



**TO:** Interested Persons  
**FROM:** Rich Marovich, Streamkeeper (SK)  
**DATE:** October 8, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Agenda for Thursday, October 8, 2014 Discussion Meeting of the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee – Monticello Room, Solano Irrigation District, 810 Vaca Valley Parkway, Suite 201, Vacaville from 3:30 to 5:00 PM.

No.	Time	Item
1	10	<b>Public Comment:</b> The public may comment on matters pertaining to Putah Creek.
2	5	<b>Approval of Minutes:</b> Minutes of the September meeting will be reviewed.
3	60	<b>Nursery Ops Updates:</b> SK will give a report on nursery operations.
		<b>Riparian Diversion Updates:</b> Mark Snyder will report on riparian diversions.
		<b>Interagency Comm. Updates:</b> SK will report on interagency communications.
		<b>Patterned Calendar</b>
4	5	<b>Correspondence:</b> LPCCC will discuss any significant correspondence.
5	10	<b>Member Reports:</b> LPCCC members will have an opportunity to report.
<p><b>Next Meeting:</b> The LPCCC will hold a decision meeting on Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup> at the Davis Police Department Community Room: 2700 Fifth Street from 3:30 to 5:00 PM</p>		

2015-10-8 LPCCC agenda.doc



**L O W E R   P U T A H   C R E E K   C O O R D I N A T I N G   C O M M I T T E E**

**TO:** Interested Persons  
**FROM:** Rich Marovich, Streamkeeper  
**DATE:** September 10, 2015  
**SUBJECT:** Minutes of Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee Decision Meeting  
 Thursday, September 10 at the Davis Police Department Community Room: 2600  
 Fifth Street, Davis: 3:30 - 5:00 PM

No.	Item	
1	<b>Public Comment:</b> There were no public comments.	
2	<b>Approval of Minutes:</b> Minutes of the August meeting were approved.	
3	<b>California EcoRestore</b> – David Okita gave a presentation on habitat restoration for lands in the Yolo Bypass, Delta and Suisun Marsh.	
4	<b>Winters Putah Creek Park:</b> Thomas Pate explained that SCWA is working with USACE and the Central Valley Flood Protection Board to complete outstanding permit requirements and staff of each agency has been helpful.	
5	The LPCCC reviewed the Grant/Project Budget	<b>Patterned Calendar</b>
	The LPCCC approved the Annual Report	
	Mark Snyder provided an update on riparian diversions – no flow violations this year.	
6	<b>Member Reports:</b> Carrie said PCC will lead creek cleanup efforts on Coastal Cleanup Day – September 19 <sup>th</sup> and has taken over the Water Ways program from UCD and received a grant from Yolo WRA to lead nursery events. Cindy said that federal, state and local agencies are cooperating on an integrated strategy for the Yolo Bypass. Andrew mentioned UCD collaboration with LPCCC on a Prop 1 planning proposal. Harold noted that the Winters Car Bridge is nearing completion.	
7	<b>Correspondence:</b> No correspondence to report.	
8	<b>Next Meeting:</b> The LPCCC will hold a discussion meeting of the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee on Thursday, October 8 <sup>th</sup> at the Monticello Room, Solano Irrigation District, 810 Vaca Valley Parkway, Suite 203, Vacaville.	

Attendees: Harold Anderson, Andrew Fulks, Chris Rose, Thomas Pate, JD Kluge, Dennis Kilkenny, Sean McNamara, Roland Sanford, Carrie Shaw, Cindy Tuttle, Stephen Sawyer. Guests: David Okita Staff: Rich Marovich, Mark Snyder  
 M:\2015-09 LPCCC.minutes

810 Vaca Valley Parkway, Suite 203, Vacaville, California 95688 ♦ Phone: (530) 902-1794 ♦ Fax: (707) 451-6099  
[http:// www.watershedportals.org/lpccc](http://www.watershedportals.org/lpccc)

*The Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee consists of:  
 Cities of Davis, Fairfield, Suisun City, Vacaville, Vallejo and Winters; Counties of Solano and Yolo;  
 Solano and Yolo Riparian Landowners; Maine Prairie Water District; Solano County Water Agency;  
 Solano Irrigation District; Putah Creek Council and University of California, Davis*

