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News from the Rose Creek Watershed Coordinator

A Project of San Diego EarthWorks

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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.

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 Rose Creek Watershed Coordinator
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 A Project of San Diego EarthWorks



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First Rose Creek Fest a Success

San Diego EarthWorks produced the first-ever **Rose Creek Fest** on February 9 at **Campland on the Bay**. The event was created to raise awareness about Rose Creek and its watershed. Activities and performances were designed to inspire participants to care for the creek and to teach them how they can help with its protection. Over 500 people showed up to learn about their creek and help celebrate the beauty it brings to the communities of Pacific Beach, Clairemont and University City.

City Councilmember Kevin Faulconer kicked off the event with a welcome and introduced the day's first performers. The **Mission Bay Preservationists**, the traditional youth jazz band from Mission Bay High School that has performed in venues throughout the nation, played early New Orleans jazz, blues and swing music. During the band's performance, Councilmember Faulconer visited exhibitors and helped paint a community mural depicting the Rose Creek Watershed.

Mayor Bob Filner made an appearance later in the morning and said a few words on stage about his concern for Rose Creek. After his remarks, he was given a tour of the mouth of Rose Creek and the Mission Bay marshes by Campland on the Bay's President Michael Gelfand and the Rose Creek Watershed Project Manager Ann Van Leer. This was a

unique opportunity to introduce Mayor Filner to many of the issues facing Rose Creek and the projects underway.

Other performances took place on the stage throughout the day. [Dr. Wilderness](#) performed his "Splashtastic!" environmental magic show and was accompanied by Aristotle, the animatronic talking toucan that resembles a creature from the Enchanted Tiki Room. Educators from [The Raptor Institute](#) gave the audience a unique perspective on local birds that can be found in the watershed with a presentation about owl adaptations and a live flight demonstration with a native red-tailed hawk.

Event-goers reported that they learned a lot about the watershed by visiting the exhibits. [Birch Aquarium at Scripps](#) and [Think Blue San Diego](#) taught people about how waterways get polluted. [Friends of Rose Canyon](#) presented preserved specimens of watershed wildlife and the Tri-Canyon Park Rangers showed off their local snakes which are usually on display at the [Tecolote Nature Center](#). [Mission Bay High School](#) teacher Steve Walters' students demonstrated how they monitor water quality in Rose Creek, and art students displayed their artwork inspired by Rose Creek and the Mission Bay marshes.

Some participants took part in organized events during Rose Creek Fest, including volunteering to improve the Mission Bay marshes as part of the annual Love Your Wetlands Day. 47 people removed enough trash to fill a dumpster and 10 invasive mangroves. [Woodstock's Pizza Pacific Beach](#) helped support the efforts by donating free pizza for all of the volunteers.

Thirty people took part in "CreekWalk", a guided tour of Rose Creek arranged by [Friends of Rose Creek](#). Participants learned about Rose Creek history, fish, birds and native plants through one-hour walks along the creekbank. CreekWalkers noted that the Mike Gotch Memorial Bridge was an excellent location to observe nature. In fact, one group observed a Great Blue Heron eating a sandpiper bird from this location. This was a unique behavior to see since the herons usually eat fish, lizards and small rodents.

A major highlight of the day was the Rose Creek Duck Derby presented by Think Blue San Diego, which took place at 2:30 along the shores of Mission Bay. City Council President Pro Tem Sherri Lightner and Councilmember Lorie Zapf were welcomed on the beach, where they read a proclamation declaring February 9, 2013 as "Rose Creek Fest Day". They both gave the official signal to begin the derby by blowing duck whistles. The



Mayor Bob Filner says a few words about Rose Creek on stage.

Photo by Eileen Maher.



Charles Gailband from The Raptor Institute displays a native Great Horned Owl to event-goers.

Photo by Eileen Maher.

ducks were dumped into a floating racetrack by boat. The first 10 ducks to make it across the finish line won prizes such as vacation packages from Campland on the Bay and spa certificates from the [Catamaran Resort](#).



Council President Pro Tem Sherri Lightner and Councilmember Lorie Zapf declare February 9, 2013 as "Rose Creek Fest Day".



Duck Derby volunteers get the contenders ready to enter the racetrack along the shores of Mission Bay.

