

Living with Alhambra Creek

Alhambra Creek and the Martinez Community

The most severe storm in recent years dumped a lot of water in a hurry on the Alhambra Watershed last winter. As Alhambra Creek carried this water through our community, it raced through Alhambra Valley and Franklin Canyon, through neighborhoods, through downtown and into Carquinez Straits. Stream banks were eroded, undercutting structures and trees. Floodwaters overflowed in four places, causing significant damage.

Most of Downtown Martinez, however, did not flood. The project to provide a proper working channel and a floodplain based on understanding how creeks and watersheds work succeeded. When we accommodate the Creek, we protect the community. Now we need apply these principles higher up in the watershed. If we do this right, we will protect the community and enhance the natural creek.

Alhambra Creek Flooding and Erosion Task Force

In the absence of a coordinated plan, some individual landowners have tried to protect their own properties by doing things to the channel bordering their parcels. Many of these projects have either failed or are in the process of failing. In many cases, the projects have made things worse. Some have been done with permits, some have not. Permits are required for any work to be performed on the creek that is below the top of bank. Working in the creek without permits can result in substantial fines.

The Mayor and City Council of Martinez have set up a Flooding and Erosion Task Force to develop a plan for protecting the upstream community. The plan will be based on understanding the watershed as an integrated system. We need this plan to coordinate, design and build projects that will work and that will continue working.

To succeed, projects need to apply these understandings to substantial reaches of the creek rather than piecemeal to individual parcels. We will need to work together as an informed and engaged community to make this happen. We have much better odds of getting money if we have a watershed-function-based community plan. We will also have much better odds of our projects actually providing long-term protection.

Permits:

Working within creeks require permits from various agencies. There are substantial fines for dumping anything into creeks or working without the proper permits. Some important contacts you should make before planning and creek repair are as follows:

City of Martinez Engineering Department	(925) 372-3515
Department of Fish and Game	(707) 944-5500
US Army Corps of Engineers	(415) 977-8462
Water Quality Control Board (SF Bay Area Region)	(510) 622-2300

DRAFT

What can we do?

Making a Plan and developing Projects will take time, money and involvement. What can we do to protect ourselves in while we are doing this? Each creekside landowner is responsible for taking care of the creek bordering their parcel. What can or can't creek side landowners do?

- ~~DO NOT~~ inspect your section of creek – look for obstructions, erosion problems, and vulnerability of structures.
- ~~DO NOT~~ undertake construction work or other streambed alteration work in the creek channel without first consulting with City of Martinez Engineering Department.
 - Working within creeks requires permits. The City of Martinez Engineering Department staff can guide you in the process for obtaining them.
- ~~DO NOT~~ talk with your neighbors – explore ways to work together.
- ~~DO NOT~~ build anything that will obstruct flow in the creek or reduce the channel capacity.
- **DO** consult with City of Martinez Engineering Department before doing work in the creek.
- ~~DO NOT~~ plant in the streambed.
- **DO** plant appropriate native plants on the banks for stability. Contact the City of Martinez Engineering Department to see if permits are required. A list of appropriate plants is available.
- ~~DO NOT~~ plant invasive plants such as ivy, vinca, Arundo (giant cane). These plants do not stabilize the banks, and choke out other plants that do.
- **DO** prune trees and bushes to remove low-growing branches, but retain canopy.
- **DO** remove trash.
- ~~DO NOT~~ dump any material into the creek such as rock, concrete, building materials, lumber, yard waste, pet waste, gray water or swimming pool drainage.
- **DO** remove obstructions and trash, such as fallen trees, lumber, tires, appliances.
- **DO** report erosion problems, obstructions, flooding exposure to the City of Martinez Engineering Department
- ~~DO NOT~~ place exotic species such as goldfish into the creek.
- **DO** report dumping in the creek to 1-800 NODUMPING

For more information contact the City Engineer at:

City of Martinez
 Engineering Department
 525 Henrietta Street
 Martinez, CA 94553
 (925) 372-3515