



**REGULAR MEETING
GOLDEN RAIN FOUNDATION LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE***

**Wednesday, February 14, 2024 – 2 p.m.
BOARD ROOM/VIRTUAL MEETING
Laguna Woods Village
24351 El Toro Road, Laguna Woods, CA**

Laguna Woods Village owners/residents are welcome to participate in all open committee meetings and submit comments or questions for virtual meetings using one of three options:

- 1. Join the meeting in-person in the Community Center Board Room.*
- 2. Join the meeting via Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/99225095454>. Please “Raise Your Hand” during the agenda item you would like to speak to. If you have an item that is NOT on the agenda, please “Raise Your Hand” during the Member Comments agenda item.*
- 3. Via email to meeting@vmsinc.org any time before the meeting is scheduled to begin or during the meeting. Please use the name GRF Landscape Committee in the subject line of the email. Name and unit number must be included.*

NOTICE AND AGENDA

This Meeting May Be Recorded

1. Call to Order
2. Acknowledgment of Media
3. Approval of the Agenda
4. Approval of Meeting Report for November 8, 2023
5. Chair Remarks
6. Department Head Update
 - a. Charging Station Update
 - b. Sprinkler System Update
 - c. Clubhouse 1

Items for Discussion and Consideration

7. Aliso Creek Update
8. Member Comments (Items Not on the Agenda)
9. Response to Member Comments

Concluding Business:

10. Committee Member Comments

11. Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday, May 1, 2024 at 1:30 p.m.

12. Adjournment

Cush Bhada, Chair
Kurt Wiemann, Staff Officer
Megan Feliz, Landscape Administrative Assistant
Telephone: 949-268-2565

*A quorum of the GRF Board, or more, may also be present at the meeting.



OPEN MEETING

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE GOLDEN RAIN FOUNDATION
LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, November 8, 2023 – 1:30 P.M.
BOARD ROOM / VIRTUAL MEETING
Laguna Woods Village Community Center
24351 El Toro Road**

REPORT

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair – Juanita Skillman, Ira Lewis, S.K. Park, Sue Quam, Maggie Blackwell (Alternate)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Glenn Miller, Anthony Liberatore, Yvonne Horton

OTHERS PRESENT:

ADVISORS PRESENT: Catherine Brians

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Merget, Megan Feliz

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Skillman called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

2. Acknowledgment of Media

No formal press was present.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Director Park made the motion to approve the agenda. Director Lewis seconded the motion. The agenda was approved without objections.

4. Approval of the Meeting Report for August 22, 2023

Director Park made the motion to approve the agenda. Director Quam seconded the motion. The report was approved without objections.

5. Committee Chair Remarks

Chair Skillman acknowledged Robert Merget retiring at the end of the year and thanked him for all he has done. Chair Skillman acknowledged the two landscaping employees who earned the Employee Excellence Award and thanked them for their hard work.

6. Department Head Update

Mr. Merget discussed Aliso Creek schedule for clean-up and Willow Trees that will be removed. He discussed the Aliso Creek asphalt replacement schedule.

Items for Discussion and Consideration

7. 4005-1G Tree Removal

Discussion commenced among the committee. Director Lewis made the motion to approve the tree removal. Director Park seconded the motion. The request was approved without objections.

8. Monkey Puzzle Tree Trimming Proposal

Discussion commenced among the committee. Director Quam made the motion to approve the tree removal. Director Lewis seconded the motion. The proposal was approved without objections.

9. Member Comments (Items Not on the Agenda)

Three members voiced a complaint about the removed benches around Aliso Creek. Director Lewis made a motion that this item was M&C department and to send it to their committee. Director Blackwell agreed and seconded the motion. Aliso Creek benches will be directed to GRF M&C Committee meeting. No objections were made. One-member commented asking status of stop on Aliso Creek Bridge.

10. Response to Members Comments

Members of the Committee responded to the member comment.

Concluding Business:

11. Committee Member Comments

Several comments were made.

12. Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday, February 14, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

13. Adjourned at 2:10 p.m.



Juanita Skillman, Chair

Aliso Creek Compliance Monitoring-Fall 2023

Golden Rain Foundation of Laguna Woods

CHAMBERS GROUP

November 28, 2023
3151 Airway Ave, Suite F-208
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Kurt Wiemann,
Director of Landscape Services
Golden Rain Foundation
PO Box 2220
Laguna Woods, CA 92637

SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 2023 MONITORING SUMMARY IN SUPPORT OF ALISO CREEK ANNUAL MAINTENANCE, PERMIT COMPLIANCE, AND BIOLOGICAL MONITORING SERVICES IN LAGUNA WOODS, CALIFORNIA

Dear Mr. Wiemann,

Chambers Group has prepared this brief maintenance monitoring summary for the Golden Rain Foundation of Laguna Woods (GRF) in support of routine vegetation maintenance occurring within and adjacent to Aliso Creek (Creek) within the Laguna Woods Village residential community, located in Laguna Woods, California. The portion of the Creek maintained by the GRF extends from Moulton Parkway to the west, is bisected by the Avenida Sevilla crossing and terminates under Paseo de Valencia to the east.

