

URBAN CORPS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

REPORT: SAN DIEGO UNIFIED PORT DISTRICT

Chollas Creek Restoration-PORT (SSRT)

Fourth Report November 30, 2009

Date November 20, 2009

(Final Report Due March 30, 2010)

Submitted by Sam Lopez Director 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 **San Diego Canyon Lands “Friends of Chollas Creek”** community group. .

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

**Grant funds balance:**

**Community Service Hours to date:**

**Urban Corps of San Diego County:**

As of November 2008, the Urban Corps of San Diego County (UCO) has removed a total of 765-cubic yards of Non-native vegetation, i.e. Arundo, Caster Bean, Tamarisk, Salt Cedar and other invasive plants as well as debris i.e. styrofoam, shopping carts, and 1-mattresses, and removed **3100 sq feet of graffiti**. UCO also assisted the Cesar Chavez SSRT, Cesar Chavez Club, the City of San Diego Urban Forestry Department plant 50 1-gallon-native coastal live oaks.

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:**

In spring 2009, Groundwork San Diego-Chollas Creek **completed the final** activities agreed to in the Port-funded Student Stream restoration Team project. **Specifically, 100** students from Emerson-Bandini and **100** students from Chavez Elementary **participated** in three in-classroom and **three habitat-based watershed** educational activities. **The program has resulted** in a strong and ongoing relationship between the Urban Corps and Groundwork. Because close to 70% of Urban Corps youth are from Southeastern San Diego neighborhoods, they serve as compelling environmental steward models for the elementary students. Working side by side, the Corps

members and the students identify native and non-native plants, remove the non-natives, and plant the natives, with Urban Corps completing the more difficult tasks, and encouraging the students. This round of activities included not only native plant restoration activities, but also live animal presentations to teach the students the value of clean waterways to healthy wildlife populations and ecosystems. They learned the water cycle, and learned the relationship between clean water behaviors (pesticides, litter, oil, non-natives) to a healthy Bay. They learned about limited water resources and personal water conservation ideas. The work of the children attracted the attention of a private landscaping company, which has agreed to donate close to \$1000 in labor and materials to repair the broken irrigation system at 38<sup>th</sup> and Alpha. That system is essential to the maintenance of the plants installed by the Urban Corps and the students. Program evaluation by staff at both schools has been extremely positive, with anecdotal information from Chavez Elementary that students participating in the Student Stream restoration team effort are scoring higher on science tests than non-participants. The success of the program is being leveraged in a grant request to the San Diego Foundation.

Submitted by Leslie Reynolds Director of GWSD 12/08/09

### **San Diego Canyon lands: "Friends of Chollas Creek" Community Involvement**

San Diego Canyon lands Inc. has continued and finished the community-organizing and local stewardship components of the subject Port District grant. The goal of developing a local "Friends Group" of volunteers to provide stewardship of Chollas Creek is completed. Through tabling events, extensive door to door outreach and three cleanup events held on April 25th, September 19, and October 24, 2009, San Diego Canyon lands established a new friends group called "Friends of Chollas Creek – 33rd and National Avenue" which now has 49 members. Javier Hernandez has continued serving a leadership role with the new Friends Group. In addition to conducting outreach for the cleanup events and working to build the new friends group by enrolling his neighbors and his co-workers, he promptly reports any illegal dumping along the creek because he has a clear view of the creek from his home. In August, he reported some abandoned vehicles to the City's code enforcement department and a District Eight council representative.

Javier is also an employee with Sturgeons and Sons, -an environmental remediation company. Javier and San Diego Canyon lands' Project Manager (Eric Bowlby) initiated a collaboration with Sturgeons and Sons and I Love a Clean San Diego to handle prompt removal and proper disposal of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) associated with the County-wide California Coastal Cleanup Day held on September 19. This relationship was successfully established.

On Coastal Cleanup Day, Javier served as site captain for the 33<sup>rd</sup> and National Avenue Chollas Creek clean up location. He helped recruit and he managed 40 volunteers at this event. They filled a 40 cubic yard dumpster to the brim. After the event was over, Javier and five other professionals with Sturgeon's and Sons donated their time to collect HHW from 20 Coastal Cleanup Day locations including five sites in the Chollas Creek watershed including the 33<sup>rd</sup> and National Avenue location. Sturgeon's and Sons employees worked until 9:00PM picking up the HHW from the various sites.

