

FAQ

Kottinger Creek Restoration

Q What is wrong with the creek the way it is? Why are we doing this project?

A For years, conventional water management practices (i.e., channel straightening, ditching, and removal of native riparian vegetation) have been used to maintain Kottinger Creek. This project, in fact, is rooted in rethinking these practices.

FarWest Restoration Engineering, experts in creek restoration, was hired by the City of Pleasanton, to evaluate the condition of the creek and to develop a restoration plan. Pending completion of this work, a moratorium on cutting in the riparian corridor was instituted.

The geometry/elevation of the creek channel itself needs repair. Studies have revealed it to be a system out of balance, with reduced habitat value. A lack of shade has produced an overgrowth of cattails and invasive species such as glossy privet and ivy, related siltation, and increased water temperatures that limit aquatic life.

Q What are the project's objectives?

A. This project has several objectives, the primary of which is to restore Kottinger Creek as it runs through the Park to proper function. A balanced, healthy system should be in a steady state or one of "dynamic equilibrium" where there is neither excessive sedimentation nor erosion.

Other objectives are: improved habitat, high-quality esthetics, passive and active recreational opportunities, safety and security, ensuring no flood hazards are created, development of a *Monitoring and Maintenance Field Guide* with training seminars.

Q Who will this project benefit?

A. This project will benefit anyone who enjoys experiencing creeks – their sights, sounds and smells – and learning about their habitat value, function. It will provide the Tri Valley with an easily-accessible restoration demonstration park. It will also provide a natural environment for recreation in the midst of the City of Pleasanton and will serve as a classroom for school children in the East Bay.

Because Kottinger Creek is in the Alameda Creek Watershed, the project has regional as well as community significance. Key byproducts of the project are a creek maintenance and monitoring guide and training workshops for both City of Pleasanton employees and the general public.

Q. Who supports this project?

A. This project has gained widespread community support as well as regional interest. The Friends of Kottinger Creek, a grassroots citizens' group, is in its sixth year of advocating restoration of Kottinger Creek. The group is affiliated with the Urban Creeks Council of California, the Alameda Creek Alliance and the Friends of the Arroyos in Livermore, California.

The City of Pleasanton contracted with FarWest Restoration Engineering to develop a comprehensive restoration plan that has been completed and hopes to receive project support from the California River Parkways Grant Program.

Q How will the creek change?

A The reach of the creek from above Bernal downstream to the crossing near Salvador Court will remain unchanged except for slight pruning and elimination of invasive species such as privet. From that point downstream, the creek channel will become wider and will meander. Invasive species will be replaced with native plants and trees. The cattails will be limited to a smaller area of the creek. Over time, there will be more shade along the creek, creating cooler water with more biodiversity.

Q Does the plan reduce lawn area that is currently used for recreation?

A No. Flat areas of lawn are left as-is for recreation and visibility around street corners. Examples are lawn at the base of Cabernet Court and corners around Adams Way where school children gather. To open up additional lawn recreation area, some of the newer oak trees that have been planted in the area between Adams and Tamur Court will be removed and used elsewhere.

Some of the steep banks which are difficult to mow and provide no recreational value will become part of the wider creek channel. On remaining banks, grass will be replaced with plantings.

Q Will the new plantings be dense enough to pose a security risk?

A No. Careful attention has been paid in planting plans to preserve sight lines. Trees will create a canopy over the creek without blocking the view of the trails from Kottinger Drive. Street trees will be spaced to allow for canopy expansion and clear sight lines.

Q Why are two or three small double-piped culverts being removed? Will I still be able to cross the creek?

A To create a continuous channel in dynamic equilibrium, the slope of the creek must be changed. However, if the small culverts remain, their fixed elevations will not allow the slope to be altered. The removal of these culverts will also eliminate the risk of their small pipes becoming clogged with debris (as frequently occurs during storms) and building up energy behind the clog. When finally released, this energy can present a flood hazard.

Whether two or three of these culverts are removed is dependent upon budget constraints. In any case, three crossings will be available.

Q Will the plan create flood hazards?

A No. As compared with the current channel, there will be no change in conditions that could contribute to flooding where the newly designed channel exits the park below Adams Way. For example: water volume will be unchanged; the surface water level will be lowered; shear forces (those that cause erosion) will be reduced.

Note: There has been no flooding on lower Kottinger Drive since 1986 when the culvert under Adams Way overflowed. Following that event four large detention basins were built in Kottinger Ranch to manage the flow. The flow that can now be expected in Kottinger Creek during a 100-year storm (1986 was only a 25-year storm) has been reduced by 86%. This means that in a 100-year storm, only 124 cfs would travel down the channel through the culvert under Adams Way – roughly one-half the culvert's capacity.

Q How can I help?

- E-mail your approval and support to members of the Pleasanton City Council.
<http://www.ci.pleasanton.ca.us/contactcc.html>
- Join the Friends of Kottinger Creek and lend a hand in the work that is yet to be accomplished.
E-mail hpgriffin@aol.com . Please title Kottinger Creek to avoid deletion.