The Creek and surrounding area are known to provide habitat for biologically sensitive resources including nesting birds, southwestern pond turtle (SWPT) (*Actinemys pallida*), native riparian plants, and protected waters. Specific biological surveys and monitoring efforts are required by the GRF's California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) number 1600-2013-0151-R5 (Amended August 2022), the Southwestern Pond Turtle Avoidance and Mitigation Plan for Laguna Woods (Endemic 2020), and the Herbicide Use Plan for Aliso Woods Park (Chambers Group 2022).

Pre-Maintenance Monitoring/Site Conditions

Wildlife

Prior to the start of maintenance or monitoring efforts, Chambers Group submitted an E-mail notification to CDFW documenting the proposed maintenance activities and pre-maintenance survey. Maintenance activities occurred November 13 through 15, 2023. A Chambers Group biologist (Joanna Kipper) surveyed all suitable SWPT habitat prior to the start of maintenance activities within and adjacent to the proposed maintenance areas. Subsequent surveys were conducted throughout the maintenance effort as crews continued to other locations within the Creek. No SWPT were observed. Surveys for nesting birds were not required or completed as activities occurred outside nesting bird season (February 15 through August 31). Numerous native birds were observed foraging and vocalizing within the general area. Non-native avian species observed included pin-tailed whydah (*Vidua macroura*). Non-native invasive wildlife species previously observed in the Creek including non-native American bullfrogs (*Lithobates catesbeianus*), goldfish (*Carassius auratus*), red-eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), and crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) were not observed during this effort. Several non-native green sunfish (*Lepomis* spp.) were observed within a few ponded areas. Trash and debris were minimal.

Vegetation/Water

Improvements in maintenance strategies and the use of herbicide in 2022 to reduce the dense monoculture thickets of plants such as non-native Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) and native southern cattail (*Typha domingensis*) from inhibiting water flow have improved water quality, clarity, and flood control capacity throughout the Creek. The 2023 spring and summer maintenance efforts further minimized the spread of non-native annual herbaceous weeds allowing a greater diversity of native annual and perennial plants to re-colonize the Creek banks. These native plant species

included common spike rush (*Eleocharis macrostachys*), yellow nut-grass (*Cyperus esculentus*), water pepper (*Persicaria lapathifolia*), and cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*).

During the a pre-maintenance site visit conducted October 5, 2023, the biologist determined there were several areas in which cattails had re-colonized the central portion of the Creek and had begun to inhibit water flow. Additionally, numerous unhealthy, diseased, and dead native willow (*Salix* spp.) trees were observed including those with scale insects or ambrosia beetle infestations. Several were also in need of trimming to minimize flow obstructions during flooding events and improve overall health of the surrounding habitat.

Description of Maintenance Activities

Removing cattails from key choke points along the Creek and pruning or removing trees that were determined to be obstructing water flow, were dead/dying, or were heavily diseased was the primarily focus of the Fall 2023 maintenance effort. GRF landscape crew size ranged from 5 to 7 per day. Tasks included the manual (hand and mechanical mowing) removal of dead annual vegetation and herbicide treatment of cattail as well as a few highly invasive plant species including giant reed (*Arundo donax*). Herbicide treatment and mechanical mowing efforts focused on immature plants or those without seeds such as Bermuda grass and Spanish sunflower (*Pulicaria paludosa*) seedlings. Trimming and herbicide treatments of cattails occurred primarily within the center (one third) portion of the Creek, particularly within key choke points such as immediately adjacent to the pedestrian bridge and in shallow areas. The trunks of healthy native trees such as willows were cleared of debris accumulation and their lower portions pruned to reduce future debris accumulation following subsequent precipitation or flooding events (Attachment A). Trash was also bagged and removed where observed.

Maintenance Monitoring

The Chambers Group biologist conducted daily biological monitoring during maintenance activities and verified maintenance staff were adhering to CDFW permit conditions and plans related to special status species avoidance and aquatic resource protections (e.g., nesting birds, SWPT, herbicide use protocols, Best Management Practices (BMPs), and native plant protections). Prior to the start of maintenance activities each day, the biologist led a brief worker awareness training to inform crews about specific permit requirements related to special status species avoidance and resource protections. No adverse impacts to native or otherwise protected nesting birds or SWPT occurred during the maintenance activities.

Conclusions/Recommendations

In addition to water quality and flood control improvements, the selective reduction in Creek vegetation has improved habitat diversity and foraging opportunities for local wildlife. Continued removal of undesirable, diseased, dead, and non-native plant species is recommended to continue to encourage natural recruitment of native riparian plant species, provide foraging and nesting opportunities for wildlife, and to maintain water quality and flood control capacities.

Continued modifications to the maintenance approach and use of approved herbicides are anticipated to substantially reduce annual maintenance needs within the Creek over time. Chambers Group recommends a site inspection occur in early March 2024 to evaluate potential vegetation management needs for Spring 2024. No additional maintenance activities are recommended in the interim.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (949) 331-2223 or at jkipper@chambersgroupinc.com if you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter report.