# THE DAVIS enterprise

YOLO COUNTY NEWS



Putah Creek has been dramatically altered by humans. This 1955 photo shows banks stripped of vegetation and a then-derelict percolation dam spanning the creek. The dam was removed as part of Phase 1 of the Winters Putah Creek Restoration Project. Courtesy photo

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## Columns

# Habitat restoration is a community-driven process

By Andrew Fulks

From page A6 | September 29, 2015

By Andrew Fulks, Eric Larsen, Peter Moyle, Chris Rose, Melanie Truan and Herb Wimmer

Recent opinion pieces in The Davis Enterprise and Winters Express have questioned both the need for, and efficacy of, habitat restoration along Lower Putah Creek, particularly the last phase of a channel realignment and habitat restoration project in Winters Putah Creek Park.

As professional and volunteer stakeholders involved in restoring Putah Creek over the past 15 or more years, we want to set the record straight on its habitat restoration projects. Our hope is that interested readers will become involved in current and future projects, as all projects to date have been community-driven. The long-term health of this treasured resource depends on community input and support.

### A history lesson

Most of the landscape of the Central Valley has been altered by humans. What may seem like a "natural" or "wild" creek in some places actually has a long history of use, abuse and manipulation.

The Winters Putah Creek Park project area was not a shaded narrow stream before the channel realignment project. Rather, a derelict concrete percolation dam and sewage aeration ponds filled in former gravel pits with shallow, open water.

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Speak out

F. Wilson Smith

Mary Rita Moncrief

A walk down memory lane, to Monticello

On the whole, the park was one of the most degraded reaches, heavily impacted by the dam, sewer pond, gravel pit, lack of floodplains, exotic invasive plants (eucalyptus, blackberry and giant reed) and littered with trash. Much of the gravel used to build the city of Winters and UC Davis was excavated from the creek nearly 100 years ago.

Those factors, coupled with the significant reduction in average and peak stream flows due to the construction of Monticello Dam, impaired the creek ecosystem, including fish habitat. This change led to a decrease in diversity of plants and animals along the creek, particularly in the Winters area.

### Community involvement

We are fortunate to live in an active community engaged in protecting and enhancing its local environment. The Putah Creek Council, a local nonprofit, was the first organization in the area formed specifically around community involvement in protecting and enhancing Putah Creek. Since then, new stakeholder and community groups, including the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee and the Winters Putah Creek Committee, have helped shape projects along the creek.

Scientific assessments and a community outreach and planning process, which began in 2002, resulted in the Lower Putah Creek Watershed Management Action Plan and a list of priority projects. At the top of the projects list is Winters Putah Creek Park. The city of Winters revised its Creek Master Plan in 2005, following an additional series of public meetings, to include an ecological restoration plan within the channel.

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Objectives of the restoration plan included re-creating floodplains in the channel to increase riparian habitat and wildlife movement, reducing the size of the channel to match current stream flows, and improving passage and water quality for salmon and rainbow trout.

Two professional geomorphologists and river restoration experts, Rick Poore and Eric Larsen, were involved at every stage of the planning, including construction. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife reviewed the proposal and environmental documents and approved the plan. Biological consultant Ken Davis and several UC Davis wildlife biologists participated in extensive pre- and post-project monitoring.

### Habitat restoration is a process

One question we frequently receive is why it takes so long for restoration projects to look better than before. We have found that, on average, a restoration project on Putah Creek takes about five years before it really starts to look successful. This delay is because some plants grow more slowly than others, but also because conditions like our current four-year drought can impact young plants and prevent larger creek flows from depositing nutrient-rich sediments onto the floodplains.

Adaptive management means we monitor success and adapt our response accordingly. In the case of the recent project in Winters, we will continue to monitor plant survival on the new floodplain and modify the floodplain if necessary to improve the establishment of riparian habitat. Some of the soils may need treatment, for example.