Overall, the event accomplished its mission to inform watershed residents about the creek and to inspire them to care for it and keep it clean. We were thrilled to have so many elected officials take part and appreciated the opportunity to showcase all of the important work going on in the watershed by community partners.

We would like to thank our event sponsors: Campland on the Bay, Think Blue San Diego, [San Diego Gas & Electric](#), [Land Conservation Brokerage](#), [Recon Environmental](#), and [CBEC Eco-Engineering](#). Many other [local businesses](#) donated items that were distributed to event-goers who participated in a Scavenger Hunt around the event.

More photos are available on the Rose Creek Watershed [Facebook](#) page. You don't need to be a member of Facebook to view the album.

Project Update: Eradicating Watershed Weeds

The Rose Creek Watershed Invasive Plant Control Project has been underway since November 5, 2012, and extensive progress has been made so far to rid the watershed of this environmental problem. Funded by the [State of California's Wildlife Conservation Board](#) and the [Friends of Rose Canyon](#), the goal of this project is to control invasive plants and trees such as pampas grass, eucalyptus trees and brazilian peppertrees throughout the watershed. According to the organization [PlantRight](#), the control of non-native, invasive species costs California \$85 million every year.

[The Chaparral Lands Conservancy](#) is leading the project and hired restoration firm [Recon Environmental](#) to conduct the work. The project began on November 5, 2012, primarily on public lands within the canyons and in some private lands that border natural

areas. To date, the contractors have controlled over 11 acres of pampas grass and over 2,000 invasive trees. All work has recently been suspended to protect nesting birds; however, work will resume later in 2013. Native plants will colonize the areas where invasive plants have been controlled and the Conservancy is pursuing future projects to speed recovery.

This project, which is making significant improvements to the



Dying pampas grass can already be seen throughout Rose Canyon. Soon, most dead vegetation will be removed and new sprouts will be retreated.

In time, native plants will return

watershed's biological and recreational assets, would not be possible without the involvement of a number of community partners who have allowed access to their lands for invasive plant control. The Conservancy and its colleagues wish to thank the following private landowners for participating in our project: [Anheuser Busch](#), [Archstone UTC](#), [Genesee Highlands Association](#), Inland Industries, La Jolla Colony Community Association, Lucera UTC, Pacific Woodlands, [Pennant Village Homeowner Association](#), [Playmor Terrace West](#), Renaissance La Jolla Community Association, [San Diego Data Processing Corporation](#), [San Diego Gas & Electric](#), Santa Fe Street Associates, [Trilogy Real Estate Management](#), [Willmark Communities](#) and several homeowners throughout the watershed. Public landowners [CalTrans](#), [City of San Diego](#), [North County Transit District](#), and the [San Diego Unified School District](#) have also participated in the project.

Additional grants are being identified to fund three more years of treatment. 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.

If you live in the watershed, you can help support our efforts by removing any invasive plants from your property. The [Don't Plant a Pest!](#) brochure recommends many beautiful alternatives. Native alternatives can even save you money because they require less water and fertilizer. Visit the [California Invasive Plant Council](#) or [PlantRight](#) to learn more about invasive plants.



An herbicide mixed with non-toxic blue dye is sprayed onto invasive pampas grass. The blue dye helps contractors identify which plants have been treated.

Canyon Restoration Underway at University City High School

As part of the Rose Creek Watershed Invasive Plant Control Project, [Friends of Rose Canyon](#) donated \$50,000 to remove a grove of invasive eucalyptus trees from the north-facing slope of [University City High School](#) which extends into Rose Canyon. These eucalyptus trees have been weakened by wasps, creating public safety issues due to falling limbs and fire hazards. These trees also cause problems for the environment, because the oil in their leaves suppresses the growth of native plants and soil bacteria and creates "dead zones" where few native plants or animals can live.

[Recon Environmental](#) conducted the work on holidays when schools was not in session and removed 1,124 invasive trees. The view down to the canyon from campus has been significantly improved, and native sycamore trees are now visible to students as they drive into the parking lot and walk to the bus stop. Science classes led by UCHS teacher Tara Howell will help restore the site by replanting it and conduct studies to document the return of native species. Recon Environmental will donate some native plants to help speed recovery, and additional funding for more native plants and other resources is being pursued through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Schoolyard Habitat Program.



