



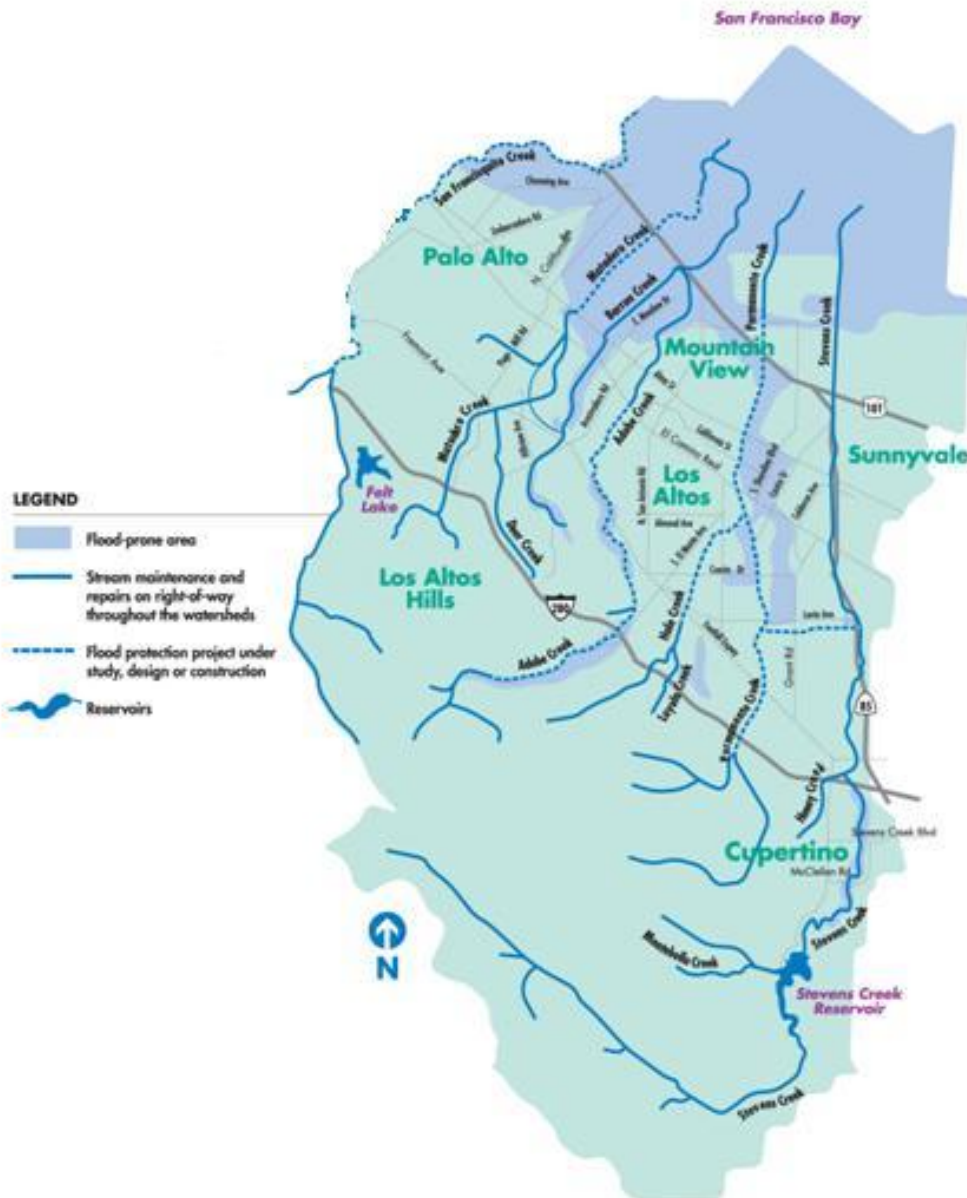
Increasing Watershed Awareness and Stewardship in Los Altos

Developed for the Los Altos Environmental Commission

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12/12/11

The Santa Clara Valley Water District places Los Altos in the Lower Peninsula Watershed

