

# Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

## Minutes of Meeting

April 5, 2005

### Alameda County Public Works Agency

#### Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Deirdre Appel	SFPUC
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Derrell Bridgeman	ACA and No. Cal. Fed. of Fly Fishers
Brenda Buxton	Coastal Conservancy
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Andy Gunther	CEMAR
David Houts	Zone 7
Laura Kidd	ACFCWCD
Jane Lavelle	SFPUC
Jeff Miller	ACA
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Brian Sak	SFPUC
Monty Schmitt	NRDC
Carla Schultheis	ACFCWCD

#### **Announcements**

David Houts announced that Zone 7 had moved its offices. The new address is 100 North Canyon Parkway in Livermore and the new phone number for the water agency is (925) 454-5000. David said that his agency has completed a Stream Master Plan for the Livermore/Amador Valley area. Environmental review for the plan will compare the effects of new policies to those contained in the previous (1966) plan, and is expected in October. The plan contains elements relating to fish passage and habitat enhancement.

Jeff Miller announced a successful fish rescue at the BART weir on Friday, April 1. A nine-pound, 27 inch steelhead was collected and transported to the area near the Alameda Creek/Stonybrook Creek confluence for release.

#### **Updates**

*SFPUC activities.* Jane Lavelle reported that the biological assessment for the Niles and Sunol dam removals project was submitted to the Corps. The SFPUC is reviewing an administrative draft EIR for this project.

Jane and Deirdre Appel said that environmental review of the inflatable dam project near the Sunol WTP is planned for the fall. They expect to have a meeting with DFG and NMFS to coordinate this project with a revised Memorandum of Understanding regarding Alameda Creek fisheries. Jane also announced a workshop on May 5 to advance formation of the central permitting office sought to facilitate the SFPUC's Water Supply Improvements program.

Jane told the Workgroup that the planned flow study for Sunol Valley has been delayed by hydrologic conditions this year. By Division of Safety of Dams requirements, Calaveras reservoir's level must be kept below established water surface elevations. Operators have not been able to "ramp down" releases for the study due to these requirements. This study will produce information regarding channel losses at high groundwater table conditions.

*Flood control channel projects funding.* Eric Cartwright said that the PAC talked about federal funding for projects at its last meeting. He and Carla Schultheis discussed a second letter that had been sent to Pete Stark's office regarding funding support. This letter requested \$1 million for planning and permitting activities in fiscal year 2006. Contacts with the congressman's office were coordinated through the SFPUC's legislative liaison in Washington, D.C.

Eric mentioned his agency's optimism in regards to receiving approval for two \$500,000 grants for flood control channel projects. The water district is planning implementation of these projects in 2006 assuming success in the Bay Bridge mitigation fund application process.

Eric said that the lower dam removal would involve notching and not removing the dam's foundation. According to Eric, the structure is important in grade control.

Laura Kidd asked about the consistency of the proposed upper dam screening project with possible implementation of a natural fishway at the BART weir. Eric responded that a new pipeline associated with the natural fishway project would have a dedicated screen at the upper inflatable dam. The two projects therefore are consistent.

### **Agenda Items**

*Webcam and fish rescue.* Gordon Becker gave a presentation on the recently-installed Webcam and its application to fish rescues. The camera has been functioning well for about three weeks, and allows viewers to monitor the apron for fish attempting to swim up its face. Two fish have been spotted using the Webcam. The first fish was smaller than expected for an in-migrating steelhead and was not the focus of a rescue. The second fish was rescued as reported in the announcements earlier.

Gordon said that a next step is developing a response protocol when fish are noticed at the BART weir. He suggested that additional staffing be made available both by agencies and volunteers to allow for rapid response. Possible predation or dewatering problems suggest that fish be rescued as promptly as is feasible. He also noted that NMFS and DFG likely would request that next year's rescues be conducted under a research permit for an in-migrant study. An application for such a permit will be prepared well before the next rainy season. With addition of a stage indicator, the Webcam also may be useful in the future as a flow monitoring device.

*Upper watershed fisheries issues.* Brian Sak said that the SFPUC's reservoir tributary traps have not been "fishing" during a large portion of the rainy season. Non-operation can be caused by trap removal prior to large storms or by storm damage inflicted on operating traps. Due to high flows in Arroyo Hondo, access to trap locations has been difficult as well. Brian noted that a relatively high reservoir level and high flows have maintained a hydrologic connection between Calaveras and Arroyo Mocho, an area of concern to DFG. He did not report progress in excluding cattle from reservoir tributaries. Brian told the Workgroup that SFPUC staff is continuing to study predation by non-natives in the reservoirs. He stated that migrant trapping may be discontinued next year.

*Restoration water planning.* Gordon said he had received input regarding restoration water planning from ACA, ACWD, NRDC, and the SFPUC. He summarized the studies that appear to be necessary as background for flows determinations: 1. historical and current hydrology as measured at Union City, Niles, and the upstream end of the Sunol Valley including characterization of water year types; 2. fish passage in the flood control channel and Sunol Valley; 3. a watershed supply/diversion model; and 4. habitat restoration planning.

Gordon suggested that timely agreement on the scope and schedule for these efforts is important to satisfy the likely expectation of possible restoration project funders that flows provisions be accounted for in planning. He also stated his opinion that success in water planning was more likely if these studies were conducted under the aegis of the Workgroup than by individual organizations.

Brenda Buxton said that it is easier for the Conservancy to support planning when it is tied to capital projects, but that Conservancy support should not be ruled out. She suggested using a hiring committee to select a consultant to carry out the set of studies. Andy Gunther noted that hiring one consultant to carry out the work could save money over a multi-party approach, and result in more efficient management and liaison with the Workgroup.

Gordon will prepare a two-page background memorandum for review by Workgroup members on this topic. The memo will be delivered to the PAC members for consideration prior to a joint Workgroup/PAC meeting on the topic. Eric and others stressed the importance of conveying the context and desired outcome of the study package in the memo.

*Master Plan and stakeholder audit process.* Brenda Buxton said that comments are due on the stakeholder audit on Friday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, although late comments likely will be accepted. Jane said that she would be commenting regarding omissions of opinions offered during the interviews. She expressed her view that the draft document is slanted against the water agencies and has stylistic problems.

*Next Workgroup meeting.* The next Workgroup meeting will be held either May 20, or June 1, 3, or 10 and will include a presentation on the stakeholder audit. Input regarding meeting scheduling should be sent to Brenda Buxton. Workgroup members are invited to contact Gordon with agenda items for the next meeting.