

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION**

**STAFF SUMMARY REPORT: Keith Lichten
MEETING DATE: October 9, 2024**

ITEM: 5

Stream Stewardship in Contra Costa County – Informational Item

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT: Keith Lichten
MEETING DATE: October 9, 2024

ITEM: 5

Stream Stewardship in Contra Costa County – Informational Item

DISCUSSION:

The San Francisco Bay Water Board (Water Board) reviews and authorizes activities in Bay Area streams that have the potential to impact water quality. To facilitate needed stream maintenance, the Water Board has issued programmatic stream maintenance authorizations to Bay Area flood management agencies, a municipality, and an open space and a regional park district. Because Bay Area streams have a range of property ownerships and maintenance needs, additional tools are needed to steward and protect them. A key tool in Contra Costa County is the [Streamside Management Program for Landowners](#) (Program), which originated in 1999 with the Water Board's support, and which is currently funded by the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (County).

Starting in 1999, the Water Board initiated the Program by using administrative civil liability fine money to fund a supplemental environmental project. That project addressed the environmental impacts of "informal" creek bank stabilization projects by property owners. Such projects were typically implemented to reduce flood and stormwater damage to stream banks, and historically included lining creek banks with rock riprap, sacrete, gabions, concrete rubble, and old cars, and other unpermitted activities, typically without Water Board or other agency review. The Program provided staff from the non-profit Urban Creeks Council to property owners who were reporting creek problems to the County in order to provide an informed professional assessment of the causes of the problems and suggest environmentally sensitive stream bank stabilization solutions. An overwhelmingly positive response from Water Board and California Department of Fish and Wildlife staffs, the Contra Costa County Public Works Department, supervisors, and the public, resulted in the County adopting and funding the Program in 2002.

The Program fills a stewardship gap by creating an important link between the County and property owners while also providing direction, education, and support for the property owners to address some of their short- and long-term needs. That involves educating property owners about the performance problems that can be created by using hard materials on streambanks and about the effectiveness, sustainability, and stewardship benefits of plant-based soil bioengineering systems. The program is now implemented by the California Urban Streams Partnership (CUSP), a project of the non-profit Earth Island Institute, with continuing County support.

In recent years, from Fall 2018 through June 2022, the Program served 86 properties. During the wet winters of 2022-2024, CUSP averaged 30 requests a month for assistance, indicating the continuing need for and interest in the Program's work.

APPENDIX A: Streamside Management Program for Landowners Information Sheet

Appendix A Streamside Management Program for Landowners

Informational Handout

This handout is available from Water Board staff upon request. To obtain a copy, please contact Rebecca Nordenholt at (510) 622-1013 or via email to Rebecca.Nordenholt@waterboards.ca.gov.

A copy is also available on [Contra Costa County's website](#).