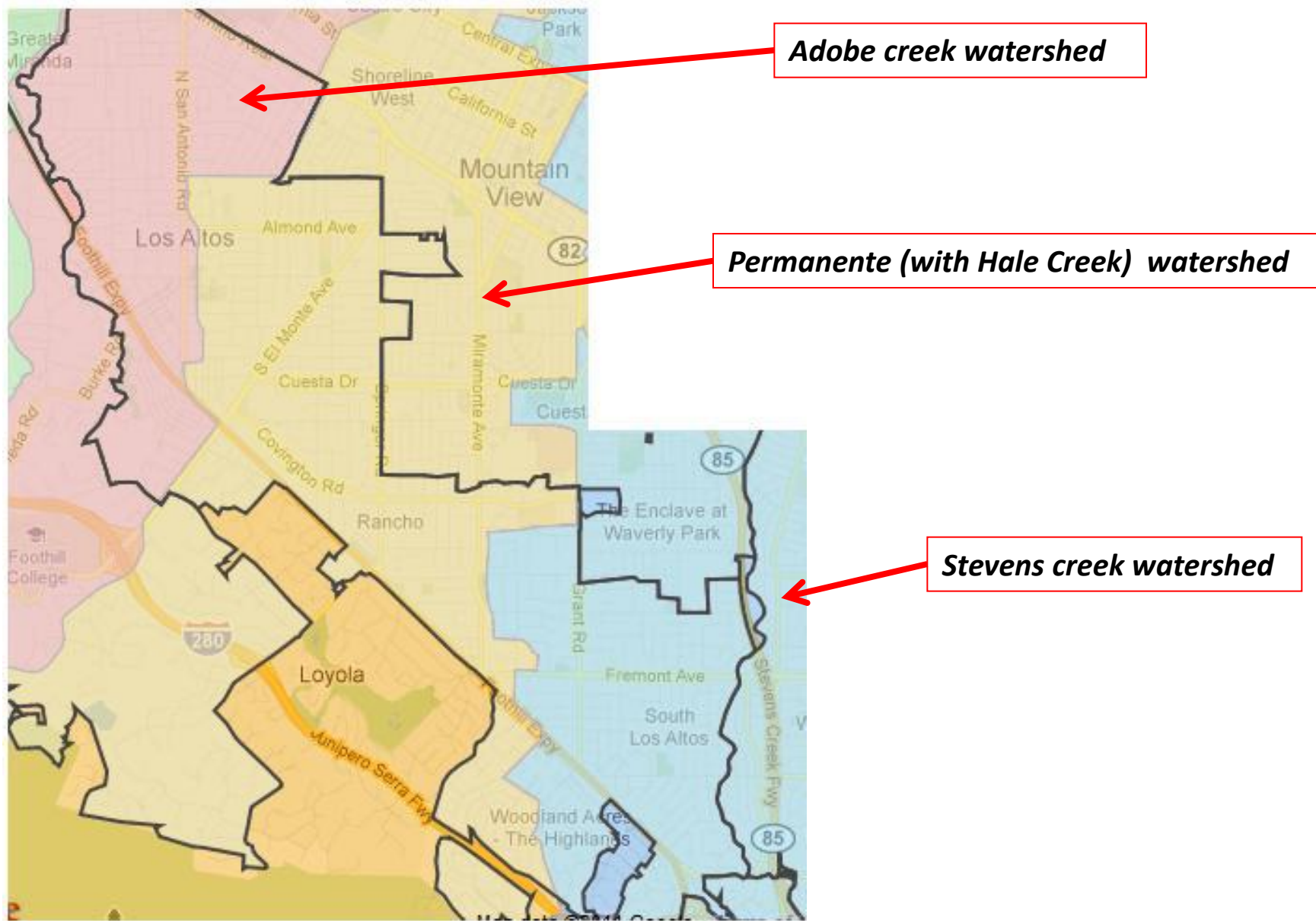


Definition of a Watershed: The land area from which surface runoff drains into a stream channel, lake, reservoir or the ocean.