The soils used to replace the previously mined floodplain, taken from the Putah Creek alluvial fan, consist of about 50 percent river gravel and 50 percent sandy clay loam. Using the principle of adaptive management, we are exploring methods of adding organic material to improve water infiltration and root penetration. These actions exemplify how we continue to learn how Putah Creek functions and how to successfully re-establish native plants.

Habitat restoration, especially in waterways, can be visually jarring during and after construction. Long-term, however, these projects will serve to create an environment where the ecosystem can thrive. Post-restoration, native trout are now found 6 miles farther downstream; Chinook salmon spawned in Winters for the first time in many years. These improvements are entirely a result of the first two phases of the project.

To learn more about how the project is progressing and how you can become involved in planning and stewarding Putah Creek, contact the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee ([www.putahcreek.org](http://www.putahcreek.org)) or Putah Creek Council ([www.putahcreekcouncil.org](http://www.putahcreekcouncil.org)). Together, we will make the creek better for the fish, wildlife and ourselves.

— Andrew Fulks is a representative on the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee and director of the UC Davis Putah Creek Riparian Reserve; Eric Larsen is a geomorphologist in the department of human ecology at UC Davis; Peter Moyle is a fisheries biologist with the UCD Center for Watershed Science; Chris Rose is a member of the Putah Creek Council board of directors; Melanie Truan is an ecologist with the UCD department of wildlife, fish and conservation biology; and Herb Wimmer is a landowner representative on the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee.

3 Comments

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 **Robert D. McDonald** · Crater High School  
 You will disrupt the environment if you do this. Please leave the animals alone  
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 **Sally Brown**  
 It would be fabulous if the LPCCC hosted a forum to allow community input in the proposed destruction of beaver habitat in the Winters Putah Creek Nature Park. The City of Winters has cancelled the last two of the bimonthly Winters Putah Creek Committee meetings, which normally would be the forum for public input. Let's have a real dialogue about this! Let's make the Winters Putah Creek Nature Park better for all wildlife, not just fish!  
 Like · Reply · Oct 1, 2015 7:37am

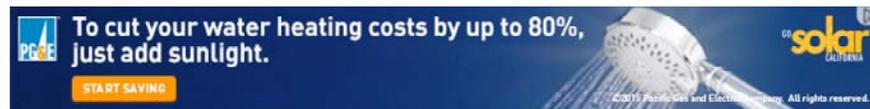
 **Linda Hirst** · Winters, California  
 When the project began, no one anticipated the jewel that would be created in the Phase 3 area. Wildlife such as otter, beaver, and heron can be seen close-up from an asphalt path which allows easy visual access for children, elderly, and disabled alike. Beaver are building dens in the banks and raising families. Even with current low flows, they can be seen at sunset. If you move the entire creek a few hundred feet from the asphalt path, narrow the creek, and provide walking paths at creek level on both sides, wildlife will face intrusion and harassment from people and dogs, and are unlik... [See More](#)  
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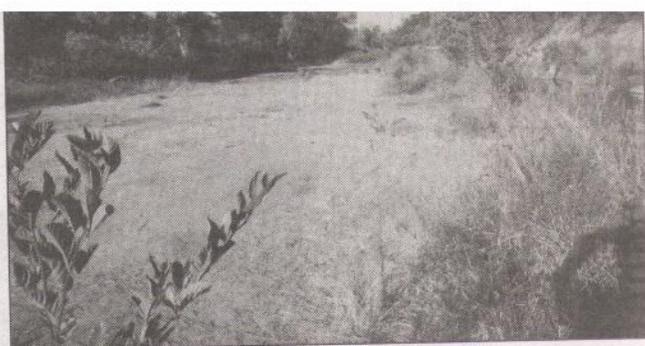
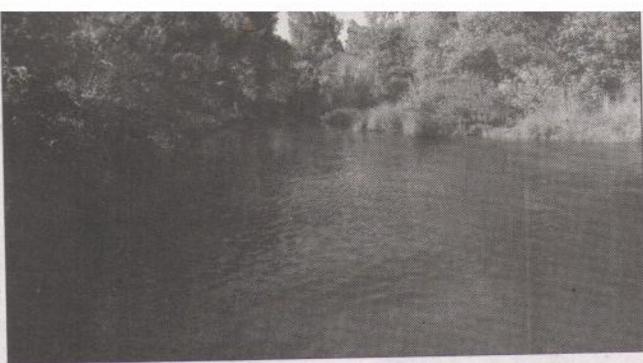


**Andrew Fulks**

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COURTESY PHOTOS

These photos show Putah Creeek before, left, and after the restoration project.

