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## Pond to purify water for Arcade Creek City-made wetland will use plant life to break down toxins

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--Long known as a dumping ground for shopping carts, yard clippings and other trash, the year-round murky water of **Arcade Creek** may soon flow cleaner.

"The whole point is to improve the water quality in **Arcade Creek**," said Patrick Sanger, a watershed coordinator for the city of Sacramento.

Funded with a million-dollar grant from the state, a water purification ecosystem is emerging on the creek where it flows into Del Paso Regional Park on Auburn Boulevard at Norris Avenue.

By this spring, the park's trails will be cleaned up, a disc golf course in place and a grassy knoll will overlook a shallow pond filled with marsh grasses and other natural wetland vegetation.

But because it is tucked away, the park is passed by more motorists than it is patronized.

It sits on a mile or so sliver of Sacramento city property that includes Renfree Field, just south of the Capital City Freeway.

Although the creek overflows nearly every winter, the water treatment project is not expected to have much effect upon the flooding.

"The grant is pretty specific in what we can do. The area is so flat, it makes it difficult for flood control," Sanger said.

What will change dramatically is the nature area that is now over-run with dead and decaying non- native brushes and trees.

Starting Aug. 1, work crews began clearing the area for a pond that will work as a wetland.

In between winter storms, the creek water will flow into the wetland where it will remain for a period to allow organically based toxins to break down naturally with the help of plant life.

The cleaner water then flows back into **Arcade Creek**, which eventually ends up downstream in the Sacramento River.

In summing up the project's scope, Sanger and city civil engineer Mark Elliott said they were working with the good, the bad and the ugly.

"The good is that there is a beautiful natural creek corridor that runs through an urban area and a park," Sanger said.

The bad, he said, is that the area surrounding the creek is built out with the sprawling campus of American River College, paved roads and single-family homes. There is little that can be done to change the environment.

"The ugly is that there is a lot of erosion on the creek and more than its fair share of illegal dumping," Sanger said.

Since much of the creek's banks are on private property there is a lot of green waste, such as yard clippings and fertilizer and pesticide residue.

Feeding into **Arcade Creek** is Cripple Creek to the north in Citrus Heights. The two join at ARC, giving creek access to scores of families.

A big part of the project is what Sanger described as educational outreach to the 600 or so residents who live in the area of Del Paso park.

The education consists of such simple things as the difference between a sewer drain vs. a storm drain.

A sewer drain like those used at a coin-operated car wash dump into the sewer system and end up at water treatment plants.

Storm drains are not filtered, and the water goes directly into the creeks and rivers.

Seemingly innocuous weekend chores like fertilizing the lawn, washing the car in the driveway or cleaning a paintbrush with the garden hose can be toxic to the environment, Sanger said.

Elliott said the wetland project was designed for such organic pollution.

The pond will be on 2 acres and will stretch over 500 feet by 150 feet. It will hold up to 6 feet of water, but the wetland is intended to be about 2 feet deep.

Native wetland plants will be planted by Nov. 1, and by spring the pond will be stocked with mosquitofish, Elliott said.

"There will be signage," Elliott said of signs that will explain how the wetland will purify **Arcade Creek**.

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