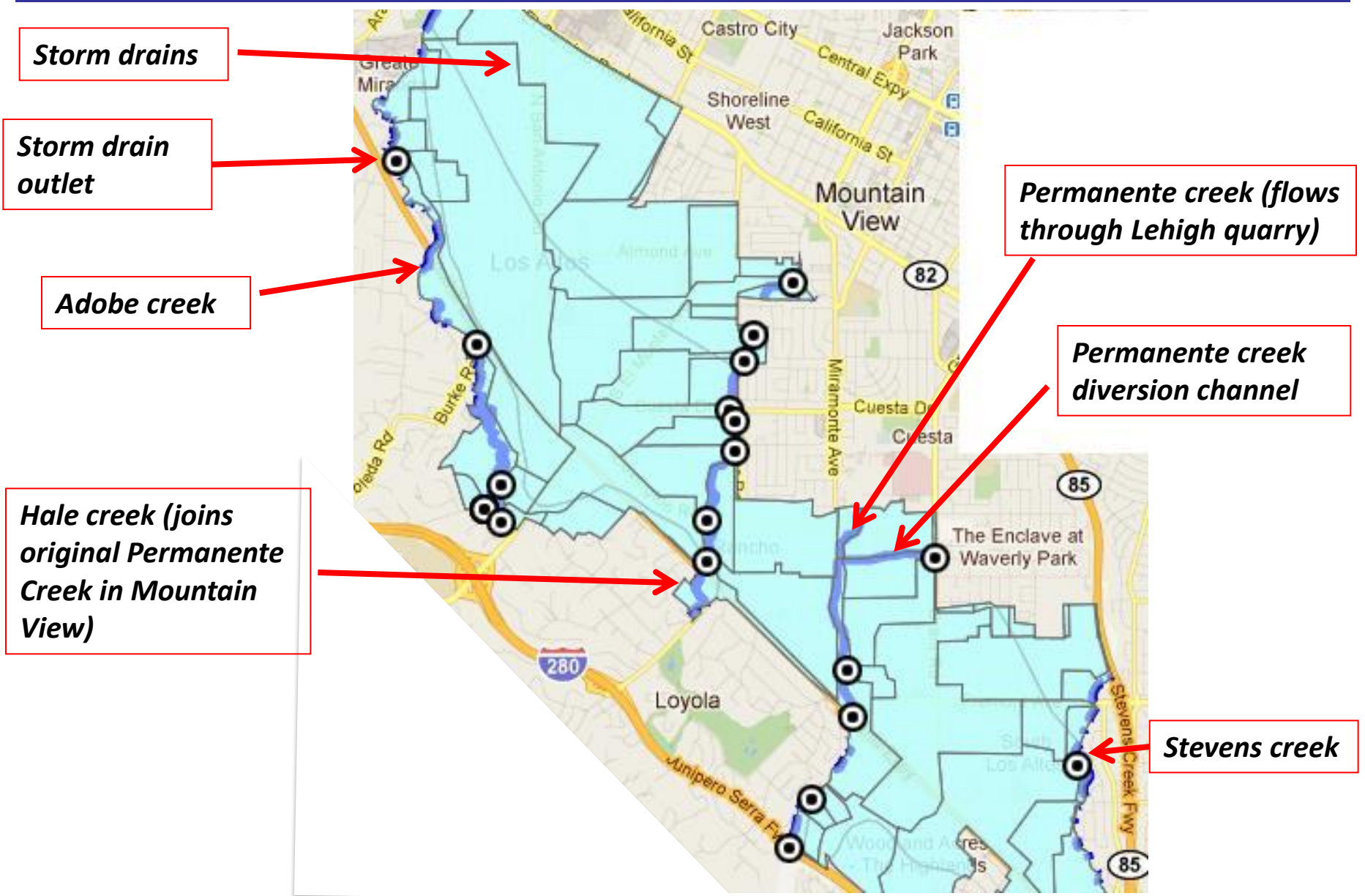
Lower Peninsula Watershed

- Size: 98 square miles
- Cities: Los Altos Hills, Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos , Cupertino , Sunnyvale
- Creeks: San Francisquito , Matadero , Deer , Barron , Adobe , Permanente , Stevens
- Reservoirs: Stevens Creek , Felt Lake (not operated by SCVWD)

