Over the last 16 months the vision for the Alameda Creek Watershed Center in Sunol (Center) has come into focus as the result of outreach to the surrounding community and interested organizations. Starting in April, 2011, regular public meetings have been held in Sunol. Below are the themes and sub-themes that are guiding the design of the Center and the interpretive media that will be displayed in and around the buildings.

Two themes (listed below) have been developed to focus on the importance of the land and water and on the nature of the watershed from both an ecological and cultural perspective.

*Here at the Sunol Water Temple, we honor the watershed and the water that flows through it.*

*At this unique confluence of waterways, we also see the confluence of people and nature, and we are reminded of the significance of water in sustaining both.*

These five subthemes support the overarching themes.

- *Throughout time, water from Alameda Creek and Arroyo de la Laguna has sustained the lives and cultures of Sunol Valley people.*

- *The Sunol Water Temple is a powerful icon that symbolizes the importance of water in nature and human culture.*

- *Human activities, including ranching, farming, mining, urban/suburban development, and individual behavior, can affect the health of the Alameda Creek watershed and its creeks.*

- *The quality and quantity of water affects the lives of humans and other species.*

- *The Spring Valley Water Company and San Francisco Public Utilities Commission’s early water conveyance system along this waterway is a testament to human ingenuity. More recent action by the SFPUC is a testament to an evolving land and water ethic.*
Watershed Discovery Trail

The Watershed Discovery Trail, a two-acre outdoor “immersion exhibit”, takes visitors on a meandering walk through a landscape that resembles the middle and upper reaches of the Alameda Creek watershed.

The following the five plant communities will be represented within the Watershed Discovery Trail.

- Central coast live oak
- Riparian forest Valley
- Needlegrass grassland
- Diablan sage scrub Oak savanna
- Mixed evergreen forest/oak woodland

Visitors will be able to meander through these trail sections and read interpretive panels that identify representative plants and animals, explain the ecological relationships between physical and biological components, and reveal their location relative to the real watershed. Fabricated wildlife tracks and other “sign” will be incorporated into the pathway and used in programs and self-guided wildlife scavenger hunt activities.

Additional interpretive media for the Watershed Discovery Trail include:
- Five watershed “you are here” maps, each corresponding to the actual location of the plant community within the Alameda Creek watershed,
- Display of Quick Response (QR) codes (or newer technology as it becomes available) that visitors can scan with their smartphone to access links to data, narration, and images,
- Cue cards corresponding to faux bronze resin sculptures: a California red-legged frog or western pond turtle on a streambed rock, a grasshopper sparrow or meadowlark in the grasslands, a western fence lizard on a rock, and a California quail and Alameda whipsnake in the sage scrub
- Media that celebrate Ohlone heritage.

Interpretive Pavilion

Exterior interpretive panels will be located where the buildings’ sustainable design features are most evident including:
- the buildings’ passive solar design
- photovoltaic solar panels
- green roofs
- greywater system
- hydronic solar heating in a high-mass thermal sand bed
Overview of Proposed Interpretive Elements for the Alameda Creek Watershed Center in Sunol
8.27.12

- and use of a night misting system for cooling
- The Center’s LEED certification is also highlighted

**Foyer Rotunda**

As visitors enter the interpretive pavilion, they first encounter the foyer rotunda. This space will welcome and orient them to the Center, its amenities, and exhibits. The rotunda will include:

- a 360 degree view of the surrounding watershed in the form of a painted mural that shows the progressions of the seasons.
- touchscreen interactive table will highlight present day and historical photos, maps and Sunol Valley memorabilia.
- The four corners of the rotunda will highlight a particular people or point in the history of Sunol Valley. These semi-immersive exhibits may include:
  - Ohlone heritage
  - 19th century ranch
  - early 20th century Sunol Water Temple construction site
  - Construction of the SFPUC water system

**Stream Related Exhibits**

Visitors leave the foyer and enter the next gallery. Exhibits the may encounter include:

- a stream exhibit
- dramatic photomurals on the walls
- free-standing interactive displays that explore local aquatic life, as well as explain the challenges various species have faced, including blockage of spawning grounds by dams, and erosion and sedimentation due to grazing in close proximity of the creek. These displays will also explore Alameda Creek water quality parameters and help visitors understand the connection between human activity (including practices at home), watershed health, and water quality.
- Panels describing watershed restoration efforts

**Viewing Deck**

The roughly 3,600 square foot viewing deck will provide visitors an opportunity to view the upper Alameda Creek watershed and several mounted panels that present the following:

- a panoramic view of the land to the southeast (landforms identified)
- a linear panel that reveals historic land use of the area just beyond the visible berm (e.g., sepia-toned 19th c. post-Mission grazing, early 20th c. black and white agricultural fields, and present day color image of the gravel quarry).


**Watershed Center Grounds**

*Picnic Area*

The picnic grounds will be restored and re-opened to the public. The area will include picnic tables and access to Alameda Creek. Interpretation in this area will include:

- Cue cards will be used to reference the plant and animal life likely seen in “the wild”.