



# 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.

Kelly Makley

Rose Creek Watershed Coordinator  
[www.rosecreekwatershed.org](http://www.rosecreekwatershed.org)

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## First Rose Creek Planned Improvements Meeting a Success

On June 26th, Ann Van Leer and Kelly Makley organized a meeting with property owners from the Lower Rose Creek area to discuss a variety of issues involving the creek. The purpose of the meeting was to update the group on several past, current and future projects taking place in the area south of the I-5/SR-52 interchange which includes Morena Boulevard, Santa Fe Street and Damon Avenue in eastern Pacific Beach.

Updates were provided on SANDAG's [Rose Creek Bikeway Project](#) and the [San Diego County Bicycle Coalition's](#) Rose Creek Watershed Trail Connections Project. John Stofleth, a hydrologist from [cbec eco-engineering](#), provided an overview of his findings from the [Rose Creek Watershed Wetland, Riparian and Water Quality Restoration Opportunities Analysis](#). He explained to the group that the prevalence of non-native vegetation in the creek is affecting the creek's ability to minimize the impact of floods. Future severe rainstorms could result in significant flooding impacts to the nearby properties along the banks if the non-native plants are left to flourish. Click [here](#) to view John Stofleth's presentation. Projects like the Restoration Opportunities Analysis help implement recommendations of the [Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment](#).

Kelly provided an overview of the developing [Rose Creek Safe, Clean and Green Program](#). This program would provide ongoing maintenance services to clean up trash, encampments and invasive plants in the creekbed to improve flood control, environmental health, public safety and

community vitality in the area. A variety of funding mechanisms are being analyzed, including private endowments, Community Facilities Districts, and Maintenance Assessment Districts.

The group of property owners appreciated learning the information and expressed an interest in forming a more formal group to discuss issues and stay involved in development projects in the area. Ann and Kelly are identifying ways to facilitate this group in order to continue momentum towards improving Rose Creek. A second property owner meeting is now being organized.



Illegal dumps are a common sight at the end of Santa Fe Street. An ongoing funding source for maintenance could help solve this problem.

## Rose Creek Bikeway Project Update

The [Rose Creek Bikeway Project](#) is managed by the [San Diego Association of Governments](#) (SANDAG). The project is part of the planned Coastal Rail Trail - a 40-mile system of multi-use paths extending from the City of Oceanside to Santa Fe Depot in Downtown San Diego. The project will improve an important connection between points to the north, such as Sorrento Valley, University City, and UC San Diego, and points to the south, such as Mission Bay, Pacific Beach, Mission Valley and Downtown San Diego.

The Rose Creek Bikeway Path will begin at the north end of Santa Fe Street and connect to the existing bike path at Damon Street and Mission Bay Drive. Chris Carterette, SANDAG's project manager, has proposed a bike facility that includes approximately one mile of Class I path that will be separate from motor vehicle traffic to the south, with the remaining approximate one mile of path to the north sharing the roadway potentially as a two-way bicycle track on the west side of the street or as buffered bicycle lanes (Enhanced Class II). A Class I path spanning the entire area was suggested in Recommendation 2.5.3 of the [Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment](#) to separate cyclists and pedestrians from vehicular traffic for safety purposes. However, difficulties arose in obtaining enough right of way within the rail corridor to achieve this goal.



Cyclists along Santa Fe Street currently share the road with vehicular traffic and streetside parking.

SANDAG held a public workshop on June 20th at Mission Bay High School to provide input on this draft proposal. At least 30 stakeholders representing cyclists, property owners and environmentalists took part in the workshop. Charles "Muggs" Stoll, Director of Land Use and Transportation Planning at SANDAG, kicked off the meeting and told the group that individual bicycle path segments like this one play an important role in the bigger picture of master planning to increase San Diegans'

transportation options. They also provide other benefits, such as improved public health and reduced transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Participants were asked to migrate among three map tables to provide specific comments on the southern, central and northern portions of the bikeway. SANDAG planners recorded their comments and questions as the participants examined the proposed maps.

