



Matt Beard

Trinidad Bay Watershed Council

Meeting Notes

Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 3:00 – 4:50 pm

Civic Club Room at Town Hall

409 Trinity Street, Trinidad

Agricultural land use and protecting water quality in Luffenholtz Creek and the Trinidad Bay watersheds.

A Westhaven resident is concerned about potential pollution of Luffenholtz Creek and nearby watersheds due to cannabis cultivation. She is experiencing water quality issues in creeks and a pond on her property including unusual excessive algae growth and blue rings in the dog water bowl. The creeks and springs from her property flow into Luffenholtz above the City's Water Treatment Plant intake, and she also expressed concern that pollutants could be an issue for the creek and the City water supply.

Discussion:

Water quality concerns:

- There may be a high concentration of cannabis permits in the Westhaven area.
- Potential contaminants from gardening and farming include sediment and organic matter, nitrogen and phosphorus as well as a range of garden chemicals.
- When water containing organic matter is treated by chlorination or other disinfectants, disinfection byproducts can be produced, which are associated with adverse health risks. Filtering water before chemical disinfection or other disinfection methods are used to avoid problems with disinfection byproducts.
- Concern about water quality issues was a big part of why the Trinidad Bay Watershed Council was formed, so this is an appropriate topic of discussion.
- Sending a letter to the board of supervisors would be appropriate when more is known about the issues and concerns about cultivation and possible water pollution. The Yurok have also submitted letters expressing concerns and requesting the County work with the Tribe to mitigate "harmful impacts cannabis cultivation has had on the Tribe's Ancestral Lands and Reservation." The Trinidad City Council approved and submitted several comment letters to the Board of Supervisors regarding concerns about the Commercial Cannabis Ordinance and General Plan changes that could impact the Greater Trinidad Planning Area and Trinidad Water Treatment Plan on Luffenholtz Creek. County planning has not listened to the City concerns regarding reduced parcel size in Westhaven and rezoning from timber to agriculture.

The group debated how to understand and address concerns of cultivation related water pollution.

- Gather more water quality data on Luffenholtz and the coastal area. Start with existing data:
 - City of Trinidad Water system consumer confidence report and required water testing
 - Watershed Plan studies

- ASBS water quality data
- HSU, Madrone thesis and Parker thesis
- Research on how many grows/applications are in the watersheds. Estimates are six permits and probably more than 30 unpermitted.
- Research what chemicals might be used at and discharged from cultivation sites. A suggestion was to talk with growers or go to suppliers to find out what growers are purchasing for their operations.
- Do water quality monitoring to determine what pollutants, if any are present in the Luffenholtz creek and tributaries. This might include starting with residents taking water samples to the lab for a household analysis, and then based on the results, doing testing for specific chemicals of concern.
- Find out what is going on in the watersheds then educate and work cooperatively to prevent pollutants from entering the ground water and waterways. The [Trinidad Westhaven] Watershed Plan has action plans for bacteria, sediment and stormwater.
- Create a “Humboldt Outdoor Certified” 3rd party certification for stewardship similar to the Sonoma Fish Friendly Grapes or “salmon safe” certification fees could fund some of the costs of monitoring and testing and other watershed improvement activities addressing cultivation issues.
- Propose to county that some of the Measure S funds be used for water quality monitoring and restoration of former cultivation sites.

Quarry concerns and Parker and Mill Creeks

Meeting participants expressed concerns about impacts of the Quarry operations on Parker and Mill Creeks. Ted Pease expressed the concerns of neighbors (~35) about noise and safety, and water quality concerns. Megan Wolf from quarry operator Mercer Frazer attended the meeting to hear about residents’ questions and concerns. She will come to the next meeting with responses.

- A water test was done in February that showed high levels of aluminum. What is considered high and are there toxicity concerns. The quarry rock is serpentine/graystone/greenstone. Is there a bioaccumulation issue?
- Is water being pumped out of the quarry discharging into the Mill and Parker Creeks?
- Permitting issues: Conditional Use permit is expired; Valid NPDES Industrial General Permit; Do they need Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR)?
- Some neighbors have experienced falling groundwater levels. There is concern that pumping out the quarry is depleting the groundwater and lowering the water table. How much water is being pumped out?
- Megan will investigate and report back.

Project and Partner Updates

Area of Special Biological Significance: Danny reported on the ASBS. The purple urchins are vacuuming up the kelp. The urchin population is high because the predator population of sea stars crashed due to sea star wasting disease. The disease is decreasing and the sunflower (25 arm) sea star population is

rebounding. There are lots of anemones as well due to fewer other sea star predators. Ocean acidification and erosion due to sea level rise are a concern.

Luffenholtz sediment: Madrone reported that the Luffenholtz sediment reduction project on Green Diamond land appears to be making a difference at the water plant. There was a lot of rainfall/runoff this year but the turbidity stayed low, with the result that the water plant did not have significant issues with processing raw water.

Westhaven Community Services District: Richard Swisher reported that WCSD is still having issues with disinfection byproducts due to tannins from the redwood forest. They are looking for more groundwater to dilute the water. The storage capacity has been doubled to ten days of storage. This means they can shut off production during storms.

City of Trinidad: Becky reported that the City will be starting construction in June on the Prop. 1 Ocean Protection Council funded Citywide LID Construction Project to install a raingarden on Hector Street and bioswales on East Street. If funding is secured, the City will construct LID stormwater improvements in 2019 and decommission the storm water outfall into Trinidad Bay/ASBS. The Clean Beaches Initiative program to repair/ replace failing onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) in Parker, Luffenholtz and Joland Creeks will wrap up by this fall, so contact Becky at the City as soon as possible to find out about this program.

TBWC meetings and activities

- Next meeting will be scheduled in June, and will include discussion about Luffenholtz and Quarry issues, as well as planning for the Fish Festival.
- TBWC Tabling at the Trinidad Fish Festival on Father's Day June 17

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p. m.

Notes prepared and submitted by Becky Price-Hall