

Creek Viewing in Mid Ross Valley

by Gerhard Epke

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In the last issue of Creek Chronicles I presented a list of creek viewing sites located in the northern portion of our watershed. In this one I describe a few special locations in the watershed's middle portion—San Anselmo, Ross, and Kentfield. True to the altered character of this region, the following list showcases a reservoir, areas prone to flooding, historic channels, and a 2000-foot concrete channel that extends into the tidal area.

Sorich Creek

1. Memorial Park Sorich Creek originates in the open space at the end of San Francisco Boulevard, but is hidden on private property or underground for most of its length. It flows right through Memorial Park and Redhill Shopping Center, just one steel grate providing evidence of its presence. The Dugout Bar, with free creekside shuffleboard and billiards, is a good location to see Sorich Creek these days. The Flood Control District and San Anselmo are moving forward with a plan to lower Memorial Park into a flood detention basin, which would daylight the creek from here to Sunny Hills Drive.

San Anselmo Creek

2. Sais Footbridge This high wooden bridge, which connects Sais Avenue with Karl Avenue, is a beautiful spot to stand above the creek, and adjacent steps provide access for exploring the creek bed. See if you can find a willow wall upstream. Downstream of the bridge, where the creek makes a sharp left turn, is the location of a logjam in the 1860s that caused the creek to jump its bank and carve its present course to join Sorich Creek.



Sais Footbridge, spanning 75 feet, is made of laminated lumber, and lacks abutments that can catch debris during floods. Photo by Charles Kennard

3. Bridge Street Downstream of Bridge Street is probably the deepest pool in the watershed. On the flagpole in front of the Fire Station tape marks indicate the heights of the two most devastating recent floods. The fire station also maintains the water level gauge, visible on the building downstream of the bridge. The Fire Department posts the river height to their website every 15 minutes; a link to it can be found on the Town website.

4. Creek Park and Building Bridges The footbridges, pathways, and benches around Creek Park in San Anselmo offer excellent opportunities for exploring the creek. Notice how small the cross-sectional areas below some of the buildings are. Removal of two buildings in particular would alleviate a significant percentage of the flooding in the rest of town.

5. Summer Ditch Historic Channel Across the street from 75 San Rafael Avenue, a remnant of the historic channel is still visible. The story of this channel, mentioned above, was told by geomorphologist Laurel Collins, in a lecture that can be viewed through the Ross Valley Flood Control District website. Could this legacy provide clues about how to relieve the Town's current flood woes?

Ross Creek

6. Natalie Coffin Greene Park Nestled in the redwoods along Ross Creek, Natalie Coffin Greene Park is a gem for hikers, bikers, and picnickers alike. Phoenix Lake, which sits a short hike away from the parking



Panorama of Phoenix Lake, by Gary Leo

lot, will be retrofitted to act as another floodwater detention basin. Phoenix Lake's two main tributaries are Bill Williams and Phoenix creeks, both of which make good exploring.

7. The Branson School The students at Branson School are fortunate to have a vibrant creek flowing through their campus, although it tends to dry up in May. Access to this reach is also good at the end of Hilgirt Drive and Southwood Avenue.

Corte Madera Creek (The name of the main creek changes at the confluence of San Anselmo and Ross Creeks.)

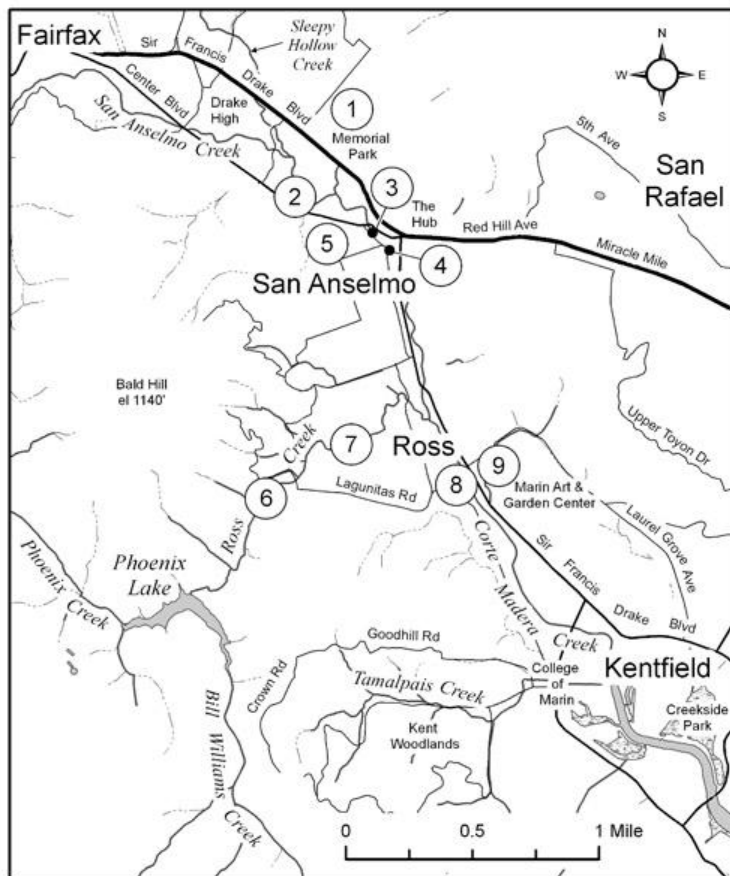
8. Lagunitas Road Bridge Downtown Ross has an abundance of interesting creek features to see. A short distance downstream of the Ross Post Office is the beginning of the concrete channel built in the late 1960s by the Army Corps of Engineers. If you stand on the Lagunitas Road Bridge and look downstream at the left bank, you can see a great example of a streambank stabilization design which also provides good habitat. The US Geological Survey gauging station, used to collect stream flow data, is located upstream from the bridge, behind the fire station.

Kittle Creek

9. Marin Art and Garden Center Kittle Creek cuts through the beautiful gardens here, dodging under buildings and bridges. See if you can follow the creek all the way across the property. Restoration of native vegetation along the creek was initiated a decade ago.



Kittle Creek, Marin Art and Garden Center. Photo by Charles Kennard



Map by Nick Salcedo

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