

City of Winters Natural Resources Commission

Mission Statement

The Winters Natural Resources Commission considers and promotes the scientific study, preservation, conservation, and enhancement of geologic, hydrologic, ecologic, biologic, atmospheric and other natural resources that are important to the City of Winters and provides expertise to the City Council, other advisory commissions, and staff.

Description

The City of Winters Natural Resources Commission brings together representatives of the public who have interest and expertise in the natural resources that influence, are impacted by, and are important to the City of Winters. The Commission advises the City Council and other entities that require information, advice, and guidance related to natural resources.

Examples of natural resources in this context include, but are not limited to:

- Geologic and Hydrogeologic resources
- Hydrologic resources
- Biologic resources
- Ecologic resources
- Atmospheric resources
- Fire-related resources

Guiding principles

The Commission serves the City and its organizations as a source of scientific and technological expertise. The Commission considers questions from other City organizations, and serves as a source of information to City organizations.

Structure and membership

The Winters City Council established the Winters Natural Resources Commission on September 7, 2021, with Resolution No. 2021-55. The Commission is a successor to the Winters Putah Creek Committee. The six members of the Commission are residents of Winters or nearby unincorporated areas with interest or expertise in natural resources. Commissioners are appointed by Council for four-year terms. The City Council, Planning Commission, and Climate Action Commission each appoint a non-voting liaison to the Natural Resources Commission. The Natural Resources Commission will appoint a non-voting liaison to the Climate Action Commission once the Climate Action Commission is empaneled.

Just as the Winters Putah Creek Committee received updates from other organizations doing work in and related to the Winters Putah Creek Nature Park, the Winters Natural Resources Commission receives updates from City and outside organizations engaging with the resources within the Commission's purview. The Commission may receive presentations related to specific projects or to enhance the Commission's knowledge about resources. The Commission is charged with making recommendations to City

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Council and Planning Commission to protect, preserve, conserve, and enhance the city's natural resources.

Initial Workplan Proposal 3/15/2022

In meetings held between September 2021 and February 2022, the Natural Resources Commission discussed initial topics and projects that the Commission might work on.

These include:

- Continued monitoring of Putah Creek aquatic and riparian ecosystems with emphasis on possible fish migration challenges.
- Updating the City's master tree list, promoting the Tree Rebate Program, and doing community outreach about tree maintenance.
- Obtaining an air quality monitor from Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District for Winters, and Winters-specific air quality forecasts from the District.
- Dry Creek native planting opportunities to help with erosion issues, promoting resident education and outreach, and enlisting neighborhood volunteers.
- Resilience to wildfires, including options within the City.
- Vegetation management options for Winters Putah Creek Nature Park.
- Light pollution impacts and remedies.
- Review and make recommendations to the municipal code and City policies that are relevant to our areas of concern; for example, the Commission could make recommendations to the Planning Commission that the Design Review Committee reviews.
- Water supply and water recycling, with emphasis on City drought preparedness and groundwater monitoring, and stormwater management.

The Commission decided that a focused, short-term undertaking would be most appropriate for an initial effort, and chose review and update of the City's tree documents and policies.

City of Winters Urban Forestry and Master Tree List

Problem Statement: The City and residents use the City's master tree list to select the most appropriate trees to plant based on setting and purpose. However, it has not been updated since February 7, 2006 and needs to be updated. In addition, the City lacks a comprehensive maintenance program for trees in the control zone, and the catalog of historic trees has not been updated in many years.

1. The master tree list currently:
 - Lacks sufficient native tree species choices.
 - Contains tree species inappropriately sized for proposed location.
 - Contains tree species that require significant water.
 - Lacks sufficient drought-resistant species choices.
 - Does not plan for the changing climate.

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- Does not discuss flammability of various tree species.
- 2. The City offers a rebate to off-set the cost of a tree that is planted in a control zone, which is defined in relationship to the sidewalk location. There is no comprehensive program for maintenance of trees within the control zone.
- 3. The City developed a catalog of historic trees. This list has not been updated in many years and several historic trees have reportedly been removed over the years without notification to the City.

The Natural Resources Commission proposes:

- Reviewing all City documents related to trees.
- Reviewing tree policies from nearby cities and other cities of similar size and climate.
- Interviewing City staff or former City staff knowledgeable about the City's tree policies and programs.
- Seeking advice from and presentations by local arborists and other native tree and plant specialists.
- Addressing urban conflagration risk related to vegetation.
- Summarizing existing tree policies in one comprehensive document.
- Preparing draft documents for City Council's review and adoption.

The final document would include, but not be limited to:

- Bringing the City tree policy in step with current drought conditions and climate change.
- Defining and mapping historic trees.
- Outlining rules related to tree removal and maintenance.
- Updating the tree list with more drought-tolerant and native trees.
- Providing a science-based outline to support the revised policies.
- Addressing urban conflagration.

Air Quality Monitor and Forecasts

Problem Statement: Because there is not an air quality monitor in Winters linked to the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District, California Air Resources Board, or Environmental Protection Agency networks, neither the City nor residents are able to get Winters-specific air quality forecasts or accurate real-time readings. This negatively affects the City's, businesses', and residents' abilities to make informed decisions.

Smoky air and smoke's role in conditions ranging from asthma to headaches to increased susceptibility to COVID-19 have brought heightened attention to air quality. Due to microclimate, geography, and, increasingly, proximity to wildfires, air quality in Winters can be significantly different than in Vacaville, Davis, or Woodland. While the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District provides forecasts and alerts for those three cities through the EnviroFlash program, people who enter Winters' ZIP code when registering for

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forecasts get Vacaville's forecasts and alerts, because Vacaville is the closest EnviroFlash city to Winters. However, some City decisions, such as whether the air will be too smoky to allow the pool to be open, hinge on those forecasts. Similarly, people in Winters who use the real-time air quality index readings included in many smartphone weather apps to gauge the safety of outdoor activity are unknowingly basing their decisions on conditions in, for example, southwestern Vacaville.

While there is a PurpleAir brand air quality monitor at the City corporation yard, it is a commercially available monitor and cannot be used for forecasts or for real-time readings on EPA smoke maps or most weather apps.

The Natural Resources Commission proposes:

- Contacting Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District to pursue getting an air quality monitor for Winters.
- Working with YSAQMD staff to determine which characteristics (i.e., ozone, PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀) should be monitored in Winters, especially given our smoky summers.
- Working with YSAQMD staff and others to get Winters included in the EnviroFlash air quality forecast and alert system.
- Doing community outreach once a monitor is in place and Winters-specific forecasts are available.

Additional Projects and Partners

In addition to focused projects, such as related to urban forestry or air quality monitoring, the Commission proposes that it begin collecting information and receiving presentations related to the City's long-range water supply planning efforts and, when appropriate, providing review of reports commissioned by the City and submitting timely comments of reviewed materials.

The Commission will also continue to receive regular updates from Putah Creek Council, Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee, and Yolo and Solano Resource Conservation Districts, as well as reports from Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Yolo County Office of Emergency Services, Yolo and Solano Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, Solano County Water Agency, Yolo Solano Air Resources Board, and other agencies as necessary.

The Commission envisions soliciting presentations from the above agencies as projects or studies of interest to the Commission are undertaken. Such presentations might include groundwater recharge projects, Fire Safe Council updates, air quality overviews, County emergency planning efforts related to flooding, droughts, severe weather events, wildfires and fuel reduction efforts.

The Commission may also assist with seeking and applying for grants, or lend its support on behalf of the City for a range of studies or needed equipment related to various projects falling under the purview of the Commission.