

## **SFCJPA comments for Board Policy Meeting June 16, 2026**

Hello, I am Margaret Bruce, Executive Director of the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority. A community member alerted us to some comments made in the May 19, 2026 Policy & Monitoring Committee. The comments were made following an update presentation by Lisa Bankosh about the Lower Peninsula Watershed Master Plan. I want to correct the record related to some of the comments that were made.

I am going to address three significant misunderstandings based our review of the transcript of the discussion.

**Clarification 1.** Valley Water stated that it views the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority as a single purpose flood protection agency – versus the terms of your mission, which envisions full protection, stewardship etc, implying that the SFCJPA has no engagement in these issues.

This is not true. A holistic and ecosystem-centered approach for the San Francisquito Creek watershed grew out of the SFC watershed council – a stakeholder group formed in 1993, which published a watershed stewardship framework in 1997, and which was a significant progenitor to the SFCJPA itself. In 2005, the Watershed Council published “The Vision for the San Francisquito Watershed”, which is available on the SFCJPA’s website.

More recently, the SFCJPA developed a Comprehensive Plan in 2020 using a stakeholder approach and organizing the document on the elements specified by USEPA for a Watershed Plan. Our plan has the following goals and vision:

*This Comprehensive Plan is the SFCJPA's description of our vision and action plan for the benefit of our member agencies, residents and stakeholders. The SFCJPA has always considered a watershed approach for our work...”*

**Vison:** The San Francisquito Creek is an asset unifying the communities it touches, providing recreation and ecosystem services. The SFCJPA works with its members and watershed partners to address the interrelated issues of flood protection, ecosystem restoration and creation of recreational opportunities along the creek and in the watershed in a fiscally responsible manner.

The plan is the SFCJPA’s action plan to Implement a suite of interrelated actions, each with independent utility but together comprising a comprehensive approach with multiple benefits to all inhabitants of the watershed.

Because Valley Water’s authority stops at Santa Clara County, and San Francisquito Creek forms the boundary, is precisely why the SFCJPA was formed- to look at the creek and watershed holistically precisely because no other entity is able to do so. It is not possible to have a holistic approach to one half of the creek.

The [Comprehensive Plan](#) was last updated in 2024 and is available on our website. The plans have been approved by our Board with each update.

This plan would be a good source of information for Valley Water in their One Water exercise since the SFCJPA plan was informed by public comments, regulatory input, staff at our member agencies and Stanford University.

**Clarification 2.** “Valley Water would like to understand how maintenance would be handled, since SFCJPA does not do this. Valley Water stated that they are maintaining the Reach 1 Project.”

There is a lack of understanding here. I want to clarify that Valley Water has *partial* responsibility for Reach 1 Project Maintenance. The SFCJPA Board delegated maintenance to Valley Water and the City of East Palo Alto in 2014. In addition, the SFCJPA, as the permit holder for this project, has been responsible for mitigation monitoring and reporting of the restoration areas, as well as ongoing responsibility for Five Year Reviews of the maintenance actions by Valley Water and East Palo Alto. The initial 5-Year Review was completed in May 2023.

For the Reach 2 Project, a similar process may be assumed- the SFCJPA Board could decide to coordinate, or to delegate some or all Reach 2 project maintenance.

It should also be noted that the SFCJPA is pursuing permits for ongoing routine creek maintenance on behalf of our members to allow for vegetation management and sediment removal. This will supplement the areas that Valley Water does not have jurisdiction on the creek in both Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties.

**Clarification 3.** This relates to the SCJPA’s role and staff comments and questions related to the Lower Peninsula Watershed Master Plan. SFCJPA staff attended the March 2025 kickoff meeting and provided comments and questions to Heidi Williams on 9/10/2025, and responded to the survey.

Staff’s impression is that the because the plan covers only half of San Francisquito Creek and used an outdated hydraulic model for the creek, the plan cannot be considered comprehensive for San Francisquito Creek in the way that it can be for the five other creeks included in this plan: Adobe, Barron, Matadero, Permanente and Stevens Creek.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide clarification on concerns that were raised at your last meeting and will serve to correct and clarify Valley Water’s understanding of the SFCJPA’s philosophy, mission and roles.

The SFCJPA remains open to any further discussions that may arise on this topic.

Thank you.

**Excerpts from Transcript of Valley Water Board Policy & Monitoring Committee – 19 May 2026  
Edited for Improved Clarity**

**Agenda Item 4.1 – Receive Update on the West Valley and Lower Peninsula Watershed Master Plans.**

**Director Hsueh:** Thank you very much for this presentation. Questions? I do have one question. So, for the Lower Peninsula Watershed, how do we deal with San Francisquito Creek, which we only have half of. The reason I ask this question is that, for the longest time I have considered San Francisquito Creek to be one of our facilities. While participating as a board representative to the JPA, I just more and more feel that there's really another body overseeing the San Francisquito Creek. As long as that body exists . . . As of now, I don't know, but I feel like this body is going to continue indefinitely for the foreseeable future. So, there is some conflict.

