



CREEK & WATERSHED MAP of Palo Alto & Vicinity

By Janet M. Sowers, William Lettis & Associates, Inc.
Historical wetlands by the San Francisco Estuary Institute

This map shows the current waterways of Palo Alto and vicinity, including the creek and storm drain network and present-day watershed boundaries. Also shown are the historical creeks, tidal marshes, and willow groves.

Urban development has noticeably changed the natural drainage. Creeks that once spread out and dropped their sediment on the flatlands now connect to the bay with engineered channels. Parts of some creeks now flow in underground storm drains. New storm drains have been built as increased pavement area has resulted in more runoff. In the hills, creeks are impounded to create reservoirs. Beside the bay, tidal marshes are diked, filled, or drained, and meandering sloughs are replaced by straight channels.

How this map was made: Storm drains, engineered channels, and present-day creeks were compiled from city and county data, 1999 and 2000 aerial photography, and field inspection. The historical locations of creeks were compiled primarily from historical maps, 1939 and 1943 aerial photography, and previous work by the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) and Alan K. Brown. Historical tidal marshes and willow groves were researched by SFEI using a variety of sources including the 1857 U. S. Coast Survey. Complete documentation can be obtained from www.museumca.org/creeks/paloalto/doc.html, or from Janet Sowers at William Lettis & Associates, Inc. in Walnut Creek. The base map (showing present geographic features) was prepared by the U. S. Geological Survey in 1991.

Notes: The map shows creeks and engineered channels having a minimum of 0.2 square kilometers of watershed, and storm drains 24 inches or greater in diameter. Where the entire creek flow is carried by a culvert buried in a former creek bed, only the culvert symbol (red dots) is shown on the map.

Accuracy: Every effort was made to produce an accurate map. However, no map is completely accurate and all lines should be considered approximate. There is error in the historical maps, in the transfer of historical information to modern maps, and in the modern maps themselves. In addition, natural shifting of creeks and fluctuations in the extent of marshes and lagoons can be expected both before and after the historical maps or photos were made. Marsh and lagoon boundaries are considered accurate to within 1000 feet on either side of the line shown. Former creek locations are accurate to within 200 feet, or if dashed, to within 500 feet on either side of the line shown. Present-day creek and storm drain locations are considered accurate to within 100 feet on either side of the line shown.

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EXPLANATION

- Bay or slough
- Creeks
- Former creeks, buried or drained - dashed where channel was ephemeral
- Underground culverts & storm drains
- Engineered channels
- Flood control channels (≥ 100 feet wide)
- Water spreads over the ground
- Tidal marsh, circa 1850
- Now water
- Now filled or drained land
- Tidal marsh formed after 1850
- Artificial marsh, modern
- Fresh water marsh, modern
- Willow groves, circa 1850
- Artificial bodies of water
- Present watersheds