



Fruitvale Bridge Park cleanup team on Earth Day 2017

Watershed Overview Puts Volunteers' Successes and Enthusiasm on Display

At this year's State of the Watershed meeting on January 17, site leaders from 16 of FOSC's 23 restoration sites presented a remarkable array of photos and information, detailing their goals, accomplishments, and challenges. We heard inspiring stories of overgrown creek banks reclaimed, former garbage dumps transformed, and endangered species brought back from the brink. From Fruitvale Bridge Park, where Sausal Creek meets the estuary, to Shepherd Canyon in the Oakland hills, the range of stories, successes, and setbacks was dramatic.

"I was struck by the sheer volume of work that's being done in the watershed," commented FOSC Board Member Mark Rauzon. "In 20 years, we've gone from a single restoration project in Dimond Canyon to a watershed-wide organization with people in local neighborhoods stepping forward to pick up the baton. It's really remarkable."

One such neighborhood volunteer is Zandile Christian who lives near the Bienati Creek Overlook near I-580. A few years ago, Zandile started removing ivy that was blocking her driveway, and she has been continuously working this small piece of public land ever since. In January, Zandile and students from buildOn planted ginger, grasses, and coyote brush grown at the FOSC Native Plant Nursery. Without a steward, this corner attracts illegal dumping and dog poop that isn't picked up. But with tending, it is a special place in the neighborhood to catch a glimpse of the creek before it flows under the freeway.



Flags mark new plantings at Bienati Creek Overlook

That type of grassroots effort has been repeated at Woodbine Corner, Barry Place, and Jingtletown Garden to name just three. Most of the sites have been adopted by volunteers through the city's Adopt a Spot program. The site leaders' tenacity was on display as they spoke of their dogged, years-long efforts in many cases to clear, plant, and maintain each site in the face of many setbacks and challenges, ranging from homeless encampments, litter flowing down the creek from upstream, and sites being loved to death by hikers, cyclists, and dog walkers.



Pallids Crew member Gary Nicholson

Major successes over the years, besides the thousands of natives that have been planted, include the rainbow trout living in the creek that have benefitted from creek cleanups and increasing awareness about stormwater pollution, and the germination of more than 100 endangered pallid manzanitas at the Chabot Space and Science Center Colony.

The Dimond Library meeting room was filled to capacity with neighborhood Friends as well as staff from the city and the county, all eager to get the latest overview. A great turnout for a great show. Thank you to all the presenters and attendees for making it a memorable evening.

--Richard Kauffman and Kelcey Tern