’s Metropolitan Wastewater Department (MWWD) has adopted the Canyon Sewer Cleaning Program and the Long-term Canyon Sewer Maintenance Program (Program) to access, clean, and repair miles of sewer infrastructure located in canyons and other environmentally sensitive areas. On July 15, 2004, the City of San Diego Planning Commission approved a Coastal Development Permit No. 13506 and Site Development Permit No. 13507 for the Program. As part of this program, the sewer lines in the RCW were accessed and cleaned. A long term access plan for San Clemente Canyon has been reviewed and approved by the City’s Development Services Department. The long-term access plan for Rose Creek is currently being prepared for submittal. These measures are designed to reduce the potential for sewer spills by providing for routine inspection and maintenance of the sewer mains in the watershed.*

### **Proposed changes to Supplemental Information Section**

#### **Section 4.3.2 Potential Wetland Restoration Sites**

Page 4-6, Potential Wetland Restoration Sites 3 & 5 – This section will be updated to reflect that these sites were installed in fall 2007, rather than fall 2005.

Page 4-7, Potential Wetland Restoration Sites - The description for Wetland Restoration Site 12 will be revised to clarify that it is located east of Genesee Avenue and was installed in the fall of 2007.

Page 4-8, Potential Wetland Restoration Site 16 – This section will be updated to clarify that this site was installed in the fall of 2007.

#### **4.6.6 Storm Water Runoff Reduction Techniques**

It will be noted that “smart” irrigation involves reducing over-irrigation and properly directing all irrigation flows onto landscaped areas to reduce dry weather runoff volume conveying pollutants to receiving waters.