This diseased grove of eucalyptus trees was removed to improve Rose Canyon's habitat.



Now that the invasive trees have been removed, native species such as California sycamores and willows will quickly recolonize the area.

Planning a Vision for the Mission Bay Gateway

Pacific Beach resident Scott Chipman and local organizations including [San Diego Audubon Society](#), [Friends of Mission Bay Marshes](#) and the [University of California Natural Reserve System](#) are proposing visions for the area where the mouth of Rose Creek meets Mission Bay known as the Mission Bay Gateway. Their proposals seek to enhance the area's recreational and marine science facilities while also expanding and protecting the Mission Bay marshes, of which only about 2% remain. The goal is to embark upon a planning process that includes the public and the scientific community to develop an environmental, recreational and educational destination in the heart of Mission Bay Park.

Creating wetlands at the mouth of Rose Creek was first envisioned in the Mission Bay Master Plan over 25 years ago and later affirmed in the [Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment](#) in 2005. The development of this vision is timely because long-term City leases in that portion of Mission Bay have or will soon expire. "The pending settlement over the closing of the illegal permanent housing at De Anza Mobile Home Park is standing in the way of fulfilling the Mission Bay Master Plan," explained Chipman. He hopes that having a proposed design will help the citizens of San Diego see the potential for this area.

Momentum is growing to implement the vision that was adopted by the City of San Diego and the Coastal Commission and embedded in the Mission Bay Master Plan decades ago. In fact, San Diego Audubon Society has recently been invited to submit a full proposal for this project to be considered for inclusion in the [Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project](#) Work Plan. If accepted, they would receive technical support and become eligible to apply for state and federal funds to help move the planning process forward. The final plan will be developed by the City of San Diego after extensive public review.

Historically, Rose Creek served as the major seasonal freshwater input to the Mission Bay marshes. This freshwater input and the sediment and nutrients it carries are critical to the health of salt marsh plants such as cordgrass which provide habitat for the endangered Light-footed clapper rail. Creating wetlands at the mouth of Rose Creek would expand the marshes to restore this connection, thereby improving the marsh's functionality. It could also significantly improve the quality of urban runoff flowing into the bay. The vision also could include the establishment of a nature interpretive center, enhanced walking paths and viewing areas, and increased opportunities for academic research by students, including those from nearby Mission Bay High School and UC San Diego.



"Clapper rail on rail", photographed in the Mission Bay marshes by Roy Little.

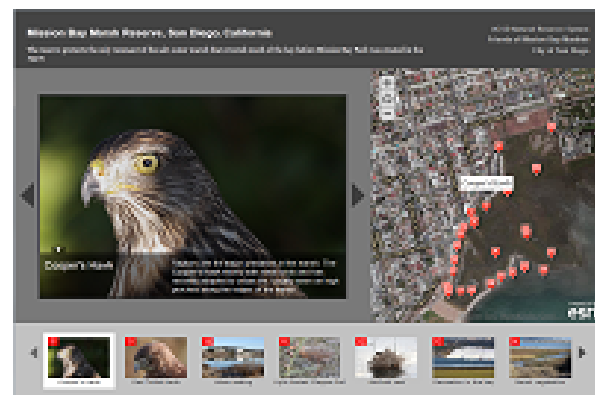
This is a great opportunity to help design the future of this part of Rose Creek, Mission Bay Park, and the surrounding area. We thank Scott Chipman, San Diego Audubon Society and the others involved for jump-starting the conversation. Please visit the websites for the [Mission Bay Gateway Project](#) and [Kendall-Frost Marsh Reserve](#) to learn more and get involved.

Virtual Mission Bay Marsh Kiosk

The [Friends of Mission Bay Marshes](#) have developed an interactive [online map](#) which provides a virtual tour of the marshes located at the mouth of the watershed. Using 30 wildlife photographs taken from different points within the more than 40-acre marsh, the creators tell the marsh's story by describing the plants and animals and discussing threats to its health.

"A significant part of our mission is to get the public involved and interested in the marsh's existence and well-being, so in order to do that, we have to somehow get the public involved. The interactive map is one potential technique for getting to a somewhat larger audience," said Roy Little, one of the map's creators and a founder of Friends of Mission Bay Marshes. He teamed up with Rupert Essinger, an outrigger canoe enthusiast, neighbor and mapping software specialist at [ESRI](#), to create this one-stop virtual information kiosk.

