

Facts about the critical importance of dredging the San Rafael Creek

Statement of the problem

Without planned and timely dredging, the San Rafael Creek will inevitably fill with silt, the consequences of which result in:

- Decreased navigability
- Drastic reduction in property values (business and residential)
- Loss of waterfront use, business and recreational
- Negative environmental impact

Congressional and Local Political Advocates for dredging are no longer available to waterfront property owners

Former Mayor Al Boro, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, and about to retire) Barbara Boxer are no longer in office and we do not have strong advocates to work on our behalf

Who has paid for this in the past? Who will pay in the future?

Federal funds in past years have paid for dredging of the CENTER of the San Rafael Creek were obtained through energetic efforts by the City of San Rafael and state and federal congressional colleagues. The Army Corp of Engineers is responsible for determining dredging frequency and prioritizing activities. Simply put, the Corps of Engineers is the most important decision maker regarding the allocation of funds for the various dredging projects.

The most recent Newport Boating Associate (NBA) dredge of 2011 was accomplished through a community wide effort designed by, implemented and facilitated by the NBA, using Salt River Construction as its contractor. Waterfront property owners paid for their share of the dredge on either side of the central dredging.

Without approval of and/or assistance by the Corps of Engineers, the NBA has little chance of accomplishing a community dredge without enormous increased costs for each homeowner.

What steps must the NBA take now to prepare it to mobilize, plan, publicize and protect its members from the consequences of inaction?

- Mobilize the NBA leadership to a more visible and relevant presence in the community
- Engage NBA members to participate in critical activities
- Inform the membership of the importance of dredging, and that timing of this planning is critical
- Identify other interested parties along the Creek and plan for integrated efforts
- Contact and meet local political figures (city, state, federal) to identify our interests and concerns
- Contact FEMA and other regulatory agencies to identify our interests and concerns
- Begin discussions with Salt River in anticipation of future dredge
- Identify NBA property owner/basins who may need to engage in interim dredging

Conclusion

History has a tendency of repeating itself unless interested and dedicated parties take the time to look back, analyze and correct problems or replicate successes. The San Rafael Creek (and other waterways) will always silt in unless steps are taken. Memories are short, and it is easy for us to become complacent and forget about the huge effort it took to carry out the first and only successful community dredge in 2011. It bears repeating that without our San Rafael Creek waterfront's viability as a clean and functioning waterway, our properties will lose their unique attraction and property value.

Let's work together to protect our interests. Let's ensure that we can continue to look out our window on any given day and see the kayaks, paddle boarders, sail boats and motorboats, and the Coast Guard vessels. Do we want to see that disappear? It is time to do the right thing.

The Ask

Sam Ferguson accepted the challenge to revive a dredging committee at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the membership. Bryon Bass has joined the efforts. We need a few more hands to help us map our course. If you are interested, please contact Bryon at 415-418-4782 or Sam at 415-686-6417.