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## Neighbors rally to preserve Kottinger Creek

*City, civic group to work on restoration*

Vintage Hills homeowners are working with city officials to save Kottinger Park's creek from further erosion and to restore some of the natural habitat in the park, itself.

Cheri Puls, a member of the Friends of Kottinger Creek, said the group is proposing a wetlands restoration project that would add trees and foliage to the park while also allowing the creek to flow uninterrupted toward downtown Pleasanton and the arroyo. She said the creek, which flowed freely through pioneer John Kottinger's ranch, now is routed through culverts and trenches installed by developers and city planners in recent years. The result has been a loss of wildlife in much of Kottinger Park.

On a recent tour of the area, former Mayor Warren Harding recalled that Kottinger Park was donated to the city by developers of Vintage Hills.

"The price was right - it was free! - so we accepted the offer," Harding said. "My idea was to leave the parkland as natural as possible and not to trench the creek, but let the water cover the lowlands during heavy rains and then return to its natural boundaries when the rains stopped."

More recently, city planners had a different strategy and moved equipment onto the park site and deep-trenched the creek. They also tore out a group of 30-foot-high willow trees that lined the creek, a move park officials now say might have been a mistake. Because of the deepened channel, heavy rains push a high volume of water down Kottinger Creek and have washed away much of the creek bed.

"Here was a beautiful area that changed with the season," said Earl Mincks, who lives across from the creek on Kottinger Drive. "Then city workers came along and tore out five heritage willows and deepened the creek. In the first heavy rain, hundreds of cubic feet of solid, sand and gravel all washed away."

Jim Wolfe, director of Parks and Community services, said his department will work with the group to study the entire creek area. That would include hiring a hydrologist and meeting with the state Fish & Game Department for permits to make streambed alterations.

"We want to consider the requests of the Friends of Kottinger Creek as well as invite participation from others in the community to make sure we do what the neighborhood wants," Wolfe said. "That includes looking for ways to increase the foliage throughout Kottinger Park and plant materials along the creek."

Puls said she would like Pleasanton to develop a creek preservation ordinance similar to one recently enacted in Oakland.

"Kottinger Creek has existed for ages and we ought to preserve it as it's supposed to be, not put it in pipes," she said. "A creek preservation law would be good for Pleasanton. Our group would like to work with others in preserving these streams all across our city."