



CITY OF ARCATA WETLANDS AND CREEKS COMMITTEE 2025 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

For Presentation to the Arcata City Council
April 15, 2026

Committee Members:

- Justin Hawkins, Chair*
- Steven Railsback, Vice-Chair (January to June 2025)*
- Bob Brown*
- Emma Held, Vice-Chair (July to December 2025)*
- Chris McAuliffe*
- Jeremy Svehla*
- Nathanael Pope (Resigned March 2025)*

Staff Liaison(s):

Morguine Sefcik, Environmental Programs Manager, Environmental Services Department



33 Years
1992-2025

The Wetlands and Creeks Committee was established in 1992. The Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council, City Manager, and City staff in matters related to policies, management and projects affecting creeks, wetland, and tideland resources in Arcata. Additionally, the Wetlands and Creeks Committee considers the perspective of open space and agricultural values since the Open Space and Agriculture Committee was dissolved. The Wetlands and Creeks Committee has seven members, appointed by the City Council, that serve overlapping three-year terms and represent various areas of expertise, knowledge, and interest. The City's Environmental Programs Manager, Morguine Sefcik, serves as the staff liaison for the Committee. The Committee held four regular meetings and one special meeting during 2025. Meetings are held in the Council Chamber on the 4th Thursday of every odd month.

The Committee reviewed and/or made recommendations on the following items:

A. Wetlands and Creeks - Policies/Ordinances/General Plan Elements

1. Community Development Director David Loya presented information to the Committee about the City's Local Coastal Program (LCP) and updates to the Local Coastal Element at their March 27, 2025 meeting. At the Committee's May 22, 2025 meeting they made a recommendation to the Planning Commission and the City Council to approve the updates to the LCP.

B. Management of City-owned Wetlands and Creeks

1. The Committee received regular updates from staff on progress of creek and wetland restoration and management projects and programs, including:
 - a. Annie & Mary Trail Connectivity Project status: construction started on 9/22/2025. The creation of a wetland at the City's Happy Valley property that the Committee visited in Fall of 2024 will be used to satisfy some of the mitigation requirements. In addition, removal of non-native invasive species, particularly reed canary grass in portions of North Fork Janes Creek along West End Road and Aldergrove Road will be conducted. A CA Conservation Corps (CCC) crew started removing the reed canary grass along West End Road in late August. (3/27/2025, 9/25/25)
 - b. Arcata Sea Level Rise (SLR) Vulnerability Assessment & Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Adaptation Plan grant from the Coastal Commission is moving forward. The CIP Adaptation Concept Plan is expected to be completed by the end of the year. (9/25/25)
 - c. The City submitted a grant application to the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) SB1 Grant Program to implement a SLR Adaptation Pathways Plan including advancing concept adaptation designs. (9/25/25)
 - d. Jolly Giant Creek restoration planning efforts updates – Early 2025 saw renewed momentum by City staff to pursue planning grant funding for Jolly Giant Creek. City staff will incorporate coastal resilience planning into the broader restoration

planning outline that was developed in 2024 with a goal of applying to the CA State Coastal Conservancy's (SCC) Climate Bond Funding in 2026. (2/4/25, 9/25/25)

- e. City staff met with staff from Humboldt County and the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District (HCRCD) about the next phase of the Jacoby Creek Restoration Planning Project in early 2025. The City supported the submission of a grant application by HCRCD to the SCC in late 2025. (2/4/25, 9/25/25)
- f. The City approved an Adopt-a-Park application for the Grotzman Creek Detention Basin from Sunny Brae Middle School staff Asia Brunell that the Committee had heard about during public comment at their May 22, 2025 meeting. (9/25/25)
- g. City staff and community member, Scott McBain, identified a location in Jolly Giant Creek for installation of a data logger to measure water level, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and conductivity. The data logger equipment was purchased with Measure A funding and installed in spring 2025. A link to the data was shared with the Committee members. (2/4/25)
- h. The City's Engineering Department and Environmental Services Department partnered with two Cal Poly Humboldt capstone classes this semester: 1) An Environmental Resources Engineering student capstone design class is looking at Jolly Giant Creek flooding issues, and 2) An Environmental Science and Management capstone class will survey ponds at the Arcata Marsh for the presence of the invasive plant South American spongeplant, map, and report their findings. (2/4/25)

C. Public Outreach

1. The Committee was informed about and invited to attend a Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) member led public volunteer workday in Shay Park on April 5, 2025 to remove invasive non-native plants along Jolly Giant Creek and plant native plants. (2/4/2025)
2. Committee Vice-Chair, Steve Railsback, attended the City Council Study Session with Committee Chairs on February 12, 2025 in the Council Chamber.
3. The Committee received a presentation from Cal Poly Humboldt Fisheries Professor Darren Ward on fish and water quality monitoring studies in Jolly Giant Creek and Janes Creek, which is funded by Measure A. A variety of fish species were found during sampling efforts, including juvenile Coho salmon. (9/25/25)
4. Committee member Railsback shared Darren Ward's recent fish sampling efforts in lower Beith Creek on the City's Baylands property and reported that juvenile coho and cutthroat trout were found. In addition, juvenile coho were found in Janes Creek near the Janes Creek Meadows Park, during another sampling effort. (11/13/2025)
5. The Committee received a presentation from Wiyot Tribe staff Marisa McGrew on sampling efforts in local waterways for the chemical 6PPD-quinone (6PPDQ) a tire anti-degradant that is lethal to coho salmon. The Tribe sampled the following creeks in Humboldt County in 2025: Jolly Giant Creek (Arcata), Powers Creek, Salmon Creek, Strongs Creek, Elk

River. Sampling methods, results, data gaps, and recommendations were shared with the Committee. (11/13/2025)

D. Measure A - Open Space, Parks, and Trails Special Tax Updates

1. The Committee received a report on the Open Space, Parks, & Trails Special Tax (Measure A) 2024/2025 priorities and outcomes and made recommendations for Fiscal Year 2025/2026 at their February 4, 2025 meeting. In addition, they selected two representatives for the Measure A Ad Hoc Group, which met February 15, 2025.

E. Developed the Following Committee Goals for FY 2025/26 at their February 4, 2025 meeting:

1. Support City staff in implementation of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit as updated, including stormwater education and outreach.
2. Maintain presence on the Measure A Ad-Hoc Group and revisit priority funding list twice per year.
3. Continue to review and provide policy recommendations to support habitat, water quality, and climate resiliency in the City of Arcata.
4. Explore Cal Poly Humboldt partnership opportunities focused on improvements to Arcata's wetlands and creeks resources.
5. Support City staff in sea level rise adaptation planning and implementation efforts.
6. Provide support for development and updates to local restoration plans, e.g., Jacoby Creek Gannon Slough Wildlife Area complex and Jolly Giant Creek Rehabilitation Plan.
 - a. Pursue funding for a Jolly Giant Creek Rehabilitation Plan.
 - b. Engage Committee and solicit feedback on the concept designs for the Jacoby Creek Enhancement Project.
 - c. Better define restoration opportunities in Janes Creek through continued data collection partnerships with Cal Poly Humboldt.
7. Focus on control and management of invasive species that are affecting Arcata's wetlands and creeks.
 - a. Removal of high/"A" rated invasive species, e.g. South American spongeplant at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary and the Aldergrove Marsh
8. Explore options for inter-committee information sharing and idea exchange with the Wetlands and Creeks Committee, e.g. share goals with other Committees, invite other Committee members, and/or provide updates to other Committees.
9. Explore subcommittee formation to support staff as needed and feasible, e.g. grant proposals.