

City of Capitola

Commission on the Environment

Regular Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, November 19, 2025 – 6:00 PM



Capitola City Hall, Community Room
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

Chair: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law

Vice-Chair: Michael Maroney

Commissioners: Mayor Clarke, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf

Staff Representative: Erika Senyk

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

3. Public Oral and Written Communications

The Chair may announce and set time limits at the beginning of each agenda item. The Committee Members may not discuss Oral Communications to any significant degree but may request issues raised be placed on a future agenda.

4. Staff Comments

5. October 15, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

Recommended Action: Review and approve minutes.

6. General Business

A. The Park at Rispin Mansion Landscape Plan

Recommended Action: Receive a presentation from staff on the landscape plan for the Park at Rispin Mansion.

B. Soquel Creek Tule Planting Plan

Recommended Action: Review and provide feedback on the 2026 Soquel Creek Tule Planting Plan.

7. Items for Future Agenda

8. Adjournment

Next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for December 17, 2025.

Agenda and Agenda Packet Materials: The Commission on the Environment Agenda is available on the City's website: www.cityofcapitola.org/ on Friday prior to the Wednesday meeting. If you need additional information, please contact the Public Works Department at (831) 475-7300.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Disability-related aids or services are available to enable persons with a disability to participate in this meeting consistent with the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Assisted

listening devices are available for individuals with hearing impairments at the meeting in the City Council Chambers. Should you require special accommodations to participate in the meeting due to a disability, please contact the City Clerk's office at least 24-hours in advance of the meeting at 831-475-7300. In an effort to accommodate individuals with environmental sensitivities, attendees are requested to refrain from wearing perfumes and other scented products.

City of Capitola

Commission on the Environment Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 – 6:00 PM



Capitola City Hall, Community Room
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

Chair: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law

Vice Chair: Michael Maroney

Commissioners: Mayor Clarke, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf

Staff Representative: Erika Senyk

1. Call to Order and Roll Call – Chair Beritzhoff-Law called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Commissioners Present: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Michael Maroney, Dennis Norton, Mayor Clarke

Absent: Scott Rohlf

City Staff Present: Erika Senyk (Environmental Projects Manager)

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Public Oral and Written Communications

Commissioner Rohlf provided written communications on General Business Item 6A in advance of the meeting, to be taken into consideration by the Commission during discussion.

Brookvale Terrace residents commented on their site-managed creek system, annual damming activity, and wildlife that utilize the creek for habitat, such as waterfowl.

4. Staff Comments

Staff provided an update on the City's application for the Ocean Protection Council's SB1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant program.

5. August 20, 2025 Regular Commission Meeting Minutes

Recommended Action: Review and approve minutes.

Motion to approve the August 20, 2025 minutes: Commissioner Norton

Seconded: Mayor Clarke

Motion passed 4-0-1 (Commissioner Rohlf Absent)

6. General Business

A. Soquel Creek and Noble Gulch Maintenance

Recommended Action: Discuss potential native plant restoration and fish habitat improvement projects for Soquel Creek and Noble Gulch.

Don Alley from D.W. Alley & Associates, the City's contracted fisheries biologist, provided an

overview of his long-term monitoring of steelhead populations in Soquel Creek and management recommendations for improving creek habitat for vulnerable fish populations.

The Commission requested that for the November regular Commission on the Environment meeting, staff prepare a plan for planting additional tules in Soquel Creek to improve habitat for tidewater gobies and steelhead.

7. Items for Future Agenda

1. Soquel Creek tule planting plan
2. Staff update for the Park at Rispin Mansion landscape plan

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm to the next Regular Meeting of the Commission on the Environment on November 19, 2025.

ATTEST:

Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Chair

Capitola Commission on the Environment

Agenda Report

Meeting: November 19, 2025

From: Public Works Department

Topic: Soquel Creek Tule Planting Plan



Recommended Action: Review and provide feedback on the 2026 Soquel Creek Tule Planting Plan.

Background/Discussion: Tules plants are native perennial grasses that are native to central California and tend to grow in marshes, lakes, and along streambanks. Tule beds benefit freshwater stream ecosystems by stabilizing streambanks with their root systems, improving water quality by filtering out nutrients and pollutants, and provide essential habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

In Soquel Creek, tule beds have demonstrated to contribute critical habitat for vulnerable fish populations, including steelhead trout and tidewater gobies. Steelhead trout and tidewater gobies are federally listed as threatened and endangered species, respectively, primarily due to habitat loss and degradation from coastal development, water diversions, and changes in water quality. Tule beds in Soquel Creek benefit these species by providing habitat cover from common predators, protection from rapid streamflow, and help to modify water temperatures by producing shady, favorable conditions.

