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New Model Colonies, LLC

Mill Creek Wetlands Project

Situation

New Model Colonies, LLC is a large developer of master planned communities involving commercial, residential and industrial components in Ontario, California. Like all land-use developments, the company's project is subject to the requirements of the "Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System" (also known as MS4) provisions of the federal Clean Water Act. Traditional MS4 approaches did not work for the Ontario development, largely due to costs and environmental factors. As an alternative, New Model Colonies undertook an innovative and multi-beneficial approach to meeting MS4 requirements through the construction of a 50-acre urban wetlands.

This ambitious project, which became known as the Mill Creek Wetlands Project, sought to:

- Increase water quality within the impaired Prado Watershed Basin.
- Create, protect, and restore the region's native ecosystems.
- Enhance recreational and educational uses.
- Increase downstream local water supplies.
- Meet MS4 requirements.

The project diverts flows from a local creek into a series of natural water-quality treatment ponds that include areas of open water and wetland vegetation. The system is designed to first remove trash and debris as water flows through the de-silting basin, and then remove pollutants through natural settlement, ultraviolet light treatment and biological activity as it travels through native wetland vegetation. The project is entirely gravity fed, requiring no man-made energy sources, thus promoting water quality alternatives that advance the use of renewable, sustainable, and environmentally sensitive designs, materials, and practices. Water from the creek suffers from high levels of nitrate resulting from runoff or leakage from agriculture and urban drainage. The Mill Creek Wetlands continuously treats a 160-acre feet volume of water.

To accomplish a MS4 project of this size and complexity necessitated a strategic funding plan of \$52 million for development. Both federal and state funding would be required to leverage local agency dollars and investment by New Model Colonies.

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Current

Water from the creek suffers from high levels of nitrate resulting from runoff or leakage from agriculture and urban drainage. The Mill Creek Wetlands continuously treats a 160-acre feet volume of water.

Proposed

The Mill Creek Wetlands continuously treats a 160-acre feet volume of water, improving conditions of creek water that suffers from high levels of nitrate contamination from runoff or leakage from agriculture and urban drainage.

Objectives

- Gain necessary project approvals.
- Identify and secure funds from state and federal sources.

Activities

- Advocated on behalf of the project before the United States Congress, California State Legislature, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Natural Resources, and California State Water Resources Control Board.
- Developed and maintained a supporting coalition of 13 public agencies and 11 private corporations.
- Develop a viable strategic funding plan.

Results

- Successfully developed and managed a supporting public-private stakeholder coalition.
- Obtained \$7.5 million in legislatively-directed spending and grants funding.
- Secured agency approvals for project.

Summary

By effectively positioning the project and then educating policymakers about its myriad benefits, Capitol Core helped obtain the needed funding for the Mill Creek Wetland Project. Through effective advocacy the firm helped to develop an accepted MS4 alternative to standard everyday compliance. The development of a stakeholder coalition became an amplifying voice for New Model Colonies' vision concerning the project. **Our successful effort helped bring the Mill Creek Wetlands to life, creating a model project with tremendous environmental, recreational, and educational benefits.**