

Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Minutes of Meeting

May 7, 2003

Alameda County Public Works Agency

Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Brenda Buxton	State Coastal Conservancy
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Laurel Collins	Watershed Sciences
Chris Gray	Supervisor Haggerty's Office
Darwin Helmuth	SFPUC
Craig Hill	ACWD
Ralph Johnson	ACFCWCD
Laura Kilgour	ACFCWCD
Jay Kinberger	U.S. Army Corps
Mary Lim	Zone 7 Water Agency
Josh Milstein	SFPUC
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Joe Naras	SFPUC
Barbara Palacios	SFPUC
Jim Reynolds	ACWD
Anna Roche	SFPUC
Brian Sak	SFPUC
Gary Stern	NOAA Fisheries
Jennifer Stokes	SFPUC
Richard Wetzig	ACFCWCD

Announcements

Flood Control Channel Steelhead. Jeff Miller, Laura Kilgour and Pete Alexander collected steelhead at the BART weir in March. The fish were measured, weighed, and tissue sampled for genetic analysis. Based on consultation with NOAA Fisheries staff, it was determined that the fish would not be moved upstream from the barrier.

The announcement led to discussion of provisions for possibly moving fish in the future. Gary Stern said it would be desirable to have a program in place for next year to deal with in-migrants more effectively than has occurred in the past. He noted that DFG staff expressed dissatisfaction with the existing *ad hoc* approach in the context of the recent collection effort, adding that an important feature of such a program to move fish would be its goals statement.

Gary stated that an interim program to deal with in-migrants could be the subject of an ESA Section 7 consultation with the Army Corps as an "early implementation" of the Section 1135 project. Water agency representatives expressed concern that provisions were not yet in place to assure the success of efforts to move rainbow trout into the upper watershed. Under current conditions, there may be inadequate flows in areas used as rearing habitat and water diversions could cause delay or

harm to out-migrating fish. Gary responded that the Section 1135 process, or development of the SFPUC's Recapture Facility project could provide a "nexus" for a consultation on these issues.

Josh Milstein told the group that the SFPUC's consultant is examining options for improving trout habitat in Calaveras Reservoir and the agency's ability to release "rearing flows." One promising approach is possible installation of a liquid oxygen system into the reservoir. Josh cited the need to develop an interim program due to the projected 8-10 year time frame for implementing the Calaveras reconstruction project.

Andy Gunther said that the Supplementation subgroup would respond to these management concerns through development of a "straw man" plan that members could review and respond to. The plan will address the program elements of phasing, release locations, goals and others. The meeting date will be confirmed after consultation with Supplementation subgroup members not present at the Workgroup meeting.

Sunol/Ohlone Land Use Plan Alternative. Jeff Miller said that the Alameda Creek Alliance is working on a "Wilderness" alternative for the land use plan governing Sunol and Ohlone Regional Wilderness areas. Jeff requested Workgroup comments on the draft alternative and the process in general.

Habitat Studies. Eric Cartwright said that Hanson Environmental is continuing temperature monitoring studies that can be used to characterize habitat in Niles Canyon into their third year. Pete Alexander announced that Peter Moyle and Rob Leidy will be sampling Alameda Creek as part of a study of Sacramento perch.

Web Site Redesign. Andy Gunther noted that the Workgroup's web site had received a "face lift." He invited Workgroup members to view the site and submit suggestions regarding possible improvements or other comments to CEMAR.

Updates

§1135 Process. Jay Kinberger said that federal budget difficulties have been slowing progress on the Section 1135 process. However, the project has received approval to advance to its next phase, the Detailed Project Report. This document serves as the basis for approving construction. He expects to begin initial tasks in the next few weeks that will produce a description of the Alameda Creek flood control channel "without project" conditions. This step will be followed by a development of alternatives and a recommended plan to meet project goals.

