

Watersheds & General Plans: September 25, 2008 Workshop Hosted by League of Women Voters



September 25, 2008 Watersheds & General Plans Workshop

The Butte County League of Women Voters hosted a workshop on Watersheds & General Plans co-sponsored by the Butte County Departments of Development Services and Water and Resource Conservation. This workshop took place on September 25, 2008 from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the Masonic Family Center in Chico and approximately 50 members of the public including watershed groups from throughout the county attended. Butte County General Plan 2030 and a number of Watershed Groups staffed information stations for visitors to obtain information and answer questions.

Tony St. Amant with the League opened the workshop and welcomed participants. Paul Gosselin, Director of the Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation provided an overview on his department's role in land use planning and managing water resources. Presentations were provided by Butte County Principal Planner Dan Breedon on the Butte County General Plan 2030 process as well as Don Chase on the City of Chico's General Plan update. The evening's keynote speaker was Jeff Loux, Director, Land Use and Natural Resources UC Extension at Davis who spoke on planning for water-wise development in the Sierra. Patricia Hickson, with the Sierra Nevada Alliance, distributed copies of an August 2008 publication, "Water and Land Use Policy Guide for Water-Wise Development in the Sierra" (available at www.sierranevadaalliance.org).

The evening also included small study groups that organized around several of Butte County's watersheds. Notes from these meetings were transcribed and will be available on the General Plan website soon. The notes compiled from this workshop are attached for the Citizens Advisory Committee's review in anticipation of policy discussions on water resources. They include notes from the Big Chico Creek, Butte Creek, Cherokee Watershed, Little Chico Creek, and Lower Feather River/Honcut Creek Watershed Groups.

BIG CHICO CREEK

Contact person: Susan Mason, BCCWA Coordinator, (530) 892-2196
(as transcribed from meeting notes)

- Not enough specific baseline data
 - Seek innovative ways to collect data
 - Support citizen monitoring efforts
- No water supply analysis
- Address cumulative impacts
- Address receding groundwater levels
- Coordinate planning and financial efforts with the City of Chico so that the “new” General Plans allocate resources for replacing septic systems
- Encourage Public understanding of watershed function
- Identify and protect recharge areas through the General Plan
- Integrate Public Education into the General Plan
- Address Forest Practices in the General Plan. Protect the Upper Watershed so that there is cool water for spring run salmon
- Make allowances for reuse of grey-water from tertiary septic systems and treatment systems.
- Encourage Conservation Easements in the Foothill/Mountain regions.
- Hire qualified staff with knowledge of conservation and sustainability practices
- Seek innovative ways to conserve store and collect “Conservation Pricing” [Home + CSUC + BCPW]
- Lower flood issues through understanding of watershed function
- ENFORCE lower impact practiced
- ENVORCE riparian setbacks
- Reduce pavement and use permeable surfaces
- Support a tree ordinance
- Plant drought tolerant plants
 - Increase incentives for residential landscaping (Xeriscaping)

Butte Creek Watershed

Issues and concerns as specific to water 09-25-08 Butte Creek Watershed
Durham area specific:

- 1) Ground water /well water levels
 - a) Durham Irrigation District low water pressure
 - b) Developments ability to supply water without impacting existing water supply i.e. proposed 500 new family housing units for Durham area.
 - c) Resident concerns, Ag not represented at table.
 - d) Aquifers settling from over pumping and lack of recharge in drought or wet years
- 2) Gravel sediment migration from 49er gold mining tailings.
 - a) Levee integrity effected due to lack of maintenance or removal of gravel bars causing infill.
 - b) Lack of brush removal within levees and on levees.
 - c) Water being channeled into levees by structural barriers caused from excessive gravel accumulation, stressing substandard levees to breach and flood.
 - d) Allow maintenance to be started up again and levees brought up to FEMA standards for 11 mile stretch from Skyway to past Durham urban area.
- 3) Determine aquifer recharge areas
 - a) Control type of development in sensitive recharge areas.
 - b) Septic, sewage management should be addressed. Inspections of septic system should be required in sensitive recharge areas. Convert septic to sewage tx plants when option is available and have managed by enduring management entity.
 - c) Keep population densities low through proper zoning applications.
- 4) Water element in general plan
 - a) Do not sell ground water outside of County of origin.
 - b) Utilize Oroville Lake water allotment in Butte County.
 - c) Locate and facilitate suitable off stream storage and consider on stream storage in areas without suitable off stream sites.
 - d) Reduce or eliminate hard surface areas, use permeable surface materials to control water runoff, buffer strips, recharge greenbelt areas, wetland setbacks etc. to manage storm water run off and promote recharge of groundwater aquifers.
 - e) Ensure development retention basins are designed for 3 day storm events instead of one day events and manage/plan flood, storm water runoff in same fashion.
 - f) Establish BMP for grey water management and recycling of grey water for non potable water use.
 - g) Meter water use when possible. Tiered Water pricing to encourage conservation.
 - h) Require native plant use in landscaping for water wise and fire wise applications.

i) Promote BMP's.

Upper watershed issues:

- 1) Re establish rural road networks in foothill and mountain communities for fire access, evacuation and commerce.
 - a) Utilize gravel from lower watershed channel maintenance for road base on upper watershed roads to control erosion and reintroduce sediments back into waterway for aquatic habitats benefits where erosion may occur. Recycle the gravels through the watersheds.
 - b) Use gravel moved around fish ladders for roads in upper watershed and lower watershed levee road maintenance instead of dumping it back in creek for next ladder manager to deal with as it migrates through system.
 - c) Determine what is adequate gravels to remain for aquatic habitat in Butte Creek and remove excess for road maintenance reducing burden on freeboard of substandard levees as excess gravel migrates through system.
 - d) Gravels are in over abundance and not naturally in channels due to historical mining practices in Butte Creek and tributaries. They need to be managed in a beneficial use to prevent erosion and flooding.
- 2) Maintain T and M large tract zoning in our mountain industrial timber zones. 40 acre minimum.
- 3) Maintain Pasture and Grazing large tract zoning in our foothill gold belt zones. 40 acre minimum.
- 4) Control urban encroachment into our upper watershed.
- 5) Determine aquifer recharge areas
 - a) Control type of development in sensitive recharge areas.
 - b) Septic, sewage management should be addressed. Inspections of septic system should be required in sensitive recharge areas. Convert septic to sewage tx plants when option is available and have managed by enduring management entity.
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 - g) Meter water use when possible. Tiered Water pricing to encourage conservation.

- h) Require native plant use in landscaping for water wise and fire wise applications.
 - i) Develop adequate water supply for Paradise and Upper Ridge. Repair or upgrade Magalia Reservoir Dam and road over the top.
- 7) Require fire wise building materials to be used in all new building permit issues. All building sites maintain fuel break set backs and have adequate roads for emergency access.
- 8) Require use of wood burning heating devices in low density areas for conservation of energy. Encourage Alternative Energy production and on site Composting Sewage Systems in rural building sites.

Prepared by Chuck Kutz
BCWC Directing Coordinator.

CHEROKEE WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Contact person: Linda Cole, colewaterinfo@yahoo.com
(as transcribed from meeting notes)

- The Water Element should drive the rest of the General Plan
- Respect constraints of watershed
- Protect natural system services
- Make sure the GP incorporates the most current science
 - GIS mapping
 - Water Inventory availability
- Protect recharge areas
 - Create watershed overlay in GIS
 - Implement building standards BMPs
 - Permeable surfaces
 - Swales
- Keep Butte Valley for recharge plan/incentives
- Require Building Standards that do not increase flood risk/run off in flood plains
- Must have sewer infrastructure and reliable water source for any further development of #11-#13 in Paradise.