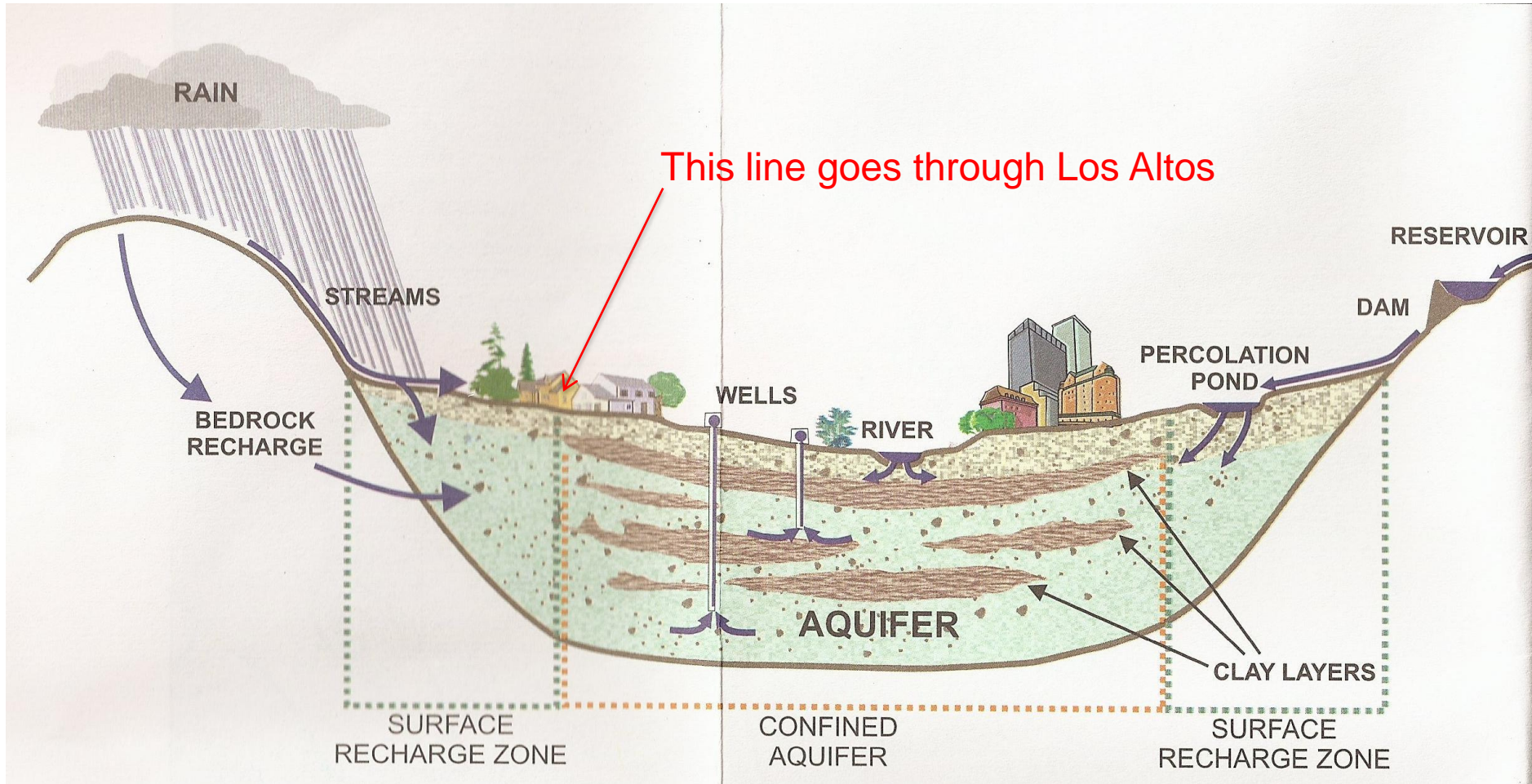
Los Altos has three watersheds: Adobe, Permanente (with Hale Creek), and Stevens