In May 2017, the Public Works Department planted tules on the eastern streambank along Soquel Creek under the Railroad Trestle (Area 1 in Attachment 1). The tule beds continued to grow and flourish between 2017 and 2022, creating suitable habitat for fish populations (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Tule planting and establishment under the Railroad Trestle in Soquel Creek in 2017.



Figure 2. Tule bed growth progress under the Railroad Trestle in 2022, five years following the initial planting project.

To reinforce the tule bed habitat following the severe storms of January 2023, the City organized a second planting project for spring of 2023. In May 2023, the City contracted with Ecological Concerns, Inc. (ECI) to source and plant tules under the Railroad Trestle (Figure 3). With permission from KSCO NewsTalk Radio staff, ECI sourced the tules from Corcoran Lagoon by entering the lagoon from an access point near the radio station. The tules were planted by ECI on May 25, 2023, after water levels in Soquel Creek allowed for easy access to the streambanks. Today, the tule beds under the Railroad Trestle have persisted and continue to provide good habitat cover for fish species.



Figure 3. Replanting of tules by ECI habitat restoration staff in May 2023, following the severe January 2023 storms.

At the regular October 15, 2025 Commission on the Environment meeting, the City's contracted fisheries biologist, Don Alley from D.W. Alley & Associates, provided a recommendation that the City plant additional tules in Soquel Creek to improve fish habitat. The Commission requested for staff to prepare a plan for tule planting in 2026.

With guidance provided by D.W. Alley & Associates, City staff recommends planting Area 2 in Attachment 1, with continued maintenance of Area 1, as needed. As was done in 2023, staff proposes contracting with Ecological Concerns, Inc. for sourcing and planting the tules with a total project budget of \$5,000. Planting would occur in spring of 2026, prior to the formation of the lagoon for the City's

Soquel Creek Lagoon Management project, which typically falls around Memorial Day weekend. Completing the tule planting effort prior to the end of May will ensure that the streambank is safely accessible by ECI staff for the duration of the project.

2026 Soquel Creek Tule Planting Plan

1. Pre-Spring (Winter 2025–2026) Preparation

- **Site Assessment:** Identify suitable low-velocity, shallow-water zones in Area 2 along Soquel Creek where tules historically occur. Prioritize areas with stable banks and sediment. Perform a survival assessment of Area 1 and plan any necessary maintenance.
 - **Permitting & Coordination:** Notify U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permitting staff and fisheries biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the proposed planting schedule.
 - **Contract:** Establish any necessary contract documentation and a purchase order with Ecological Concerns, Inc. for sourcing and planting the tules.
 - **Plant Material Sourcing:** Arrange to collect tule plugs from Corcoran Lagoon with KSCO NewsTalk Radio Station as the approved donor site.
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2. Spring 2026 Planting Window (March–May; Prior to Formation of Soquel Creek Lagoon)

- **Site Preparation:** Remove invasive vegetation by hand where necessary. Determine access points for transferring equipment to the planting site. Secure parking accommodations for contractor vehicles.
 - **Planting Method:**
 - Source tule plugs from Corcoran lagoon and transfer to planting site using 5-gallon buckets filled with water.
 - Install sourced tules in Area 2 and replenish existing tules in Area 1 as needed.
 - Install tule plugs or rhizome divisions in clusters, spacing them roughly 1–2 feet apart.
 - Plant in coved areas and deeply enough to anchor rhizomes against spring flows.
 - Use wooden stakes, willow wattles, or biodegradable erosion-control mats if needed for protection.
 - **Crew & Safety:** Use professional crews with waders; follow safe-access protocols near water.
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3. Early-Season Aftercare (May–July 2026)

- **Monitoring:** Check sites every 2–4 weeks for plant establishment, flow impacts, and herbivory.
 - **Maintenance:** Replace failed plugs as necessary; remove competing invasive species.
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4. Late-Season Review (August–October 2026)

- **Survival Assessment:** Document growth, percent cover, and bank stabilization benefits. D.W. Alley & Associates to monitor benefits to fish species during the Soquel Creek Lagoon Management project period (May – September/October).
- **Adjustments:** Plan any future maintenance or next-season expansion based on results.

Report Prepared By: Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager

Attachments:

1. Soquel Creek Tule Planting and Maintenance Area Map

Soquel Creek Tule Planting & Maintenance Area Map



November 13, 2025

