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News from the Rose Creek Watershed Coordinator

A Project of San Diego EarthWorks

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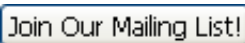
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Thanks for your interest in the Rose Creek Watershed. Please read on to learn about the projects taking place to improve our watershed's beautiful environmental and recreational attributes.

Kelly Makley
Rose Creek Watershed Coordinator
www.rosecreekwatershed.org
A Project of San Diego EarthWorks



Report Identifies Watershed Restoration Opportunities

A study that identifies restoration opportunities in the Rose Creek Watershed has recently been completed by [San Diego Earthworks](#), thanks to funding from the [California Coastal Conservancy](#). Through extensive field work, data collection, mapping and modeling, *The Rose Creek Watershed Wetland, Riparian and Water Quality Restoration Opportunities Analysis* recommends 19 specific restoration projects to improve one of our region's most beautiful recreational and environmental assets.

"Because the majority of the watershed was fully developed by the mid 1980's,

few, if any best management practices (BMPs) were implemented to help mitigate for the increase in impervious surfaces," explains the report. "The lack of BMPs has allowed for not only increases in flows, but has also caused a substantial increase in the pollutants entering Rose and San Clemente Creeks compared to historic conditions."



This native sycamore tree has been damaged as a result of changes to the canyon's natural water flow.

A fully functioning watershed stores rainwater by spreading out the water flow across a floodplain. This decreases the water's speed, reduces flood peaks, and distributes the water throughout the environment over a longer period of time. When impervious surfaces such as roads and sidewalks are added as a result of urbanization, the natural flow of rainwater is modified and diverted. The increased amount and speed of the rainwater flow causes "channel incision," meaning the creek deepens into the canyon valley bottom while creating steep slopes on either side. This process causes problems for watershed ecosystems, such as restricting water flow to the root systems of native trees, making the water more "muddy" (which affects water quality and aquatic plant growth), and increasing flooding during storms.

The report suggests a variety of specific restoration strategies and techniques to reverse the effects of channel incision and enhance the watershed's natural structure at 19 sites. For example, Rose Canyon Site 3 is severely incised, with no access to a floodplain where water can be captured and stored. This has resulted in a dominance of non-native grasses. Step pools and site grading are recommended techniques to restore the floodplain.



Non-native grasses dominate Rose Canyon Site 3.

The report was prepared by [cbec, inc.](#), [eco-engineering](#), Trestles Environmental Corporation, and [KTU+A](#) for San Diego EarthWorks. The project was identified as an Action Item in [The Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment](#), the long-term planning document that identifies ways to improve the watershed. The report can be reviewed [online](#) and the input files can be made available. Please contact the [Rose Creek Watershed Coordinator](#) for more information.

"Sense of Wonder" Project Receives San Diego Gas & Electric Grant

[Friends of Rose Canyon](#) has been leading nature walks to educate students in University City about Rose Canyon and the Rose Creek Watershed for several years. Their "Sense of Wonder" Project is designed to provide experiences for schoolchildren that inspire a lifelong sense of wonder through guided nature walks in nearby canyons. They partnered with



the [Rose Creek Watershed Alliance](#) to reach additional schools in the watershed. An Environmental Champions grant from [San Diego Gas & Electric](#) is currently helping continue this program for University City schools and expanding it to new schools in Clairemont and Pacific Beach.

Students from Curie Elementary School in University City and their parent chaperones learn about Rose Canyon wildlife.

A big thank you goes out to San Diego Gas & Electric for funding this effort to build environmental stewardship throughout the watershed's schools. Forty excursions are already scheduled for this Spring in order to introduce as many students as we can to the beautiful nature in our watershed.

Mike Gotch Memorial Bridge Opens Over Lower Rose Creek

The 260-foot Mike Gotch Memorial Bridge was dedicated on April 20, 2012, honoring the late San Diego City Councilmember and California State Assemblymember who tirelessly promoted the enhancement of Mission Bay. The bridge connects Pacific Beach Drive to the Mission Bay Drive bicycle network over Rose Creek, providing a safe and convenient route for bicyclists and pedestrians to access Mission Bay Park. The \$2.9 million construction project began in May 2011 and was completed in 11 months, on time and within budget.



Bicyclists enjoying the newly connected bicycle path.

The dedication ceremony included remarks from San Diego City Councilmember Kevin Faulconer, former Mission Bay Park Committee Chair Steve Alexander, Campland on the Bay President Michael Gelfand, and City of San Diego Public Works Department Director Tony Heinrichs. After the ribbon-cutting, Councilmember Faulconer led an enthusiastic crowd of over 200 bicyclists, joggers and walkers across the bridge for the first time while riding a blue bicycle. Click [here](#) to view photos from the event.

The opening of this bridge is a milestone for local beach-lovers, who can finally cycle, jog or walk around all of Mission Bay Park. The bridge will provide its users with a new upstream view of Rose Creek, which we hope will increase awareness that the creek is a sensitive habitat that needs our protection. In anticipation of the bridge opening, [San Diego EarthWorks](#) and [Friends of Rose Creek](#) created a proposal to fund a "Rose Creek Festival" to further support the creek's enhanced public visibility. The festival would include outreach, activities, and a community mural-painting project to educate the public about the watershed and its impacts on Mission Bay's water quality. We have not yet been successful in securing a grant to produce this event, but will continue seeking opportunities. Please contact the [Rose Creek Watershed Coordinator](#) if you have any funding suggestions for us.

