



# Friends of Five Creeks

*Volunteers preserving and restoring watersheds of  
North Berkeley, Albany, Kensington, south El Cerrito and Richmond since 1996  
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July 20, 2023

Berkeley Mayor and City Council  
City Manager, Public Works Director Liam Garland  
Transportation and Infrastructure Commission

Re: City Council July 25 Consent Calendar 27, Stormwater Master Plan

Mayor, Council, Manager, and Public Works Director Liam Garland, Commissioners:

Friends of Five Creeks, a 27-year-old volunteer organization working for creeks and watersheds from Berkeley to Richmond, is delighted that the city plans a new, comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan. We look forward to seeing this plan build on existing detailed modeling of two watersheds – the city's largest, and its most environmentally sensitive – as well as what has been learned from experience, including installation of cisterns, rain gardens, and the like.

Berkeley needs a new plan because our infrastructure is old, storm frequency and severity are changing, sea levels are rising, and [Water Board requirements](#) that went into effect July 1 mandate more extensive and expensive treatment of runoff to lessen both the amount of runoff and the pollutants carried.

Going beyond the mechanics of dealing with rain and other runoff in an city overwhelmingly paved and roofed, so that water rushes to drains, creeks, and bay, the new plan must deal with the likely but still uncertain effects of climate change. These include risk of both drought and extreme downpours, as well as rising groundwater levels and saltwater intrusion. These subtler groundwater changes are likely to lead to inland flooding, mobilization of buried industrial pollutants, soil instability, and damage to infrastructure including corrosion and sinking in low-lying areas of West Berkeley.

The plan also must take into account how environmentally sensitive areas can be affected by runoff of all kinds, including water-main breaks, firefighting, accidental spills, and nutrients and pollutants carried in water. A comprehensive plan must deal with pollution flowing to the Bay, pollution and flows that affect creek life, and the harmful effects of runoff on Aquatic Park, a human-made series of lagoons subject to extreme inflows and lacking adequate connections to the Bay.

Finally, a new plan can point out ways that retaining, slowing, infiltrating, and re-using runoff, including employing green infrastructure, can contribute to sustainability, beauty, and health in our city. .

Please keep us informed of opportunities to contribute to this plan. We look forward to helping make it a model for others.

Sincerely,

Susan Schwartz, President  
Friends of Five Creeks