



The Splash

— Fall/Winter 2016-17

General Meeting:

Tuesday, October 25, 2016
San Leandro Main Library
300 Estudillo Ave.

Upcoming Events

Creek Cleanup Saturday, October 15

9:30 AM-12:30 PM Root Park

General Meeting October 25 6:30-8:00

PM San Leandro Main Library—Conference

Room B - Peter Mangarella, *Trout*

Unlimited's newest East Bay Chapter representative will speak



Environmental Forum Saturday,

November 12. 10:00 AM—1:00 PM San

Leandro Main Library - Lecture Hall -

Expert panelists will speak about the

Alameda County Flood Control's VMP

(dangerous tree management and removal in San Leandro Creek)

This issue:

VMP

If you are a neighbor of the creek in San Leandro, you have likely heard about the work planned for this fall by Alameda County Flood Control. As owners of portions of the creek, it is their responsibility to continually evaluate the creek, including trees for risks and safety. If a tree on their property were to fall, they would be liable for damages to life and property. To be prepared, County of Alameda Flood Control and Water Conservation District produced a study, the Vegetation Management Plan (VMP), which was released in April of 2015. In this study, the Flood Control inventoried every tree within their purview. Trees found to be a "potential risk to life and property"¹

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will be pruned or removed.

After an earlier Flood Control evaluation in 2011, hazardous trees were removed on three locations along San Leandro Creek at Huff Avenue, Haas Avenue, and St. Mary's Avenue in San Leandro. "Of special concern were trees near the footbridge off Haas Avenue used by children en route to Bancroft Middle School."² Last year a large tree branch fell directly on the above mentioned route, the heavily traveled Haas Avenue Bridge. Luckily no one was crossing the bridge at that particular time. Natalie Torres, a 38 year Cary Drive resident was not so lucky. A *Flood Control Eucalyptus* tree dropped a 100' rotten branch from the Glenn Drive side of the creek. It fell on her back deck; destroying it, part of her fence, rain gutters, and broke windows filling her downstairs rooms with glass. "Thank God my dog and I were in the breakfast room on the Cary Drive side. If we had been downstairs, we wouldn't be here today." Her out of pocket costs (after Flood Control covered the basic replacement expenses) were approximately \$1,100.00. Tree abatement has been a hotly debated topic in San Leandro, but today, most property owners along the creek (including Ms. Torres) are thrilled to see the Flood Control District take action.

For the VMP all Flood Control trees on the creek (A total of 337 trees) have been individually studied, tagged, photographed, and rated on a 12 point scale (scale developed by the Society of Arboriculture). Of the trees they rated, 24 were considered dangerous enough to be removed. Others deemed a lower risk will be pruned. Some trees are so large they must be cut while in the creek, and cranes used to remove them branch by branch.

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1. Alameda County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, VMP

2. Alameda County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, San Leandro Creek Tree Removal pamphlet

Officers and Board of Directors:

Michael Gregory President; *Dave Owen* Vice President, *Jan Woycheshin* Secretary, *Melanie Courchaine* Treasurer, *Claudia Taurean* Membership Coordinator, *Maureen Forney* Member at Large
Susan Levenson, Watershed Awareness Coordinator/Newsletter Editor

Friends of San Leandro Creek is a 105(c)(3) non-profit organization made up of citizens, students, and businesses dedicated to improving community understanding and awareness of San Leandro Creek and its watershed.

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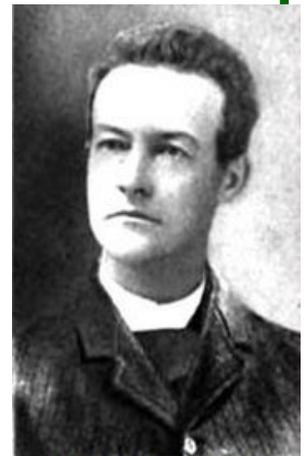
The slopes of the creek are very steep in many places, accessing these trees can be very difficult. This year Alameda County built 2 new access points: Huff Ave, and Cary Drive so heavy machinery can be utilized. (Alvarado St and St. Mary's Ave access ramps were already in place.) These new access points will be made permanent so monitoring the creek will be possible in the future.

An important piece of this project is the *replanting* of vegetation. Alameda County plans to use plants/trees with spacing, shade-tolerance, and moisture requirements in mind. Planting will also include maintenance, (watering and replacing failed trees/vegetation) for several years. The questions about the importance of planting native vs non-native life is addressed in the VMP. FSLC supports the removal of non native species, (not found here *before* European settlers) especially if unhealthy or dangerous. Nearly ½ of the trees studied by the Flood Control District were invasive Eucalyptus trees. They are oily, thus highly flammable. For this reason a nickname for the eucalyptus in Australia is the "gasoline tree". Their characteristic spicy fragrance is really flammable oil. But more about eucs later. The removal of sick and/or dying trees makes way for a new generation of trees, in this case chosen specifically for the location. It is a perfect opportunity to plant native species that belong there. By no means are all the trees that are being removed or pruned non-natives or invasive. Of the 24 trees chosen to be removed, 10 are blue gum eucalyptus, but the remainder are natives. Regardless of species, only trees representing "potential risk to life and property" will be addressed.

