

## Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

### Minutes of Meeting

March 5, 2003

Alameda County Public Works Agency

#### Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Kristine Atkinson	DFG
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Dale Boyer	RWQCB
Brenda Buxton	State Coastal Conservancy
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Laurel Collins	ACFCWCD consultant
Chuck Hanson	Hanson Environmental
Craig Hill	ACWD
Jim Horen	Zone 7 Water Agency
Terry Huff	NRCS
Ralph Johnson	ACFCWCD
Laura Kilgour	ACFCWCD
Jeff Miller	ACA
Josh Milstein	SFPUC
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Joe Naras	SFPUC
Jim Reynolds	ACWD
Jim Robins	Jones and Stokes
Anna Roche	SFPUC
Brian Sak	SFPUC
Jackie Shick	NRCS
Janet Sowers	William Lettis & Associates
Gary Stern	NOAA Fisheries
Jennifer Stokes	SFPUC

#### **Announcements**

The first Steelhead Festival planning meeting was announced for March 6<sup>th</sup>. The festival is scheduled to occur on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Updates**

*§1135 Process.* Laura Kilgour said that the Corps' Detailed Project Report (DPR) is scheduled to be completed in August 2006, suggesting that project construction is not expected until at least 2008. Dale Boyer noted that lobbying of congresspersons by Workgroup members and agency managers may be beneficial if they urge the Corps' to accelerate its activities. Brenda Buxton restated her agency's commitment to help fund steelhead passage projects in Alameda Creek, indicating that the Workgroup should continue to evaluate alternatives to funding via the 1135 Process. With sufficient matching funds, as much as \$5 million may be available through the Conservancy.

*SFPUC Activities.* Josh Milstein told the Workgroup that the SFPUC started the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) process for various species of concern occurring on the Alameda Creek watershed properties held by the agency. SFPUC management is deciding what species and what projects will be covered in the HCP process, with Josh recommending that it include only operations and maintenance projects as there currently is no project description for the Calaveras Dam reconstruction. Josh noted that Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) is considering tying the dam project and downstream steelhead-related projects in a "focused [ESA] Section 7 consultation." The HCP process is on an approximately 30-month time frame.

In response to questions about operations, Josh said that the Department of Dam Safety is restricting Calaveras operations by having the SFPUC maintain about 30,000 acre feet of water in the reservoir. At this level, Josh expressed reservations about interim water releases for fisheries purposes. The SFPUC will adopt an interim operations plan that addresses such releases. At present, the PUC can operate the Alameda Creek Diversion Dam within the constraints of the mandated storage levels.

Anna Roche stated that the SFPUC completed sediment sampling at Sunol Dam. Results indicate that sediments have sufficiently low contamination levels to allow the removal process to continue at both Sunol and Niles dams. The cultural resources evaluation associated with this project is near completion, and environmental review of the project is expected to begin soon.

*Zone 7 Update.* Jim Horen summarized the status of the Zone 7 projects on Arroyo Mocho and Arroyo las Positas. Jim said that the las Positas project is scheduled to occur this summer. Zone 7's efforts to re-design these projects to account further for fisheries and wildlife concerns, including incorporating a fish screen and bypass flows, were complimented by several Workgroup members. Dale Boyer expressed his agency's position that watershed management issues such as grazing practices should be addressed as part of the Stream Management Master Plan in coordination with current planning for steelhead restoration.

## **Agenda Items**

*Livermore-Amador Valley Steelhead.* Chuck Hanson and Janet Sowers presented their findings in regard to the historic occurrence of steelhead in this area, as well as habitat suitability. They found evidence of hatchery fish being planted in Arroyo Mocho and Arroyo Valle as early as 1894, with variable success. Documented steelhead sightings were summarized, with multiple sightings occurring in Arroyo Valle, and none found for Arroyo Mocho. Chuck and Janet stated that steelhead were more likely to use the Arroyo Valle watershed due to its greater size and the creek's more common connection to Arroyo de la Laguna. They estimate that steelhead may have used Arroyo Valle one in six years, and acknowledge a limited data set on which this conclusion is based.

Temperature measurements in Arroyo Mocho indicate that lower reaches exceed 72° F. during a large part of the year. Upper reaches such as the area near "Veteran's Park" have lower water temperatures and may provide suitable rearing areas for salmonids. Some suitable rearing habitat also was noted in Arroyo Valle below del Valle Reservoir. Chuck indicated that a written report is in preparation and that it may be made available for posting on the Workgroup web site.

*USDA NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).* Terry Huff spoke about programs administered by NRCS that can benefit steelhead restoration in Alameda Creek. He informed the Workgroup that funds are available to support work on private lands aimed at controlling erosion and sedimentation. Cost sharing is not required for such projects, but increases the chances of having a grant awarded.

Terry said that NRCS is working with SFPUC and EBRPD to fund cattle fencing, and that the service will submit an application to support Alameda Creek restoration via funds available for urban creeks. Historically, mid-western states have received most of the funds available through the NRCS and Terry believes that good proposals may be able to attract more money to California projects. The application will be submitted before the end of April. Funding for projects next year is obtained by submitting an application by October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Dale Boyer discussed money available through the RWQCB. He recommended submitting an application for an inclusive project representing all Workgroup-related restoration projects. He suggested placing "tabs" at million dollar increments in the proposal to allow reviewers to select appropriate elements of the overall project based on funding availability. In the application, project elements also should be ranked in importance, according to Dale, and the use of matching funds is encouraged. Dale noted that Proposition 13 funds will be distributed soonest, with an RFP expected shortly. Funds available through propositions 40 and 50 will follow.

*PAC Items.* Eric Cartwright told the Workgroup that ACPAC is in the process of revising the draft policy document. Revisions are mostly minor, with a key change being use of the word "planning" instead of earlier terminology that has a greater association with mandatory environmental review. Eric will continue to update the group on this process.

Josh Milstein described a letter prepared on behalf of the PUC to NOAA Fisheries regarding potentially including areas upstream of major reservoirs as designated steelhead critical habitat. The PUC is opposed to this proposal on the grounds that it is unnecessary and could result in harm to reservoir populations managed by the commission. The Alameda Creek Alliance submitted a letter to NOAA Fisheries in support of including these areas in designated critical habitat.

Josh also brought the Workgroup's attention to the Santa Clara Valley Water District's Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat Collaborative Effort (FAHCE) process. Josh believes that agreements made through FAHCE may serve as models for future agreements necessary as part of the Alameda Creek steelhead restoration program. He cited Richard Roos-Collins' role in the SCVWD process, noting that he could be a valuable participant in discussions about restoration water supply in Alameda Creek.

*Next Workgroup Meeting.* The next meeting of the Workgroup is scheduled for Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 a.m. at ACFCWCD. A summary of the steelhead supplementation subgroup's meeting will be made, as well as updates on PUC planning issues, the Re-graded Channel Alternative study, and SFPUC trapping activities. Workgroup members are invited to submit additional agenda topics to CEMAR for inclusion in the agenda, which will be circulated prior to the meeting.