

WATERSHED WORK

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Day 3, Track C spotlighted watershed activists and agencies from around the Bay. The S.F. Bay Regional Board's Dale Hopkins introduced the Bay Area Watershed Network (BAWN), spawned in 2006 when a group of 50 folks met in Oakland to talk about interest in and need for a regional group to represent watershed issues and interests. Today BAWN has over 180 members, including watershed activists, restoration practitioners, planners, consultants, NGO representatives, scientists, and community organizers, with six working groups ranging from assessment and monitoring to policy, education and outreach, land and water use, and coordination with IRWMP (the Integrated Regional Water Management Program).

Ten watershed groups then gave a virtual tour of their work, starting in the North Bay. The Sonoma Ecology Center's Caitlin Cornwall described her organization's efforts to work with over 400 streamside landowners. "We're in it for the long haul," said Cornwall. Patrick Lowe discussed the on-line Watershed Information Center & Conservancy of Napa County (www.napawatersheds.org), which aims to "educate and support the community." The organization is developing a watershed assessment framework and holding watershed symposiums. The Solano Land Trust's Benjamin Wallace said his organization tries to "increase watershed health" through the acquisition of open space—including core conservation areas and conservation easements.



Members of the Alameda Creek Alliance carry fish past barriers. Photo courtesy of ACA.

Moving to the south, the Contra Costa County Resource Conservation District's Carol Arnold described her agency's partnership with the Friends of Pinole Creek: "We're working to restore the native steelhead population by removing barriers that prevent fish from making it upstream to good spawning habitat." Salmonids were also the focus of the Alameda Creek Alliance's Jeff Miller's talk. "After a quarter century of advocacy, we're finally in a place where we're poised to restore steelhead and salmon passage to 20 miles of suitable habitat," said Miller. His agency has partnered in removing five small and medium dams, plus removed four additional barriers and built two fish ladders, with four more underway. Ongoing threats include the retrofit of Calaveras Dam. "We're working to ensure that the new dam is operated in a beneficial way for fish," said Miller. "Alameda Creek is a potential urban stream success story. It's an 'anchor watershed' that will help overall recovery of central coast steelhead."

The North Richmond Shoreline Open Space Alliance's Whitney Dotson said his organization also formed in response to threats—primarily from proposed developments—to some of the last remaining wetlands on the east shore of San Pablo Bay: "There are ongoing threats. Chevron still wants to build a deep water port." On Wildcat and San Pablo Creeks just to the south along the same shoreline, the Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council formed 24 years ago in response to a different threat—an Army Corps flood control channel proposed for lower Wildcat Creek. Residents came up with an alternative design, and the group continues its work today, said the Council's Tim Jensen. It also works to establish regional trails and access along the creeks and shoreline, engages local youth, and helps the community plan, among other efforts.

The Urban Creeks Council, in Berkeley in the central part of the Bay, works on many of the streams that drain to the Bay. UCC's Phil Stevens told the audience that his agency "invests in the future of communities, creates wild spaces in cities, increases property values by decreasing erosion, offers technical stream assistance, and helps cure 'nature deficit disorder.'"

Mondy Lariz of the Santa Clara County Creeks Coalition said his agency is trying to