Alameda County Flood Control's Vegetation Management Plan is available to view. This includes the list of the replacement tree/plant species. FSLC encourages all interested parties to check it out:

<https://www.acgov.org/pwa/documents/FINAL-SLCrVegMgmtPlan4-3-15.pdf>

The history of eucalyptus trees in the East Bay may be a helpful addition to this article. The eucalyptus tree was introduced to California in 1856, when the population here was growing by vast numbers. The "1870 Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture reported on California's need for hardwood trees and suggested the development of "artificial forests"³. Native trees were relatively short and interspersed with large areas of grassland predominating. Eucalyptus trees grow at an astonishing rate. One grower reported having 40-foot trees just six years after planting them. That spurred the infamous Oakland developer Frank Havens to open the Mahogany Eucalyptus and Land Company, (for planting and milling) anticipating profits from the fast growing tree. In 1910 he planted 8 million eucs in a 14 mile-long strip from Berkeley through Oakland. "This tree at this particular moment is in many instances the most valuable one on the face of the globe," stated Havens's son, Seyd.⁴ Soon trouble began. Within a few years, the first burgeoning trees were harvested. It was found that the eucalyptus wood was not only brittle, but the grain was so crooked that even building fence posts was out of the question. In their native land Australia, foresters only enjoy a straight, profitable wood after approximately *75-100 years of growth*. With this devastating information, Frank Havens quickly closed up shop. Unfortunately those 8 million trees spread throughout the area, including the banks of San Leandro Creek.



FRANK C. HAVENS

(Continued on pg. 3)

3. Cycling Through History *Eucalyptus Trees and the Bay Area* Sam Larson 2012

4. Bay Nature *Ubiquitous Eucalyptus How the Aussie Got Naturalized* Bill O'Brien July- September 2005

“Like people, trees are all individuals.”

-David Hockney

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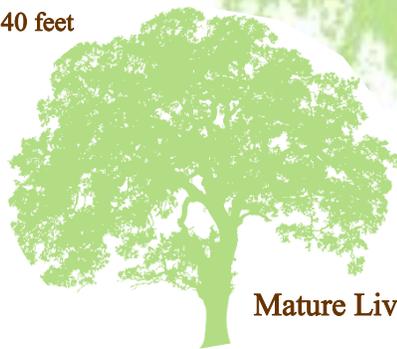
When Eucs were brought over from Australia, they were imported by *seed*. Very few natural insect pests arrived with them. The 57 Australian mammal and over 200 bird species that live in and depend on the tree for food didn't come either.⁵ Further, the leaves and bark of Haven's favorite tree are poisonous. Over millennia, the Aussie native mammals and birds evolved the mechanisms to deal with those toxins. In Northern California, our natives have not yet been able to adapt. Some birds nest, and monarch butterflies utilize the euc forests to over-winter. The tallest tree in the forest here, eucalyptus top out at 50-150 feet (our native trees typically grow only to 40'). Shorter locals cannot compete for sunlight. Further, if eucalyptus trees catch fire, flames can reach more than 150 feet in the air. "Branches, bark and leaves slough off in in long pieces...during periods of dry, windy weather...create a near-optimal mixture of oxygen and fuel for fire". Because of their natural oils, eucs release twice as much energy as a comparable grasslands blaze.⁶ In 1991 the "gasoline trees" lived up to their nickname. The East Bay Hills fire of '91 destroyed over 3,450 homes, killed 25 people and injured 150 others. It cost \$3.9 *billion* in today's dollars.⁷

Whatever your view of tree removal, I think we can all agree that removing a *clear danger* is in the best interest of all. In fact, San Leandro Creek will be a healthier, safer, more welcoming area. With a little time, vision and patience, new trees will grow; back yard greenery will again shade and grace us with wildlife and beauty.

“Trees are poems that the earth writes upon the sky.”

-Kahlil Gibran

40 feet



Mature Live Oak



Mature Eucalyptus tree

5. Santa Barbara Independent *How the Eucalyptus Came to California - A Cautionary Tale* Teisha Rowland 2011

6. Bay Nature *Ubiquitous Eucalyptus How an Aussie Got Naturalized* Bill O'Brien 2006

7. *Vegetation Management for Fire Safety in the East Bay Hills*, Sierra Club brochure

Have you checked out our web site?



The San Leandro Creek Watershed Awareness Program is a comprehensive watershed education program funded by Alameda County Flood Control and Conservation District, with additional support from the City of San Leandro, implemented by Friends of San Leandro Creek. Thank you to the following for your continued support: Alameda County Public Works, The City of San Leandro, Robert and Lois C. Braddock Charitable Foundation, Fremont Bank and FSLC Members and Volunteers.



Friends of San Leandro Creek Membership Application

Yes, I would like to become a member/renew my membership in the following category: (Please circle one)

- Student \$ 1
Non-Profit \$25
- Individual \$5
Business \$100
- Family \$15

Make checks and please remit to:

Friends of San Leandro Creek
C/O RHSD
835 E. 14th St.
San Leandro, CA 94577

Friends of San Leandro Creek is a 501(c) (3) not for profit corporation. Your donations are tax deductible

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I have a special skill or interest in: _____



**“Why pay money for the horror movies?
Just go to a street without trees!”**
- Mehmet Murat ildan

Only Rain Down The Storm Drain!