# How to wreck an ecosystem

By Glen Holstein

SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE

Jan. 28, 1986, was the fateful day Christa McAuliffe, the first teacher astronaut, rode upward in Challenger space shuttle launched in sub-freezing temperatures numerous engineers warned it couldn't survive.

But like an encounter between Dilbert and his pointy-haired boss, NASA managers after the process of planning the launch weren't about to listen to those viewed as geeky underlings. We know the rest. On that fateful frosty morning Challenger exploded causing the loss of Christa and all hands before ever reaching space, and it was left for Nobel laureate Richard Feynman to demonstrate what happened.

Rubber O-rings holding the shuttle together shatter in ice water like wine glasses vibrating from a singer's high note.

Such inflexible bureaucratic process has caused many other unintended disasters, from the guns of August 1914 to Bush Junior's invasion of Iraq. By consensus each was a grand idea — until it wasn't. It even happens in our own back yard. Our own great fish biologist Peter Moyle and his colleague Michael Marchetti found the Winters reach of

## Commentary

Putah Creek was the richest part of the lower creek in native fish and suggested this was because of "irregularities or a compression of the natural longitudinal gradient."

These "irregularities" are apparently what inspired Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee's "streamkeeper" Rich Marovich to develop a scheme to smooth them out so the creek flowed more like textbooks said it should. A good rule in such "restorations" is the medical one of "do no harm," but to do that you have to know what you're doing. Unlike doctors, "restorationists" don't have to be certified. Anybody can call themselves one.

Rich was very good at getting taxpayers to foot the bill to pay roughly \$6 million for implementing his "stream restoration" plan, but unfortunately it's been a disaster for the creek. The first to go were over a hundred old growth native riparian trees, each one critical to the carbon economy of the creek and ultimately the planet. They grow much faster than other kinds of California native vegetation because they're watered by the creek instead of rain and thus can take full advantage of

long hot summer days to grow quickly while most of our other native plants are dormant riparian trees shade streams providing the cool temperatures fish need, but they do far more.

Since ours lose their leaves in winter, carbon from their summer super growth spurt falls into creeks like Putah to provide the food chain base for everything living in and along them from fish to otters to migrant song birds. Plants pull carbon out of the air as they grow so when Marovich destroyed the super-fast growing riparian forest at Winters, he also erased the efforts of many to reduce their carbon footprint.

Rich fully intended to regrow the riparian trees he destroyed and consequently helped organize many idealistic volunteers to plant new ones which after four years should be a thriving young forest by now. Instead almost all withered and died so that the once shady riparian forest at Winters is now a barren plain where nothing grows but weeds. What Rich didn't know was that in anaerobic riparian environments, the exotic clay fill the project calls for creates such a toxic brew by mobilizing high levels of reduced iron, manganese, zinc and other elements that riparian trees can no longer grow.

An area project that also promised a riparian forest despite similar conditions is still barren after 35 years.

Of course since restorationists aren't certified Rich didn't need to know about such fine points of geochemistry when he started his project, but now he knows better after they were called to his attention by soil scientists. All this damage was done in the first two phases of a three-phase project, but a significant part of the riparian zone at Winters is still intact.

Incredibly, Rich now wants to destroy this in a Project Phase III using the same methods that were so devastating in Phases I and II. Like the NASA managers who sent Christa and Challenger to their doom, Rich's attitude mirrors the classic DMV wrong answer about how not to enter a busy street: "Sound horn to clear traffic and full speed ahead!" Fortunately a brave little band of citizens called Winters Friends of Putah Creek is now standing up to the juggernaut that's already destroyed so much of the creek they love. You can help them by emailing [saveputahcreek@gmail.com](mailto:saveputahcreek@gmail.com).

— Glen Holstein is a botanist for the California Native Plant Society Sacramento Valley Chapter