

Cypress

Environmental and Land Use Planning

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Spring Newsletter

April 2014



For those of us in California, we give thanks this spring to the recent rainfall and snowfall in March and early April; however the drought is still with us.

Remember, Earth Day is April 22!

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In this edition of the newsletter:

- **[Urban Stream Restoration Returns Waterways as Assets Across the USA](#)**

Learn how and why many cities, from Los Angeles to Santa Cruz, CA have embraced returning their controlled urban stream channels to natural waterways.



- **[Your Business Could be a Green Business](#)**

Not in a land use oriented business, but want to be sustainable? Becoming a Green Business might be your answer. And it can be personally and professionally rewarding!



Cypress Mission Statement:

Creating project solutions for you while enhancing our environment.

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Cypress is certified as a sustainable practices business by the Monterey Bay Area Green Business Council.



Cypress has been a member of the Santa Cruz Construction Guild since 2010.

Urban Stream Restoration Returns Waterways as Assets to Cities Across the USA

Los Angeles Gets a "New River"

Rivers connect us. Historically, they linked our cities and towns and connected us to nature. But during much of the 20th Century, urban development included culverting and channelizing rivers and streams that flowed through developing areas to provide flood control, and to create more land for development. Towards the end of the 20th Century, some cities, initiated plans to revitalize their maligned streams towards becoming more natural ecosystems. Today more cities are embracing the benefits of urban stream restoration. One of the best examples is in Los Angeles.



Los Angeles River Today -
A Concrete Channel

For over eight decades, Los Angeles's largest waterway was classified as a concrete drainage channel and continues with that classification today. But in the early 2000's, local citizens and civic leaders spearheaded the idea of returning the river to its natural condition. The L.A. River Revitalization Plan was completed in 2007.

The Los Angeles River is a 51-mile waterway that meandered from the San Fernando Valley to the ocean at Long Beach. The naturally ephemeral and braided stream would remain dry for months, only to rush with water during storms as is common in desert environments. Catastrophic floods in the late 19th and 20th Century to encase most of the waterway in concrete and change its meandering course to a straight alignment. By the late 1950's the river's naturally functioning ecosystem was gone.

The City of L.A.. Los Angeles County and the U. S. Army

Corps of Engineers (COE) have partnered to produce the Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan. The firm Tetra Tech was hired in 2005 to prepare the plan, including various alternative projects to implement it. This past September, the COE announced its preferred alternative – a project that would restore 588 acres of habitat along several key points of the river from Griffith Park to downtown. It would remove concrete from the river bottom along most of this reach and widen the river by 300 feet to form a freshwater marsh in an area known as Taylor Yard, near Glassell Park. While this project would be limited to an 11-mile reach of the river, it is considered a vital start.



A rendering of future implementation of the Revitalization Plan on a reach of the L.A. River

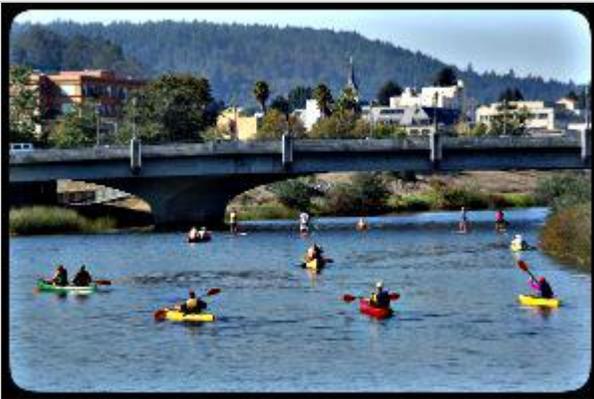
Why Should You Care?

City residents and businesses have realized several benefits from urban stream restoration. Creating a more attractive and accessible waterway provides new public park opportunities. Improved aesthetics and more parks typically increase property values. Some stream restoration projects include bikeways along the top of stream banks as has been done extensively in the City of San José; thereby adding to a city’s alternative transportation network. Restored streams in a commercial center have been a catalyst for downtown economic revitalization. Bend, Oregon is one example of a medium-sized city that has restored the Deschutes River to a focal point for downtown businesses. In Bend, much of riverfront was contaminated brownfield land that was closed to the public. The restoration plan included brownfield redevelopment and the creation of a new zoning district - “Mixed Use Riverfront”, that when implemented, allowed the construction of new retail commercial uses interspersed with lodging and apartments and townhouse dwellings. Pedestrian walkways and restaurant patios are oriented towards the river. A new amphitheatre was also built along the riverfront.

Some Benefits of Urban Stream Restoration:

- Improved urban aesthetics and citizen pride
- Increased property values
- Impetus for urban redevelopment projects and business stimulation
- Increased urban recreational access, including creating new parks
- Creation of a participatory civic project
- Improved water quality and wildlife habitat
- Enhanced erosion and flood control measures (for some streams).