Spotlight on the San Diego Tracking Team in Rose Canyon

Did you know that San Diego County is home to more plant and animal species than any other comparable region in the United States? A variety of wildlife use the natural areas and canyons within the

Rose Creek Watershed everyday, but they're often hard to see. That's where the [San Diego Tracking Team](#) (SDTT) comes in. This group of volunteers conducts wildlife surveys along trails throughout the County. During their surveys, they identify tracks and other animal signs such as scat. They hope to find species of interest such as the bobcat and coyote, because their presence means that the ecosystem is healthy.

Data from their surveys is important because it has influenced planning decisions throughout the region. For example, SDTT data showing that top predators and other wildlife such as gray foxes often use a particular tunnel to move from one area to another can validate the need to fund maintenance of that infrastructure.

One team conducts regular surveys in [Rose Canyon Open Space Park](#). They have followed raccoon and striped skunk tracks for several hundred yards along the main trail, which proves that humans aren't the only ones that use it. They also often find evidence of the elusive bobcat throughout the canyon.

The Rose Canyon Team is always looking for new volunteers. "For those who love nature, tracking can add a whole new dimension to their enjoyment of the outdoors", says SDTT's President Fred Kramer. "So, take SDTT's one-day class for volunteers and participate in a wildlife survey. It's not only fun, but the data collected supports our conservation activities." Visit their [website](#) to learn more about this organization and how you can get involved.



SDTT members examine a possible animal track.

2012 Love Your Wetlands Day

Organized by the [University of California Natural Reserve System](#) and [Friends of Mission Bay Marshes](#), this annual event took place on February 11 at [Kendall-Frost Mission Bay Marsh Reserve](#) at the mouth of the Rose Creek Watershed. This rare tidal marsh habitat is the last of its kind in Mission Bay, and it needs our help. Volunteers took part in "Love Your Wetlands Day" to help restore the marsh to better support endangered birds such as the Light-footed clapper rail. Volunteer projects included picking up trash, removing invasive plants, and enhancing nesting platforms for birds.



Volunteers give a native California buckwheat more room to grow by removing the encroaching invasive iceplant.

Plans are already in place for the 2013 event. We partnered with the University of California Natural Reserve System, Friends of Mission Bay Marshes, [Friends of Rose Creek](#), [Mission Bay High School](#), [Campland on the Bay](#), and the [City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department](#) to apply for a Community Wetland Restoration Grant from the [Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project](#). If the event gets funded, we plan to make it even bigger and better, with more restoration activities

and more volunteers.

Free Nature Walks in Marian Bear Memorial Park

Experienced guides from the Tri-Canyon Parks (which is comprised of [Rose Canyon Open Space Park](#), [Marian Bear Memorial Park](#), and [Tecolote Canyon Natural Park](#)) give free guided nature walks at the West Entrance of Marian Bear Memorial Park (5250 Regents Road) on the second Sunday of every month at 9:30 AM (meet near the restroom). This is a great opportunity to check out this park's beautiful trails, where you can see giant sycamore trees and other native plants such as California buckwheat.



It's always a beautiful day at Marian Bear Memorial Park.

Links to Watershed News

[Volunteers tackle health of waterways in Creek to Bay Cleanup](#)

[Bill would help San Diego protect open space](#)

Elusive Clapper Rail Chicks Photographed in Watershed

Roy Little, a dedicated volunteer with [Friends of Mission Bay Marshes](#) and amateur photographer, recently captured this endearing shot of endangered Light-footed clapper rail chicks in the [Kendall-Frost Mission Bay Marsh Reserve](#) from his balcony. Catching a glimpse of these shy and elusive birds is a rare treat.

"Our apartment overlooks the marsh, so when we look out the window, the first impression is of wide open space", says Roy. "We have a prime view of the saltwater creek which meanders through the marsh and serves as a source of food (crabs, snails, fish, algae) for shore birds. Clapper rails sound off at dusk, bathe in the creek and catch crabs, Belding's savannah sparrows sing outside our window, and herons and egrets fly by or stop to fish or just hang out. In the winter, flocks of migrating shore birds arrive to feed. Predators such as ospreys and other hawks, raccoons, and occasional coyotes visit for food. Opportunities for photography from my balcony are frequent, but do require telephoto lenses and I need to be ready when the occasion arises. It takes some effort to appreciate such a marsh but the effort is well worthwhile."



Although adult clapper rails are light brown in color, their chicks are jet black.

Thank you, Roy, for the charming reminder of what we're all working hard to protect!

Become a Facebook Fan of the Rose Creek Watershed!

Please become a fan today to receive watershed news, updates, and more nature photography by Roy Little.

Like us on **Facebook** 

Rose Creek Watershed Alliance Convener: [San Diego EarthWorks](#)

San Diego EarthWorks convened the Rose Creek Watershed Alliance in 2004 as an informal organization of stakeholders to help plan the future of the 23,000-acre Rose Creek Watershed. They developed a planning document to encourage watershed improvements called *The Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment*. The Assessment includes recommendations to improve the watershed's biological, cultural and recreational attributes and was accepted by the San Diego City Council in 2008.

Members:

Clairemont Mesa Planning Group
[Clairemont Town Council](#)
[Friends of Mission Bay Marshes](#)
[Friends of Rose Canyon](#)
[Friends of Rose Creek](#)
[Friends of Stevenson Canyon](#)
[Marian Bear Natural Park Committee](#)
[Mission Bay Park Committee](#)
[Nobel Recreation Council](#)
[Pacific Beach Business Improvement District](#)
[Pacific Beach Planning Group](#)
[Rose Canyon Recreation Council](#)
[San Diego Audubon Society](#)
[San Diego Canyonlands](#)
[San Diego County Bicycle Coalition](#)

Partner:

[City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department](#)



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