We view this creek in terms of our mission, which envisions full protection, stewardship etc., compared to how this separate government body views these same issues. Also, it's a governmental body that does not have any revenue source. So, I was thinking that maybe this master plan can be a vehicle to at least touch on some of the high-level policy issues for both bodies. For example, maintenance. Who's going to do it? This includes the minimum maintenance that happens throughout the years through cooperation between both sides of the creek, but then moving on, who is doing the maintenance? Who does whatever it is? Somebody has to be responsible to do something, or else nothing's going to happen. We just sit there and talk. So, anyway, we're doing this master plan for the Lower Peninsula Watershed. It seems as though this can be the type of high-level policy issue or roles-and-responsibility type of issue that can be included in this master plan. I haven't heard from JPA staff that they have any involvement in this master plan development. So, I don't even know if they know about this or how these things connect.

**Lisa Bankosh:** Sure. And thank you for the comment and questions. So, the JPA staff have participated in the public meetings, or at least attended the public meetings. The way the master plan process has currently been handling the San Francisquito questions that you mentioned is simply to refer to the JPA and Valley Water's continued participation in it. So, in other words, the master plan is not diving into the kinds of questions that you suggest it could or should. That being said, the JPA staff is involved. We have not heard comments or specific questions from them yet. I think there's potential. We have other community meetings coming up. There's also the potential to hold targeted stakeholder meetings, and so this could be a forum for that type of policy-level discussion. I think it's possible, if that helps.

**Director Hsueh:** Yeah, we cannot solve this in one meeting, that's for sure. So, it's something for us to continue thinking about it. Keep in mind that the JPA has a very, very flood-protection-project-oriented mission. All they're thinking about is that they need to do something so that some of the flooding events that happened recently can be reduced. But from a long-term perspective, for a master plan type of study, I just think that we should figure out a way that we can either work together through some kind of common understanding and plan, or at the other extreme, we give San Francisquito Creek to the JPA. "You own the whole thing, and you do whatever." I'm joking, but we're caught in the middle. We view

this as a precious watershed and creek for Santa Clara County, but we don't have direct control on any of these things. The JPA basically thinks that they're the organization that has authority for San Francisquito Creek. So, while we're doing all these other studies, let's keep in mind that these things are just out there, and that we have to figure out a way that we can work together or have some kind of solution, so that these issues for San Francisquito Creek can be worked out, even though it's a 20-year or 30-year process, but that's what I'm saying. I don't know if anybody has any thoughts.

**Melanie Richardson:** I have a thought. Chair, if you would allow me, as you're saying this, I'm thinking about the fact that yes, the JPA is responsible for Reach Two, but for Reach One, which is completed, Valley Water does have responsibility for maintenance on our land. I know we coordinate with Palo Alto, because we have land on the Palo Alto side. So, there is some, I guess, work being planned by us to maintain the flood protection project that we built, the reach we built from the Bay to 101. So, what I'm going to ask is that you all get together with the San Fran Creek team, Chris Hakes, I guess, just talk with him about how we can better coordinate with the JPA, not just on the upcoming projects, but on the ones that we're currently maintaining, and you know, maybe just come up with a plan for how to do that, because I agree with you, Chair, that the JPA isn't really thinking about this. No, I think that we're the ones thinking about this.

**Director Hsueh:** Yeah, and that's why we're in the middle all the time.

**Director Estremera:** No, I agree. I think it's our responsibility to come up . . . We're creating the master plan, and as you said, this is a very important piece of infrastructure for us, so it's not like we, you know, we can neglect it or ignore it. We need to have our policy regarding how we deal with it, and then how we maintain it, and so on, because the rest of the parties, they have other interests, so it's important for us to state our interests and be very clear about it.

**Director Hsueh:** Yeah, if we can just think along those lines, and while you're doing the study, and then incorporate these things. That will be my comment on this, and other than that, just great work, just keep, keep working. It's a kind of work that is kind of difficult to understand, because I participated in that public meeting in Los Altos last year, and the questions we received from people were still like, one piece — that tide gate, I want to know exactly what happened to that tide gate. So, it's this master plan concept, very long term, and then through this matrix there can be priorities set. It's kind of difficult, I think, particularly for the general public to understand. Yeah, so, just keep up on this good work, even though when you have public meetings, maybe people cannot appreciate this kind of work.