Aliso Creek Compliance Monitoring-Fall 2023

Golden Rain Foundation of Laguna Woods

CHAMBERS GROUP

Sincerely,

CHAMBERS GROUP, INC.



Joanna Kipper

Biologist

jkipper@chambersgroupinc.com

(949) 331-2223

3151 Airway Avenue, Suite F-208

Costa Mesa, CA 92626



Attachment A. Site Photographs November 13 through November 15, 2023 (Before and After Maintenance Effort)



Photograph 1a Before. Taken at the north end of the Creek south of Paseo De Valencia facing upstream.



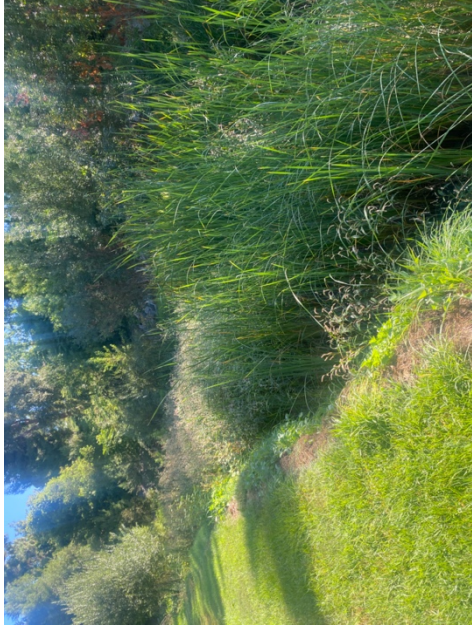
Photograph 1b After. Dead plant material along the both banks and on the sandbar removed. Living non-native plants trimmed down. Lower 1/3 of healthy willows (*Salix* spp.) trimmed to minimize flow obstructions during flooding events.



Photograph 2a Before. Dense cattails. Photo taken facing upstream mid-way through Aliso Park.



Photograph 2b After. Cut and chemically treated cattails from center of channel. Trimming improved water flow and visibility.



Photograph 3a Before. Taken just north of one of the larger ponded areas within Aliso Park.



Photo 3b. After. Cut and chemically-treated cattails and dead annual plant material removed. Living non-native plants trimmed down.



Photograph 4a Before. Taken immediately adjacent to and north of the pedestrian bridge. Dense cattails and overgrown and downed willow trees obstructing flow.



Photo 4b After. Dead annual vegetation removed, cattails cut, and chemically treated, and downed willow tree debris removed. Lower 1/3 of healthy willows trimmed to minimize flow obstructions during flooding events.



Photograph 5a Before. Taken south of the pedestrian bridge. Willow tree limbs encroaching into creek and partially obstructing flow.



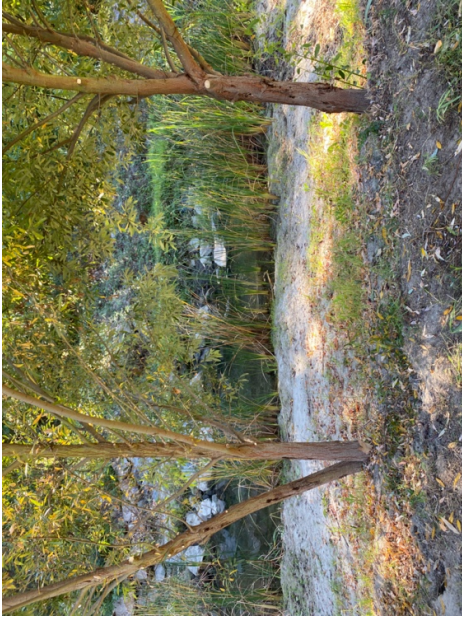
Photograph 5b After. Downed willow tree debris removed. Overgrowth of dead/downed vegetation in understory cleared out. Lower 1/3 of healthy willows trimmed to minimize flow obstructions during flooding events.



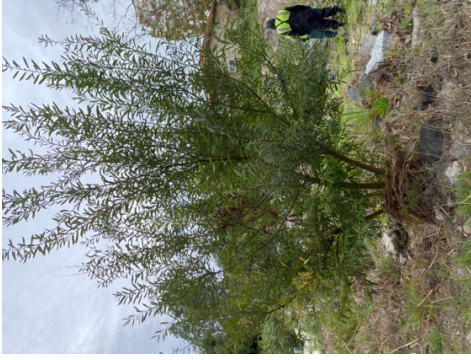
Photograph 6a Before. Taken at a lower portion of the creek south of Avenida Sevilla. Dense cattails inhibiting water flow.



Photograph 6b After. Cut and chemically-treated cattails. Improvement in water visibility and flow immediately observed.



Photograph 7. Example of lower 1/3 trimming of native trees to minimize flow obstruction during flooding events.



Photograph 8. Before and after photographs depicting native tree pruning. Debris tangled/wrapped around truck base removed.



Photograph 8. Example of unhealthy and diseased limbs that were removed to allow for recovery of the standing tree. Some examples of unhealthy or diseased trees include those with scale insect or ambrosia beetle infestations.



Photograph 9. Another example of unhealthy and diseased limbs of trees that were removed.