Storm drains empty into all of the Los Altos creeks



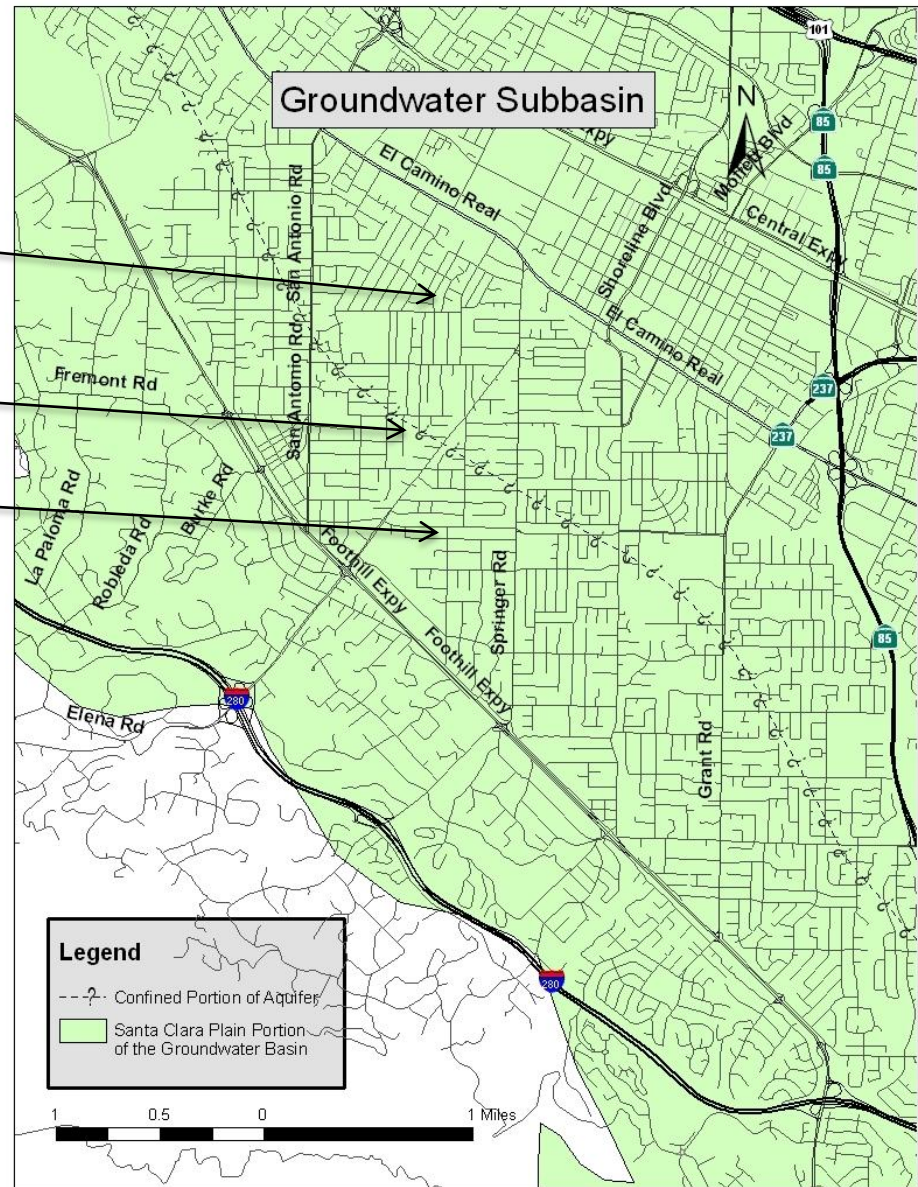
Cross section model of the Santa Clara County groundwater system



Much of Los Altos is over the drinking water aquifer recharge zone

- o Confined aquifer – no recharge from the surface
- o Approximate delineation line between recharge zone and confined zone
- o Surface recharge zone

Note: The delineation line is approximate and could vary by ¼ mile or more. Therefore, all Los Altos citizens and vendors should operate as if they are over the recharge zone.



Why should our citizens care about the Los Altos creeks?

- o The creeks flowing through Los Altos are the last “wild” corridors through our suburban city. They:
 - o Support wildlife, such as aquatic insects, fish, small mammals
 - o Enable people to connect with nature in our parks – Shoup, Redwood Grove, Heritage, etc.
 - o Provide a historical, ecological, and cultural connection to the land
- o Trash in the creeks (such as plastic bags and take out containers) is unsightly and physically and chemically harmful to wildlife
- o Chemical pollution from runoff and the quarry:
 - o Affects wildlife, especially the lower levels of the food chain. Urban runoff now biggest source of bay pollution
 - o Leads to excessive algae growth, depleting oxygen
 - o Percolates into the aquifer (the source of 30% of Los Altos’ drinking water)
- o Erosion and silt from excessive runoff chokes creeks and remove oxygen
- o Invasive plant and animal species also upset the native ecosystem



“Nature is not just to be found in the national parks”

Many residents and vendors have incorrect and/or incomplete creek stewardship knowledge

- o They think storm drains flow into sewer system or that they directly “Flow to Bay”.
- o Don’t understand impact of landscape overwatering, fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides on the creeks.
- o Don’t know that we get 30% of our water from the aquifer which is recharged from much of Los Altos
- o Don’t realize that urban runoff (e.g. roofs and non-permeable hardscape) provides unnaturally high flows, causing flooding, pollution, erosion, and silt
- o Do not know the benefits of native plants (drought tolerant, less maintenance/GHG emissions, disease/pest resistant, support pollinators and wildlife) vs. the destructiveness of invasive species.
- o Do not realize that physical creek barriers prohibit fish