The HHW items included:

- 300 pounds of Electronic Waste (E-Waste)
- 40 tires, some tires had rims that had to be removed

- 27 batteries
- Flammable items including: 5 BBQ grill propane tanks, one propane tank for a Fork Lift
- 2 gallons of charcoal lighter fluid
- 30 gallons of **used oil**, **Sturgeon** has a collection system for oil
- 6 containers of **Un-labeled toxics** with varying materials, including pesticide. They were PH tested for **corrosive acid** etc.

I Love a Clean San Diego was happy with this coordinated and professional effort to pick up HHW from all these **cleanup sites** and is looking forward to **continuing** this new collaboration with Sturgeons and Sons.

San Diego Canyon lands also conducted outreach, coordinated, and facilitated a restoration event on October 24<sup>th</sup> in the “Chollas Creek Walk” area near 4166 National Ave. Here volunteers from the Chollas Creek Friends -33<sup>rd</sup> and National Ave. and members from two local church groups, Nu Way International Christian Ministries and Victory Outreach, helped remove weeds, plant native plant species and apply mulch to the Chollas Creek shoreline. This project is called the “Children’s Native Plant Garden”. Nine youth and nine adults were in attendance including three employees from NASSCO. This neglected and blighted section of the creek has been transformed into a beautiful native plant garden and a valuable “nature classroom” to educate local youth and citizens about San Diego’s unique eco-systems.

One goal of this October 24<sup>th</sup> event was to demonstrate the kind of native plant garden that the Friends Group would like to plant at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and National Avenue on a city-owned vacant lot next to Chollas Creek. Project Manager Eric Bowlby is in discussion with City of San Diego District 8 to obtain a Right of Entry permit to establish this garden.

The new Friends Group now has forty nine members including teen agers that enthusiastically helped at the April 25<sup>th</sup>, September 19<sup>th</sup> and October 24<sup>th</sup> events. Several of these youth earned community service credit for their hours of work that they can apply toward their high school requirement.

The highly successful April 25<sup>th</sup> Creek to Bay Cleanup event and the California Coastal Cleanup event on September 19<sup>th</sup> at 33<sup>rd</sup> and National were conducted in collaboration with I Love a Clean San Diego. Other volunteers and the project manager helped with outreach including door to door flyer delivery and bi-lingual one-on-one conversations with residents promoting the cleanup events and the establishment of the new friends group. A forty cubic yard dumpster was filled with trash and green waste at both events. Including the Oct. 24<sup>th</sup> event, we had 71 adults and 25 youth participants’ total. Of these volunteers, 48 were local residents including 13 from the Urban Corps youth program, NASSCO and BAE Systems employees.

**Summary of Volunteer hours during the Grant Period**

Description of Volunteer Activity	Number Vols.	Hours Served	Total Vol. Hours
Door to Door Outreach	5	12	60
Tabling at Earth-Fair	2	6	12
Tabling at Heritage Day Festival	1	5	5
Creek To Bay Cleanup Apr. 25	14	4	56

Creek To Bay, Urban Corps Vols.	13	5	65
Creek To Bay Coordination	1	4	4
Creek To Bay Photos and Organize	1	8	8
CA Coast Cleanup Sep19 coord./outreach	3	8	24
CA Coastal Cleanup Sept. 19	40	4	160
Sept. 19 Cleanup & HHW Removal	6	8	48
Children Native Plant Garden Oct 24	18	4	73
Outreach Volunteers for Oct 24	2	2	4
<b>TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>			<b>519</b>

This is a link to a video for September 19, 2009 California Coastal Cleanup Day:  
<http://sdcanyonlands.org/news-press/video-from-ca-coastal-clean-up-day-at-33rd-national>

Video for October 24, 2009 “Children’s Native Plant Garden” event still under-going editing and production.

**Pictures:**



**Urban Corps of San Diego County removing, litter, debris and non-native vegetation from Chollas Creek.**



Urban Corps of San Diego County corpsmembers clearing Chollas Creek on a community service day.



Urban Corps of San Diego removing non-native vegetation from Chollas Creek.



Urban Corps of San Diego County, GWSD and Canyon Lands Inc litter & debris removal on a community service day. Community service the only way to give back