

Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Minutes of Meeting

January 14, 2004

Alameda County Public Works Agency

Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Brenda Buxton	State Coastal Conservancy
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Erika Cleugh	DFG
Laurel Collins	ACFCWCD Consultant
Dan Corcoran	ENTRIX
Elissa Gill	ACPWA
Andy Gunther	CEMAR
Craig Hill	ACWD
Dave Houts	Zone 7 Water Agency
Laura Kilgour	ACFCWCD
Jane Lavelle	SFPUC
Jeff Miller	ACA
Josh Milstein	SF City Attorney's Office
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Carl Morrison	Carl Morrison & Associates
Diedra Pell	SFPUC
Norm Ploss	NCCFFF Steelhead Committee
Brian Sak	SFPUC
Jim Salerno	SFPUC
Carla Schulteis	ACFCWCD
Bill Snider	ENTRIX
Gary Stern	NOAA Fisheries
Jennifer Stoltz	SFPUC
Tom Taylor	ENTRIX
Saskia van Gendt	CEMAR
Richard Wetzig	ACFCWCD

Announcements

Andy Gunther reminded Workgroup members to authenticate their e-mail addresses in order to join the group's listserv through majordomo. Contact CEMAR for more information.

Jeff Miller announced a watershed tour on February 18 for a new San Francisco Supervisor. He also announced a strategy meeting on January 27th to discuss the

Apperson quarry issue. Jeff is organizing hikes to Maguire Peaks to view the site of the proposed quarry on February 28 and 29. Contact Jeff for more information.

Jeff reported that the ACA provided the SFPUC with comments regarding fisheries and other issues resulting from the PUC's CIP projects. The ACA requested consideration of dam re-operations and supporting studies.

Richard Wetzig announced that the Watershed Steering Committee was meeting to discuss stakeholder interests and options lists for revitalizing stakeholder interest. The process will produce a Watershed Management Plan that will be an advisory document regarding agricultural, parks and recreation, and flood control uses in the watershed. The meeting was held at 1:30 on January 14th.

Updates

§1135 Process. Laura Kilgour said that the Corps had started existing conditions investigations, and had received from ACFCWCD the Workgroup's alternatives analysis and background information for flood modeling, including topographic information for the flood control channel and various cross sections. The Corps strategy will be to conduct an Environmental Assessment that leads to preparation of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) under NEPA. Compliance with CEQA requirements was not discussed.

SFPUC and PAC Activities. Josh Milstein said that ESA had been retained to conduct the programmatic EIR for the CIP. Also, URS is performing geotechnical investigations regarding placing a dam immediately downstream from the existing Calaveras dam.

At its last meeting, the PAC determined that additional steelhead program definition was necessary before undertaking a programmatic EIR process. Josh cited a letter regarding fishery flows issues (rearing upstream from Sunol, passage through Sunol, and passage through the flood control channel) that is leading SFPUC and ACWD to advance a study program. (A copy of this letter was distributed, which was co-signed by NHI, California Trout, Inc., Alameda Creek Alliance, and American Rivers.) Josh also noted that a stakeholder audit would be useful in the current planning context. The SFPUC is developing a schedule of activities that it will use to "overlay" on the CIP schedule.

Josh said that it may be possible to have rearing flows in place by 2006 with the caveat that water may not be available due to Calaveras operating restrictions. The SFPUC also is examining methods by which to protect the *O. mykiss* population in Calaveras reservoir under both interim operating and future conditions.

Agenda Items

Niles Canyon gaging station modification. Norm Ploss introduced himself and his organization. The group is seeking support for an investigation of fish passage improvements at the Niles Canyon gaging station. Norm said that the intention is to develop a conceptual plan for proposed modification after looking at a number of

alternatives. The Workgroup discussed concerns that the project could lead to a decrease in the quality of data from the station, and that because this is only a partial migration barrier to steelhead it may be a lower priority than some other barriers in the watershed. Norm agreed that maintaining a high quality record would be an important component of the project.

Re-graded channel alternative study. Gordon Becker reported on the TAC meeting held on December 12th. The meeting reviewed the study method and preliminary findings regarding design constraints and opportunities. Gordon relayed that the group was considering alternatives that decreased flood carrying capacity due to the relatively high design flow in the study reach (approximately 500 year return frequency). He also noted that the UPRR bridge at Alameda Creek was not included in plans for transportation changes currently being considered. The possibility of re-constructing the UPRR bridge supports in conjunction with another project will no longer be considered in the re-grade study.

Three alternatives will be moved forward to conceptual design and analysis: 1. re-grading downstream from the railroad bridge; 2. re-grading “balanced” up- and downstream from the BART weir; and 3. a modified fish ladder concept within the flood control channel. Substantial consideration will be given to alternatives that do not involve modifying the UPRR bridge supports or the ACWD middle inflatable dam due to costs. Modifying either of these structures would entail cost in excess of one million dollars. Also, the TAC determined that consideration will be given to creating walls atop the levees adjacent to the weir complex in order to compensate for flood capacity lost to project design elements in the channel.

Stonybrook Creek improvements conceptual design project. Gordon noted that the Coastal Conservancy passed a board order to participate in developing the conceptual design for Palomares Road crossing improvements. Initial efforts on this project will include agency and study team site visits, as well as landowner outreach.

Restoration program activities. Gordon reported on the flows and habitat subgroup meeting held on December 12th. The group supports a tiered approach to steelhead habitat restoration, with the principle target of providing flows for the reach between upper Sunol Valley and the Little Yosemite area. Other areas of interest include mainstem Alameda Creek upstream of Little Yosemite, and various tributaries. Recommended activities associated with each habitat “tier” are discussed in the meeting write-up on the Workgroup Web site. Hanson Environmental is continuing passage and temperature related studies between Niles Canyon and Little Yosemite. The results of these investigations will help inform restoration planning.

Andy Gunther said that at the December 1 meeting regarding a Programmatic EIR for steelhead restoration, there was general consensus that the next step should be upgrading the draft Restoration Action Plan toward a goal of creating a Master Plan for Steelhead Restoration in Alameda Creek. This document could be the subject of environmental review, and the resulting documentation could be referenced in the environmental review

for specific restoration projects. He referred the group to the write up of the December 1 meeting for more detail.

Andy indicated that the Coastal Conservancy and the SFPUC are considering funding the development of the Master Plan, and stated that he is drafting a scope of work for its development. The scope will include the concept of a “stakeholder audit” process in which private interviews with stakeholders will be used to draft an expanded set of guiding principles and the goals and objectives for the Master Plan. The audit also will attempt to produce consensus regarding the definition of a successful restoration program. In addition to the results of the audit, information from the work to be proposed by the flows and habitat subgroup and other updates would be recommended for inclusion in the Master Plan.

Funding. The Workgroup’s recent “Prop 13” proposal to fund fish screens and other improvements in the flood control channel has not been approved or rejected. An additional proposal has been made to American Rivers to support the Stonybrook road improvements conceptual design project that is still pending. Bay Bridge mitigation funding has been further delayed by legal issues raised by Caltrans.

Next Workgroup meeting. The next meeting of the Workgroup is scheduled for Wednesday, March 3, at 9:30 a.m. at ACFCWCD. Workgroup members are invited to submit additional agenda topics to CEMAR for inclusion in the agenda, which will be circulated prior to the meeting.