Little Chico Creek

Watersheds and General Plans Workshop, Breakout Session Notes for the Little Chico Creek Watershed

Thursday September 25th, 2008

- ▶ There were 6 participants, plus 1 who sent along comments to the meeting
- ▶ We approached the task by dividing the watershed into physically similar areas, identifying issues, and then listing potential policies and solutions that Butte County and the City of Chico could implement for watershed protection.
- ▶ Two overarching issues participants discussed was protecting recharge areas and groundwater supplies, and making the city section a resource instead of a problem.
- ▶ Many of the policies and solutions, although listed in a single area, would be relevant to implement throughout the watershed, such as monitoring water quality and supporting the use of grey water.

	Issues	Policies and Solutions
Mountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be a balance between fire safe and infiltration (i.e. making sure surface flow doesn't occur in cleared areas) • Dirt roads diverting and concentration runoff. • Invasive Broom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support grey water use (washing machines...) • Keep water in the watershed • Provide assistance for homeowners to switch from septic systems to sewer. • Use BMP's in road design and maintenance.
Foothills/ Oak woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recharge areas are unknown and unprotected. • Lack of oak regeneration • Dumping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study recharge areas before developing so we don't have to regret or scramble later. • Designate no development areas or zones. Sacred areas.
Alluvial Fan & Valley/ City Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creek is "invisible", not featured, neglected, and abused. • Abuse in the creek bed is in the form of encampments, litter, and criminal behavior. Resulting in poor water quality. • Storm water is diverted straight to creek, scouring banks, transporting pollutants, and not recharging ground water. • Exotic invasive plants dominate riparian area. • There is a lack of a riparian buffer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural storm water management and low impact development for both new developments as well as existing neighborhoods. • Build a continuous trail-way/bike path along LCC. • Acquire creek-side property when it becomes available. • Make sure day-lighting never happens – maintain natural flow. • Implement flood control measures and utilize natural infrastructure such as detention ponds and bio-swales. • Use pervious concrete. • Mitigate all runoff for commercial development.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor water quality and flow.
Valley/ Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower Tuscan Aquifer needs to be protected.• Non-point source pollution.• Need wide buffer zones between agriculture and the creek.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Require wide riparian buffer zones.

Lower Feather River/Honcut Creek Watershed Group

2360 Cox Lane
Oroville, CA 95966
October 2, 2008

Mr. Dan Breedon
Department of Development Services
7 County Center Dr.
Oroville, CA 95965

Dear Mr. Breedon:

As landowners in the Honcut area of Butte County and members of the Lower Feather River/Honcut Creek Watershed Group, we would like to include these observations and suggestions into the General Plan Update process.

The South-eastern area of Butte County has recurring problems with stormwater surges and episodic flooding, both of which damage public and private property and interrupt transportation and other services. This results in the County being liable for public safety and expected to make necessary infrastructure repairs and continued maintenance.

This area also has a functioning wetlands component that naturally receives much of the storm and surface water runoff. This wetland area serves to contain, slow and filter surge water, provides wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge, open space and other benefits.

The suggestion is to consider watershed and wetland function as a tool of the growth planning process, rather than merely another element of the landscape, competing with, or in danger of, land use change.

As a tool, wetland or watershed benefit should be perceived as an active planning element to be used in conjunction with other infrastructure components to facilitate problematic or negative affects of adjoining land uses or proposed uses.

Likewise, land use proposals should be required, through design, to contribute to and support the health of the watershed/wetland function. Moreover, its proximity to a planned land use should be embraced and incorporated into the plan, rather than allowed to be altered or destroyed, then mitigated offsite. Unlike a static, detached mitigation effort, integrated watershed/wetland planning would engender local

“ownership”, provide educational opportunities and possibly become revenue producing.

We suggest the County General Plan Update recognize the intrinsic value represented in watershed/wetland function and formalize that value as active land use planning elements.

To make wetland development possible in the Honcut area, we encourage the further use of Conservation and Habitat Easements, while advocating for consistent and equitable Payment In Lieu Of Taxes treatment to offset property tax revenue shortages.

We appreciate your consideration of these suggestions, and would be very willing to discuss them in further detail.

Thank you,

Mel Thompson
Mary Thompson
Cindy Daley
Dave Daley