

TO ALL OF OUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS LIVING ON SMITH CANAL

FOSC Clean up Day—Saturday, May 15

American Legion Park from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Friends of Smith Canal has learned that the City has developed a tree plan for the waterway and that we will see activity beginning with the Clean Up Day on Saturday, May 15. Thanks to City Manager, Mark Lewis, for his vision on the Smith Canal clean up project.

Dumpsters will be available on Clean Up Day to Smith Canal homeowners to discard trash and debris removed from the levee. Check with the FOSC information table at American Legion Park between 9 am and noon for information on the specific locations of the dumpsters.

News Bits

Alternate Work Program clean up crews working the banks of the canal and Yosemite Lake in April removed 15 tons of debris and trash from the waterway.

Congratulation to Grayson Moyses for his heroic effort and recognition in saving the life of a driver whose car plunged off the road and into the canal at Buena Vista and Shimizu Drive.

Congratulations also to the City for rescuing the car from Smith Canal.

Good News

Bob Murdock, assistant director of the city's Municipal Utilities Department, reported at the April FOSC general meeting that MUD is installing a filtration system at the pumping station of American Legion Park. This filter has the capacity to remove trash and debris from the storm drain system before it is discharged into the canal.

Congratulations to FOSC activists and those homeowners working independently for their phone calls, petitions, and letters-to-the-editor regarding concerns for code enforcement activities on the canal. Their efforts have resulted postponing enforcement until the interpretation of the ordinances could be reviewed and appropriately applied (we hope) to conditions and circumstances on the waterway.

Available for your review

Mud has provided draft copies of the study plans they are submitting to the state water quality board regarding pesticides, pathogens, and dissolved oxygen for our review. Comments are due back to MUD by May 24. Any one interested in reviewing the proposed programs should contact Randy Norman (209-546-0869) for a copy of the plan.

A Day in the Delta Lands of Smith Canal

OK it's time. I can't put this off any longer and have any expectation of eliminating this blighting condition on my levee bank by the due date set on my code enforcement citation. So with the chill of the morning still crisp and with shovel, chains, and saws in hand, I trudged up the incline to crest the peak of Farmer Smith's embankment to begin this chore of civic responsibility. After a few more moments of deliberating procrastination, I decided to work east to west, and would tackle first an old-growth stand of oleanders. I was sure that this plant indigenous to freeways must have some meaningful significance in the development of Smith Canal, but for the betterment of the community, this task of cleaning up the levee must go on.

Cutting one limb at a time and dragging the 15 to 20 foot lengths of living vegetation to my pre-determined and indistinguishable location in the lowlands of my yard (I didn't want to get a citation from code enforcement for a blighted condition visible from the front yard), light rays of sunshine began to filter through the dense overgrowth. I was amazed to find that as I painstakingly examined these entangled branches, it appeared that some limbs had developed growths of varying leaf configurations. Like over the years, either by some freak of nature or more likely at the doing of the myriad birds that habitat this foray of delta jungle, seedlings had grafted to this oleander bush to develop a unique variety of horticulture. For another procrastinating second I contemplated contacting an expert in the field with hopes that due to this newfound discovery I might attain a "stay" of this laborious task, but I quickly regained my senses and continued working.

Eventually this clearing unveiled the existence of a water tank and pump assembly. The levee bank had completely eroded from beneath the equipment, leaving the water tank dangling precariously by the inlet and discharge piping. I was sure that somewhere in this conglomeration of fittings and machinery was a component that could be

tagged an antique and that this finding could require an asserted effort and time to determine the potential monetary and historical value of this treasure. But just then my wife popped her head over the fence and with a quick assessing glance she uttered, "there's some more junk you'll need to get rid of". So ignoring this opportunity, I once again continued working and by the stroke of lunch had successfully cleared the overgrowth at the west-end of the levee. Over a sandwich and a glass of iced tea, I re-read my citation regarding the blighted vegetation. Finding no references to antique junk, I determined that the removal of the equipment would have to wait another day.

With my well-deserved hunger sensations satisfied and my body re-hydrated, it was back to work. My next task would also be an overgrown stand of oleanders, but before I could tackle this removal, a path through ivy and low-lying limbs from several species of trees and bushes would need to be secured. As I hacked my way through what would surely one day grow into a prominent rainforest, a rustle in the brush startled me. Ah, a vermin! At the pace of its scamper I obviously had violated the sanctity of its humble home. I summoned my wife; sure she would share in the excitement of this uncovering. As we prodded through the area of the last sighting, the vermin again scrambled seeking further refuge from our encroachment. Behind me my wife screamed while making her quick retreat up the bank shouting, "that's just a rat!" I knew that this could not be "just a rat", but most probably an endangered "river rat".

By now it was mid afternoon and it had grown warm, if not hot, and as it had only been a few weeks since our last rain, double-digit humidity had begun to take it's toll on my white-collar stamina. With the code enforcement deadline fast approaching, I knew I must persevere. Every so often I was encouraged by the voice of my new found friend, River Rat, reminding me that a good shower at days end would relieve a multitude of pains, and what the shower did not help, a few Advil chased by a margarita would resolve.

Upon the removal of the second stand of oleanders I unearthed an oddly shaped cedar tree. Encapsulated by the oleanders and sheltered from the light of the sun, the tree had grown into a twisted clump. The artistry in this evolution of nature was amazing. I thought for a moment that I should share this experience with my wife, now safe within the confines of our house, but one of the ducks that had taken up vigilance at the water's edge assured me that this was not beauty she would appreciate. Later my wife did divulge her concerns that some exotic tree sap had entered into my blood stream through one of the many scrapes I had procured during the day, or that the aromatic fumes from the freshly cut cedar wood had overcome me inducing this delusional state. She could envision no other explanations for this condition that would have me enjoying conversations with the local wildlife, and seeing art on a blighted levee bank.

At the end of the day, I had survived, and the task of clearing the overgrowth on my portion of Smith Canal's north levee had been completed. For the first time since I acquired the lot, I could see the water's edge along the entire length of the property line. The two piles of debris now stacked in the lowlands evidenced the fruits of my labor and the clean up task that still lay before me. Now I only need the approval from my code enforcement officer.

FOSC Event Calendar – 2004

May

10 – Steering Committee Meeting
15 – FOSC Clean up Day

June

14 – Steering Committee Meeting

July

12 – Steering Committee Meeting

August

9 – FOSC General Meeting

September

11 – FOSC/California Coastal Commission Clean up
13 – Steering Committee Meeting

October

11 – Steering Committee Meeting

November

8 – Steering Committee Meeting

December

Happy Holidays!

Friends of Smith Canal Project Contacts

For more information, questions, or assistance:

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Friends of Smith Canal website
www.smithcanal.org

City of Stockton website
www.stockton.ca.us

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City Councilman

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City Manager's Office

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Neighborhood Services

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Code Enforcement

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County of San Joaquin website
www.co.san-joaquin.ca.us

Steve Gutierrez (209) 468-3113
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Denise Thomas (209) 468-2179
Dept. of Public Works – Stormwater Facilities

Lori Oldfather (209) 931-6285
Dept. of Fish & Game – State of California

California Coastal Commission website
www.coastal.ca.gov