Representatives from [Friends of Rose Creek](#) expressed concern over lighting and stormwater runoff into the creek. Several cyclists who regularly use the route were interested in safety precautions related to sharing the on-road portion of the bikeway with vehicular traffic in the northern portion. Property owners asked how the proposed bikeway would impact streetside parking for their business tenants.

The path's connection with east-west bicycle and pedestrian access to Rose Canyon Open Space Park and Marian Bear Memorial Park was also discussed. Fortunately, [San Diego EarthWorks](#) (SDEW) received a grant from the [California Coastal Conservancy](#) to investigate the feasibility of placing an east/west bicycle and pedestrian bridge at the confluence of Rose and San Clemente creeks (beneath the I-5/SR-52 interchange). This bridge would carry trail users between San Clemente (Marian Bear) and Rose canyons and the Rose Canyon Bicycle Path by crossing the rail corridor under the freeways. SDEW asked the [San Diego County Bicycle Coalition](#) (SDCBC) to take the lead on the planning for this bridge and that project is now underway. This bridge connection over the railroad tracks was identified as Recommendation 2.5.5 in the [Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment](#).



SANDAG's proposed alignment of the Rose Creek Bikeway. [Click to enlarge.](#)

The SANDAG project team also continues to examine east-west connection options and intends to include a conceptual plan for one as part of the current effort. The most feasible connection for the SANDAG project team to pursue appears to be a bridge crossing the creek and rail corridor at Jutland Drive. The SDCBC supports a connection at Jutland Drive, but is still urging SANDAG to add the additional connection beneath the I-5/SR-52 interchange. Riders and pedestrians in western Rose Canyon and Marian Bear Memorial Park cannot physically get to Jutland Drive to safely cross the rail corridor. A bridge at Jutland Drive will serve bikeway users in southern Clairemont and Pacific Beach, while a bridge at the interchange would serve the community to the north.

SANDAG planners are examining the input from the June 20th meeting as they progress to the next phase of the project. Work will begin on preliminary engineering and environmental permits after the current public outreach and conceptual design phase is complete. Then the project goes into

final engineering phase, is put out for competitive bidding, and constructed. The project team hopes to have the bikeway under construction in 2015 and open to the public in 2016.

Visit the [website](#) for further information and contact [Chris Carterette](#) at SANDAG with any questions or to receive email notification of upcoming public workshops.



A proposed map of alternate locations of the bridge that could safely transport cyclists and pedestrians over the rail corridor beneath the I-5/SR-52 interchange. Click to enlarge

**Please attend SANDAG's next public workshop to share your input on both the north-south bikeway and the importance of east-west connections:**

**Thursday, August 15  
6:00 - 8:00 PM  
Mission Bay High School Library (2475 Grand Avenue).**

We hope to see you there.

## Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Update

The [Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project](#) will extend Trolley service from Santa Fe Depot in Downtown San Diego to the University City community, serving major activity centers such as UCSD and Westfield UTC. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2015, with service starting in 2018.

The route is proposed to travel in existing railroad corridors alongside I-5 all the way to Gilman Drive through the Rose Creek Watershed. A draft [environmental review document](#) was recently released and was available for public comment between May 17-July 17, 2013. The document identifies potential impacts that may result from the implementation of the project and proposed mitigation measures to address impacts.



The proposed map of the Midcoast Transit Corridor Project. Click to enlarge.

Several members of the Rose Creek Watershed Alliance analyzed this document and provided comments to SANDAG. [Friends of Rose Creek](#) were concerned that not enough detail was provided regarding the impact of activities of construction, main and ancillary transportation operation, management and environmental agency approvals and oversight, and stakeholder involvement in setting and monitoring benchmarks. They were concerned that the proposed mitigation measures outlined in the report were insufficient to remedy the impacts.

[Friends of Rose Canyon](#) focused their attention on the area north of SR-52 at the

west end of the park. They encouraged SANDAG to install a high earthen berm along the east side of the rail corridor to reduce impacts to the canyon. They suggest the berm be at least 12 feet tall and vegetated with native plants to diminish noise, improve the natural view, and protect wildlife by directing animals away from any attempts to cross the rail corridor. They also requested that all mitigation measures take place within the Rose Creek Watershed.

