

URBAN CORPS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

REPORT: SAN DIEGO UNIFIED PORT DISTRICT

Chollas Creek Restoration-PORT (SSRT)

Report November, 2008

Submitted by Consuelo Villarreal Manager of Environmental Services UCO

The Urban Corps of San Diego County, in collaboration with the Groundwork San Diego Chollas Creek and the Sierra Club is in the first initial stage of the **“Chollas Creek Student Stream Restoration Team”(SSRT)** and has involved local students and residents in environmental education as well as the **Sierra Club of San Diego “Friends of Chollas Creek”** community group.

Funding sources for project: San Diego Unified Port District \$82,640.00

Urban Corps of San Diego County:

As of April 2008, the Urban Corps of San Diego County (UCO) has removed a total of **126 cubic yards** of Non-native vegetation, i.e. Arundo, Caster Bean, Tamarisk, Salt Cedar and other invasive plants as well as **80-cubic yards** of debris i.e. styrofoam, shopping carts, appliances, and mattresses, **5-gallon** container of oil, which was taken to Auto Zone for recycling and **2886 sq feet of graffiti**. UCO also assisted the Cesar Chavez SSRT plant over **350-native plants**.

UCO focused on the sections of Chollas Creek known as the Main Branch-specifically on sections of National Avenue to the East and Harbor Drive to the West. Sections of Chollas Creek Main Branch also included the intersection of the South Branch, located West of Interstate 5-and 15. The intersection of these two branches of the creek is a major point of urban debris accumulation, and if not cleared and maintained on a regular basis, flows into San Diego Bay during storm events.

Groundwork San Diego-Chollas Creek Student Stream Restoration Team:

Groundwork San Diego - Chollas Creek (GWSDCC) has successfully engaged students from Emerson-Bandini and Cesar Chavez Elementary schools in the Student Stream Restoration Team (SSRT) environmental science standards-based educational program. Approximately 200 4th & 5th graders have participated in our SSRT model project that began in June 08. We offer three in-class and three field trip learning experiences for students. We have created curriculum specific to the state science standards but also specific to this habitat, emphasizing the need for watershed stewardship from these students.

We have been working with the SDUC and other contractors to restore the 38th & Alpha Street Park into an open space that students can walk to and participate in the following activities: planting of native plants, watershed activities, Kumeyaay history, and hikes that include identification of plants and animals in this coastal native habitat and an herpetologist that brings living native snakes and bugs. Building on a grant GWSDCC received from the City of San Diego, property improvements have included installation of a solar powered irrigation system, fencing, non-native plant and debris removal and tree planting.

The residents have embraced the notion of the children walking to their open space and learning about the environment. In an effort to authentically and effectively engage stakeholders into the planning process for the restoration and educational activities slated for the 38th and Alpha Street Park, Groundwork San Diego-Chollas Creek utilized a multi-pronged approach. The stakeholder groups included residents, government officials, educators, students, community organizations, local businesses, churches and other interest groups.

GWSDCC has engaged Corps members to work alongside our SSRT students whenever they are on a field trip. The Corps members auger holes for the native plant restoration that our students plant. They also work together to water trees and plants.

GWSDCC and the SSRT, their parents, St. Jude's Church, community residents and NASSCO participated in the I Love A Clean San Diego, creek to bay clean-up @ 38th & Alpha. Stewardship and ownership for this part of Chollas Creek has begun to take root among the stakeholders. Report submitted by Liz Faddis Director of GWSDCC

Sierra Club San Diego "Friends of Chollas Creek" Community Involvement:

During the first quarter Sierra Club canvassed the community to develop a local "Friends Group" of on-going volunteers to provide stewardship of Chollas Creek from National Avenue in Logan Heights to San Diego Bay. Sierra Club enrolled 10 members and successfully developed collaboration with BAE Systems, Inc. and several small businesses immediately adjacent to the creek at 33rd St. and National Ave. On April 26, 2008, Sierra Club organized a successful cleanup event at the corner of 33rd and national removing a 40 cubic yard dumpster of trash, a 40 cubic yard dumpster of invasive weeds and a considerable amount of hazardous waste.

Subsequent to this successful cleanup event the Sierra Club continued discussions with several members of the Friends Group about issues surrounding this section of Chollas Creek. Community concerns centered around encampments, illegal activities, illegal dumping, flood control, and the need to restore the historic level of tidal flushing to the creek.

Due to employee turn-over, Sierra Club did not have any further organizational activities on this project in the second quarter.

In the first weeks of August, Sierra Club closed down the Canyon's Campaign. The two remaining full time staff resigned but were immediately hired by a new non-profit, San Diego Canyonlands Inc. San Diego Canyonlands (SDCL) is being run by the same staff, (Eric Bowlby, Executive Director/Program Manager), that ran the successful Sierra Club program for 8 years.

SDCL has a similar mission to *restore the natural habitats in San Diego County canyons and creeks by fostering education and ongoing community involvement in stewardship activities.* SDCL is continuing to develop community-based "Friends Groups" for canyons and creek areas. Urban Corps plans to contract with SDCL to complete the community organizing portion of this grant that Sierra Club began in the first quarter. Work will resume in January 2009. Report Submitted to UCO by Eric Bowlby, San Diego Canyonlands, Inc.

Pictures:



Chollas Creek Student Stream restoration Team "SSRT" Cesar Chavez Elementary School.



Urban Corps of San Diego Planting Native Plants with Cesar Chavez Elementary SSRT as well the removal of debris and non-native vegetation.