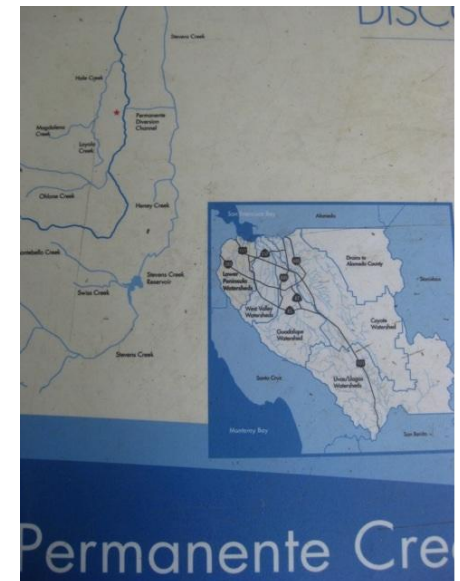
A Los Altos Storm Drain



Screening from street project that finished 3 months ago

The good news: Many sources of creek stewardship information

- o **Santa Clara Valley Water District**
 - o Extensive educational, best practices, and regulations info on valleywater.org
 - o School education programs
 - o Grants to local communities and non-profits for educational materials and programs
 - o Water conservation rebates
- o **Watershed Watch** – Provides education and outreach for Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program. Funded 30% by SCVWD, 30% by San Jose, 40% by remaining northern Santa Clara County cities
- o **CalWater** web site and sponsored classes; incented by SBx7-7 to reduce water usage by 20% by 2020
- o **Classes by BAWSCA and local communities**
- o **Los Altos Environmental Commission** website
- o **Los Altos History Museum** exhibit and programs
- o **Local non-profits provide education, creek cleanups, monitoring, and restoration:**
 - o GreenTown Los Altos
 - o Acterra
 - o Friends of Adobe Creek
 - o Santa Clara County Creeks Coalition
 - o Stevens & Permanente Creek Watershed Council



Los Altos Resolution 2009-22: focused on conservation; also helps the watersheds (6/23/09)

City Council of the City of Los Altos hereby encourages the Los Altos community to reduce water consumption by 15% a year based on 2004 water usage.... The Council ... recommends that City of Los Altos residents, businesses, and water users adopt the following voluntary water conservation measures:

1. Landscape Watering Time Restrictions
 - Irrigating of landscape with potable water discouraged between of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m
 - During June – October, users are encouraged to provide only minimal water to sustain plant growth without water run-off
 - During November through May, irrigating to be minimal, reduced or discontinued
2. Recommendations for Obligation to Fix Leaks,
3. No Washing Down Hard or Paved Surfaces
4. Avoid Excess Water Usage
5. Encourage Water Conservation in the Business Community –
 - Use table signs stating that drinking water is served upon request only in eating establishments.
 - Commercial lodging encouraged to provide guests the option to decline daily linen service.
 - Avoid installation of Single Pass Cooling Systems in buildings requesting new water service;
 - avoid installation of non-re-circulating water systems in commercial car wash and laundry systems.
 - Restaurants are encouraged to use water conserving dish wash spray valves
 - Use of recirculating water in non-drinking water fountains and decorative water features is encouraged.
6. Recommendation that Parties Review and Comply with the City of Los Altos Water Efficient Landscape Regulations

Los Altos use of SCVWD conservation offers could improve

- o **Water Wise House Calls** (Jan 1 - Sep 30, 2011)
 - o Los Altos: 95 (4% of Santa Clara County WWHC's; we have 3.2% of the households in the county)
 - o Los Altos Hills: 1
 - o Santa Clara County total: 2,450
- o 18 customers heard about the WWHC program through Town Crier, 1 heard about it through GreenTown (GreenTown also ran a TC ad). Most of the other customers heard about it through a water bill insert, post card, customer service, or friend/neighbor.

- o **Turf Replacement Rebate** (2008-Dec 6, 2011)
 - o Los Altos
 - o 22 Single Family customers have received a rebate (2.5% of Santa Clara County WWHC's; we have 3.2% of the households in the county)
 - o 2 Institutional customers have received a rebate
 - o Los Altos Hills
 - o 15 Single Family customers have received a rebate
 - o Santa Clara County total: 896
- o Above numbers do not include sites that are in process.



Conclusion

- o The creeks in our city are important for many reasons including:
 - o Natural resource for local wildlife and the community
 - o Our creek water influences the quality of the bay and the aquifers
- o The City of Los Altos should continue to build community awareness and foster creek stewardship through complimentary local actions, as outlined in the previous slides