

Alameda Creek Fisheries Workgroup Meeting Minutes

Wednesday March 3, 2010

Updates on ongoing projects in the watershed

BART Weir fish ladder

Agency staff and consultants held a workshop to develop design components for the fishway. In particular, designers are trying to make the ladder functional at a range of flows. Eric said that more details likely would be available in six to eight weeks.

A mitigated negative declaration is expected to satisfy CEQA requirements for the project. The facility likely will have a provision for trapping and observing fish.

ACWD updates

Eric said the additional planned fish screens at Bunting Pond would use the design of the previously installed screens. The district's focus is on BART weir fishway first, followed by the upper rubber dam project. ACWD staff reported that the notching at the lower rubber dam site appeared to be functioning well. ACWD has estimated the total budget to be about \$20 million for flood control channel projects.

ACA updates

Jeff reported no steelhead sightings in Alameda Creek. Josh said this is consistent with one of the best indices of coastal steelhead status, the Russian River hatchery return, which is low. The group talked about the regional status of steelhead, agreeing that the limited available information suggests poor condition of the population.

New fishing regulations went into effect this month. There may be an exemption for bass fishing in Arroyo Valle in the future. In response to questions about the impact of non-native fish in Lake del Valle, Pete said that screens prevent release of reservoir fish into the downstream channel.

SFPUC updates

Tim said that a letter was sent to agencies to establish the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) process and expedite completion. The HCP's first three chapters were posted for review. The SFPUC proposes to release the remaining chapters this summer. Tim stated that a large part of the analysis related to fisheries depends on ongoing hydrology analyses.

Tim mentioned that Calaveras Dam Replacement Project draft EIR comments were received and responses are being prepared. Jeff asked about the location of mitigation projects. Tim responded that the study area is larger than the SFPUC owned lands, but that there are difficulties with uncertainty with off-site mitigation projects.

Tim said that while conditions for the quarry operators require a Sunol Valley restoration plan, the operator has not applied to the county for the permit that would trigger needed payments. As the SFPUC wants to advance this process, it intends to send a scoping letter to AC stakeholders to solicit input regarding the plan's content.

Stonybrook Creek projects

Manny said there are 13 passage barriers in the basin consisting of the Caltrans crossing, seven county roads crossings, and five private landowner sites. Mike Love is under contract to estimate the cost of completing modifications of the barriers. Gordon mentioned that a landowner in lower Stonybrook should be convinced to participate to realize the potential of the creek.

Manny said that additional considerations in the creek include illegal diversions and dumping. Manny also mentioned that sediment studies will be carried out with SFEI on Stonybrook Creek, possibly this spring.

2010 Fisheries Restoration Grant

Kwabra reported that Krissy Atkinson said that the DFG grant program would be best suited to projects in mainstem Alameda Creek.

Others/Announcements

Tim mentioned that this would be a good time to observe conditions in relation to del Valle releases. Evan said that ACWD has received notice of the releases, which are attributed to a failure at a state water project turnout.

Jeff asked about getting DWR involved in a discussion of basin-wide flows issues. Evan cited Paul Mendoza as a possible DWR contact regarding del Valle issues.

Manny asked about the condition of the USGS gage in Niles Canyon. Tim said that the upper and lower Niles Canyon gage locations have been correlated, allowing for continued applicability of gage data in the event that the Niles gage is altered or abandoned.

Migration Flows

Jeff mentioned that the SFPUC and ACWD are meeting with NOAA regarding operations, and that upcoming projects have migration flow implications. He expressed interest in discussing a basin-wide approach to determining migration flows.

Pete expressed his opinion that the maximum benefit from releases is from the southern part of the watershed. The group discussed the proportion of the del Valle storage from local versus state water project water. Gordon said that del Valle might have an operational requirement (unenforced) to release when there is hydrologic connectivity with the Bay.

Gordon asked about the ability of ACWD facilities to pass mid-range flows. Evan responded that ACWD diversion essentially ceases around 400 cfs due to water quality

considerations. In practice, the diversions are stopped at flow levels varying between 200 and 500 cfs depending on water supply considerations.

Josh said that migration flows are a work in progress. Modeling is being used to inform these determinations. Eric said that their operational permit must cover all aspects of flows and their operations.

Tim said there currently isn't coordination between the water supply agencies regarding migration flows. He cited the SFPUC policy of mitigating for project impacts as opposed to watershed wide impacts produced by multiple parties. He cautioned against expecting all flows issues to be solved via the CDRP process.

Manny said that he will update the group regarding how the historical ecology relates to the discussion of migration flows. Eric said that the Workgroup's flows studies are intended to use the best available science to inform flows decisions.

Gordon mentioned his perception that there is a relative lack of information regarding migration flows planning. Tim responded that there are many issues that haven't yet been studied regarding this issue, but that infrastructure is being designed to handle a wide range of contingencies. Eric agreed that said that planning for migration flows is not as advanced as other aspects of the steelhead restoration process.

Jeff asked that we continue the flows issue as an agenda item. Manny stated his intention to have it be a standing agenda item.

Pete asked about ACFCWCD plans for dredging in the future. Manny said that the agency is looking at other approaches to sediment control, and that information will be prepared for the Army Corps to determine the potential acceptability of other approaches.

The group took a lunch break.