Additionally, the [San Diego County Bicycle Coalition](#) (SDCBC) wrote comments supporting enhancement of east-west bicycle and pedestrian trail connections in the corridor through construction of a bicycle and pedestrian bridge at the confluence of Rose and San Clemente creeks beneath the I-5/SR-52 interchange. It is currently illegal to cross the existing railroad tracks, but trail users in both canyons cross the tracks on a daily basis to move throughout the watershed and to Mission Bay. With the construction of the this new rail route, key portions of the corridor will become physically inaccessible to pedestrians and cyclists due to associated fencing. The SDCBC recommended that SANDAG construct an east-west bridge beneath the I-5/SR-52 interchange to carry cyclists and pedestrians over the tracks and creek to link the trail systems in both canyons to Mission Bay Park. As referenced above, the SDCBC is in the process of completing technical studies, design and stakeholder coordination for this potential project with funding from the [California Coastal Conservancy](#). SANDAG has not taken a position on the construction of this bridge as suggested by the SDCBC and recommended in the [Rose Creek Watershed Opportunities Assessment](#).

Click below to view the full comment letters from:

[Friends of Rose Canyon](#)

[Friends of Rose Creek](#)

[San Diego County Bicycle Coalition](#)

The public comment period is currently over, but it is still timely to email [Leslie Blanda](#), SANDAG's Project Development Program Manager, in support of the comments submitted by Rose Creek Watershed Alliance members. Stay tuned for further updates on this significant project.

## Sense of Wonder Program Continues in Rose Canyon

[Friends of Rose Canyon](#) has just wrapped up their busiest year yet providing nature exploration programs in Rose Canyon Open Space Park and Marian Bear Memorial Park. Friends of Rose Canyon conducted 95 nature exploration events involving over 3,000 people. The participants spanned all ages, the majority were watershed residents. Many were introduced to their neighborhood canyons for the first time.

Thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the [San Diego Gas & Electric Environmental Champions Program](#), Friends of Rose Canyon provided free guided nature exploration programs in Rose Canyon and Marian Bear Park for students from Spreckels, Curie, Hawthorne, Whitman, Doyle and Bayview Terrace elementary schools and University City High School. For many participating students, teachers, and parents, this is a rare opportunity to get up close and personal with local wildlife. Six of the schools the program reaches are classified as Title 1 schools,



Students from Whitman Elementary

meaning that more than half of the students are from low-income families.

in Clairemont look for wildlife in San Clemente Creek (Marian Bear Memorial Park)

"Getting out in the canyons to conduct this type of outreach plays an important role in protecting our watershed," said Debby Knight, Executive Director of Friends of Rose Canyon, and one of its founders. "Bringing people into the canyons to experience their beauty and encounter nature close up helps inspire them to want to save these protected natural areas." Debby and the other naturalists who lead these canyon explorations teach participants not only about the plants and animals in the canyons, but also about how these canyons form the Rose Creek Watershed. They also discuss the threats from urban runoff and non-native plants, and how protecting the remaining undeveloped land helps preserve the watershed.

A big thanks to [San Diego Gas & Electric](#) for making this program possible. Friends of Rose Canyon and the Rose Creek Watershed Alliance have already submitted a joint application for continued funding in 2014. You can join Friends of Rose Canyon for free on their [website](#). You'll receive their emails about nature exploration programs for the general public and volunteer native plant restoration projects.



Students from University City explore an insect inside a magnified bug box with Debby Knight, Executive Director of Friends of Rose Canyon

## Endangered Bird Release at Mouth of Watershed

Provided by Lisa Cox, US Fish & Wildlife Service

Seven healthy 12 to 14-week old light-footed clapper rails were released into the [Kendall-Frost Mission Bay Marsh Reserve](#) on June 13, 2013 to further strengthen the population of the federally endangered marsh bird. Several more releases are planned for the 2013 season based on the number of chicks born so far this year in captivity. Volunteers affixed bands to the birds' legs to identify them and then transported the birds across the marsh in protective carriers. The birds were safely released into the native cordgrass habitat that grows at the mouth of Rose Creek.