[Another Medium-Sized City Launches its Own Restoration Effort – Santa Cruz, CA](#)



A Community Paddle in Downtown Santa Cruz
Organized by the San Lorenzo River Alliance

Although considered an environmentally-conscious city, Santa Cruz, CA, is bisected by a river that appears as a forgotten and degraded waterway. The river, which was once a vibrant stream that hosted the City's "Venetian Water Festival" until the 1950's, the San Lorenzo River's streamflow has decreased over past decades as the City's Water Dept. increased its water diversions to supply increasing water demands of urban growth. The water-starved river is quite visible since it flows along one edge of the City's trendy downtown.

This past autumn, the local Coastal Watershed Council (CWC) launched a new effort to reverse the negative trend in this river. Under the name, San Lorenzo River Alliance, CWC has created a coalition including other non-profits and some public agencies to begin planning for a river that could become a focal point for downtown Santa Cruz. The Alliance sponsored a community river paddle in October 2013, where paddlers in kayaks, canoes and stand-up paddle boards massed down the river for the first time in decades. Now the Alliance is holding a series of community forums to gain ideas from the public on how to revitalize the river. The [next forum](#) is May 12.



The current work of the Alliance illustrates two cornerstones that make urban stream restoration successful - planning and community input. Local residents, as supportive stakeholders, will increase the ideas, volunteerism and public funds flowing into a river renewal project. Interested in taking a glimpse at the process for restoring an urban river? This [7-minute video](#) summarizes the Bronx River Restoration Project in New York. My summer newsletter will continue this topic in more detail, including discussing the Urban Stream Research Center.

[Your Business Could be a Green Business](#)



What is a Green Business?

So you own or work in a company that's not in the energy or environmental conservation business, but you'd still like to do your part to promote sustainability while on the job. What can you do? You could help your company become a certified Green business! Once certified, there can also be fun and interesting networking events and other opportunities, as occurred with the Green Biz networking event I attended last month.

Green businesses are *any* type of business or agency that has shown it is actively using its workplace as a tool to increase environmental sustainability in the way products and services are obtained, manufactured and marketed and how business operations and facilities are conducted through a certification program. To become certified, a

Kim Tschantz discusses green business ideas with other Santa Cruz area certified Green business owners, Lydia Corser, [Greenspace](#) (left of Kim) and Peter and Lleni Carr, [Somerset Door & Window](#) at the Green Business Networking Mixer in March.

business must achieve a certain score, showing it is meeting certain sustainability objectives. This begins with completing a questionnaire. The questionnaire answers are verified by an on-site inspection of the business facility. Certification staff will work with businesses that don't achieve a "passing" score towards implementing additional practices that will allow a "passing" score the next time around.

Most localities now have some type of Green business program. The [Monterey Bay Green Business Program](#) assists and certifies businesses where my business is located. If a similar program does not exist in your area, contact [Green America](#) to be connected to a program that can assist you.

Why Go Green?

There are a number of important reasons to **Go Green** with your business. Most importantly, you will be taking responsible actions towards preserving the world's natural resources.

Additional reasons for your business to Go Green include:

- Setting a positive example for employees, which boosts morale and company loyalty
- Gaining a competitive advantage by differentiating yourself as a **Green** business
- Showing you care about a sustainable world and setting an example that, maybe they should too
- Being listed in green business directories in your community, your region and your state
- Reducing utility bills and other related cost savings
- Providing a cleaner and healthier work environment
- You will receive assistance on how to achieve additional sustainable objectives, as needed
- You and your staff can participate in green business networking opportunities
- You will receive information (e.g. newsletters) keeping you up to date on sustainability ideas and practices for the workplace

How to Start the Journey Towards Certification

Begin by reviewing the Green Program website in your area to determine their certification requirements. Requirements can differ in different programs or areas of the country. There are typically optional ways a business can achieve a "sustainability objective". You may discover that you are already employing enough sustainable practices to gain certification. If not, you can select certain objectives where you want to increase sustainable business practices. In general, you can achieve more sustainability by enacting company policies and practices that effectively respond to these questions:



- How can you achieve more water conservation? (More than the average business)
- How can you reduce your solid waste output and recycle more of your waste?
- How can you conserve more energy?
- How will you prevent pollution?
- What will you do to educate yourself and your employees towards creating more sustainable practices on the job?
- What company policies will you adopt to promote sustainable practices?



For example, replacing standard flush toilets (3.3 gal./flush) with low-flow flush toilets (1.6 gal./flush) can provide significant water savings, depending on the number of employees and toilets used in the business. For a smaller business there are less expensive options to conserve water. Replacing standard faucet aerators (2.2 gal./minute) with low-flow aerators (1.5 gal./min.) is one way to reduce water use. An easy thing I did to reduce energy use was replace incandescent light bulbs with compact florescent bulbs. I also switched from conventional computer paper to recycled post-consumer content paper.

Most programs certify businesses and agencies for 3 years and encourage the option for renewal by going through the certification process again. This method ensures green practices are continuing and staying current. Becoming Green certified is a useful way to play an active role in conserving our environment and, I believe, an important aspect in conducting today's business.

Please visit [my website](#) to better understand our various land use planning and environmental planning services that can help you and your project.

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