Local conservation organizations can use ESRI's ArcGIS mapping tools for free to create online maps like the Mission Bay Marshes Map Tour. For more examples of these sorts of maps, and for more information on how to make them, please visit



A sample of the Mission Bay Marshes Map Tour.

[ESRI Story Maps](#) see or [email](#) Rupert. You can check out the Mission Bay Marshes Map Tour [here](#) and [email](#) any comments or suggestions for improvements to Friends of Mission Bay Marshes.

Rose Creek Park Update

The stretch of Rose Creek from Highway 52 and I-5, south to Mission Bay Park is a river corridor full of birds and even the occasional bobcat. Native California Live Oak, California Sycamore and Black Sage grow in abundance in this habitat. The Rose Creek Bicycle Path connects this area to Mission Bay Park via Santa Fe Ave and Damon Street and is used by the community for bird watching, dog walking, jogging and cycling. Eventually the bike path will follow the creek and provide pedestrian and bicycle access from University City and Clairemont to the bay and beach without crossing a road.



The Rose Creek Bicycle Path provides many recreational opportunities.

While Rose Creek is a natural connection between three city parks (Rose Canyon Open Space Park, Marian Bear Memorial Park and Mission Bay Park), unfortunately this part of Rose Creek does not have the same legal protection as these three city parks. Rather, this section of the creek has been unmanaged for decades, used by the City as a flood control channel with no additional protection for its natural and recreational values.

Fortunately, City Councilmember Kevin Faulconer has committed to "dedicating" the parcels along Rose Creek from Marian Bear Memorial Park to Mission Bay Park so they cannot be sold by the City without a 2/3 majority vote of San Diegans. While dedicating them will not make them parkland, this is a first step towards recognizing these parcels as important public spaces worth keeping. [Friends of Rose Creek](#) will continue to push to have these parcels officially become part of the City's park system so they can be managed as part of an integrated natural system from the upper watershed (Clairemont and University City) to Mission Bay Park.

While many challenges remain, the Friends of Rose Creek believe that this goal can be achieved through Councilmember Faulconer's continued leadership and support from Council President Pro Tem Sherri Lightner and Councilmember Lorie Zapf (their districts include the upstream communities of University City and Clairemont). Stay tuned for more updates on this exciting project in 2013.

Rose Creek Watershed Community Mural

Members of the community helped paint a mural depicting watershed wildlife at the Rose Creek Fest on February 9. The artwork was designed by local artist Thom Guerra and was painted onto wooden panels which will be mounted on the back of the Mission Bay High School racquetball court wall. The mural will be visible from the Mike Gotch Memorial

Bridge to remind the public of the diverse plants and animals that make their home in the creek and its watershed. [Campland on the Bay](#) is currently storing the panels and has graciously donated the staff time to install the mural at a later date. Stay tuned for further information regarding a public unveiling of this new addition to Rose Creek in 2013.



This part of the mural depicts San Clemente Creek in the eastern portion of the watershed.

Creek to Bay Cleanup

The 11th Annual [Creek to Bay Cleanup](#) is taking place on Saturday, April 27 from 9 AM to Noon. You can register for the "Pacific Beach: Lower Rose Creek at Mission Bay High School" site in Zone 3 [here](#) to help pick up trash that has been carried through the watershed by urban runoff. Meet at [Mission Bay High School](#) and wear closed toed shoes and clothes that can get dirty. Community service hours are available from Friends of Rose Creek.



Free Spring Bird Walks in Rose Canyon Open Space Park provided by [Friends of Rose Canyon](#)

Experience the amazing sights and sounds of spring birds... some recently arrived from their winter homes in the tropics, some year-round residents, and some that have wintered here and will migrate north for the summer.

Adults and children over the age of 9 are welcome. All bird walks take place from 8:00 - 10:00 AM on the following dates in 2013:

Saturday, April 20
 Sunday, April 28
 Sunday, May 5
 Saturday, May 11

Click [here](#) for more information including the meetup location.

Become a Facebook Fan of the Rose Creek Watershed

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

Like us on Facebook 

Rose Creek in the News

The Friends of Rose Creek have compiled several articles about Rose Creek that have been in the news lately. [Click here](#) to view the stories.

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](#)

Partners:

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