A clapper rail shows off its leg bands, which help researchers track the program's success. Photo by Roy Little.

The birds are reared through a captive breeding program. This program team is the result of an extensive partnership between several volunteers and agencies. Representatives from [Friends of Mission Bay Marshes](#), [US Fish &](#)

[Wildlife Service](#), [Sea World](#), and [Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges](#) helped with the release. Other agencies that help raise the chicks and prepare them for release include the [Living Coast Discovery Center](#), [San Diego Zoo Safari Park](#), the [Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy](#) and the [California Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).

"We like releasing rails at Kendall-Frost not only because of the habitat, but because of the community involvement", said Charles Gailband, the program's Captive Breeding Coordinator. "It's fun to have this Reserve as a part of the breeding program where the neighbors that surround the marsh actually care to get involved and report things they see to help the rails. Also, these volunteers help maintain and restore the habitat for all wildlife there such as ospreys, shorebirds, herons, and egrets."

Most clapper rails in the breeding program incubate and rear their chicks naturally, but some eggs require artificial incubation and are reared by hand. All chicks are transferred at 60 days old to pens in the [San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge](#) where they live in conditions that mimic a natural marsh. The chicks are monitored during their time in the pens to ensure they develop natural foraging and survival skills before they are released to the wild.

While the success rate of release is not precisely known due to the elusive nature of these birds, the population as a whole is doing very well. As of 2012, a record of 520 pairs was recorded throughout southern California. Annual increases between the years of 2002 and 2007 suggest that restoration and management (including captive breeding) are contributing to the recovery of this endangered bird. Hopefully the 2013 season will continue to bring high numbers.

Although their numbers are at a record high, the clapper rails are not considered to be recovered. The birds that reside in the Mission Bay Marshes depend on the health of the Rose Creek Watershed for their survival. Urban runoff from University City, Clairemont and Pacific Beach that flows into Rose and San Clemente creeks carry pollution that can impact the birds' quality of food or their ability to find it underwater. You can help protect them by participating in cleanup events throughout the watershed or by donating your time to Friends of Mission Bay Marshes to take part in their monthly volunteer work events to help improve the marsh.

Visit the Facebook Photo Albums for [Rose Creek Watershed](#) and [San Diego National](#)



The seven clapper rails are transported across the marsh in protective blue carriers.

Photo by Roy Little.



Both clapper rails and volunteers rejoice as the endangered birds enter their new home.

Photo by Roy Little.

[Wildlife Refuge Complex](#) to view more photos from this exciting day. You do not need to be a member of Facebook to view the albums.

## Save the Date for 29th Annual Coastal Cleanup Day

The 29th Annual [Coastal Cleanup Day](#) is taking place on Saturday, September 21 from 9 AM to Noon. If you would like to participate, we encourage you to register for the "Pacific Beach: Rose Creek" site hosted by [Friends of Rose Creek](#) in Zone 3 [here](#). You can help improve our watershed by picking 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 Summer Evening Walks in Rose Canyon Open Space Park provided by Friends of Rose Canyon

"We hope to see sunsets, stars and planets  
Watch the full moon rise  
See daytime birds go to roost  
Glimpse a barn owl gliding by  
Find flowers that open at night"

-Debby Knight, Executive Director  
Friends of Rose Canyon

Adults and children are welcome, and you can leave at any time. All walks take place from **6:45 - 8:15 PM** on the following dates in 2013:

### Tuesday, August 20

One spotting scope will be set up to view the full moon rise at 7:06 PM.

### Sunday, August 25

One spotting scope will be set up to view the dark night skies with no moon.

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



Barn owls are one of the many nocturnal animals you may see on a Summer Evening Walk with Friends of Rose Canyon naturalists.

Photo by Roy Little.

## 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 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:**

City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department  
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