Jay said that he wanted to place staff from the Hydrology and Hydraulics group at the Corps into Supplementation subgroup meetings. He also noted that potentially rising costs of the project could force the Corps to adopt a "GI" funding process.

Gary Stern commented that bypass flows in Alameda Creek is the largest undetermined component in the steelhead restoration program. Josh Milstein responded that a program office may be established to coordinate agency interactions regarding water supply and fisheries issues.

SFPUC Activities. Josh said that the SFPUC expects a design for Calaveras reconstruction to be developed in about 18 months. He told the group that the previously mentioned liquid oxygen system may be installed by next summer reservoir to increase habitat availability while reservoir storage capacity is restricted.

Darwin Helmuth reported that the Habitat Conservation Plan process has been started to address operations and maintenance programs in the watershed, including grazing and mining on PUC property. He expects completion within about two years.

The Niles and Sunol dams removal project is at the point of examining alternatives, which include complete or partial removal. Project implementation is expected in 2005 if no unforeseen circumstances arise. SFPUC staff noted that a stakeholder involvement process would occur prior to implementation, and that the project could serve as another potential avenue for Section 7 consultation.

Agenda Items

SFPUC Trapping. Brian Sak distributed a hand-out showing results of trapping activities in San Antonio and Indian creeks, and in Arroyo Hondo. Brian relayed that traps were repeatedly damaged by high flows from storm activity. He stated that comparisons between this year's data and that from previous years was problematic due to the high incidence of traps being out of service.

Brian noted that upper watershed landowners were not cooperative regarding the studies. Since some over-summering habitat occurs on private property, a complete understanding of the natural history of rainbow trout populations upstream from San Antonio and Calaveras dams is unlikely under current circumstances.

SFPUC staff tagged individual fish to determine how long reservoir-based fish spend in tributaries. In subsequent years, tagging will allow for mark-recapture experiments that will provide reservoir population estimates. Brian also noted his agency's intention to conduct snorkel surveys in Arroyo Hondo next year.

PAC Items. Josh Milstein reported that the PAC discussed supplementation and funding issues in its last meeting. No follow-up items were noted.

Steelhead Festival. Laura Kilgour said that the 4th annual Steelhead Festival and Watershed Awareness Fair would be held on May 10. The event is intended to increase awareness of water supply and steelhead restoration issues associated with Alameda Creek.

Stonybrook Creek project. Gordon Becker reported that ACFCWCD provided support for CEMAR to develop a funding proposal for conceptual design of improvements at two Palomares Road crossings. The project would be funded in part through a \$40,000 fine imposed on the City of Fremont by the Corps for an improperly-conducted culvert project. The concept proposal is being reviewed by NOAA Fisheries and the Corps. The project, in combination with the Highway 84 crossing improvement planned by Caltrans, would make about 3,000 additional feet of Stonybrook Creek accessible to steelhead. The completed conceptual design and cost estimate will be used for implementation grant proposals in the future.

Re-Graded Channel Alternative Study. Gordon updated the group on this study, saying that the project team was building the HEC-RAS model used to assess the feasibility of removing the BART weir. The first meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee is expected in approximately two months, and will review the project methodology.

Grants and Funding Update. Eric Cartwright described the proposal being submitted to the Regional Water Quality Control Board for a package of Alameda Creek Restoration projects. The proposal includes funding for six projects including: interconnection of recharge pits at the lower inflatable dam; the upper inflatable dam fishway; Stonybrook Creek passage improvements; Sunol Valley Restoration (i.e., gas line crossing modification and riparian enhancement); SFPUC

Recapture Facility; and off-stream cattle watering facilities. The total value of the projects is approximately \$5 million.

Andy Gunther noted that the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Bay Bridge mitigation funds is anticipated in June, although legal complications may delay this process. There is no match requirement for grant proposals, and the per-project cap is \$500,000. NOAA Fisheries estimates that about 15 percent of the total available funds may be applied to studies/research/education projects. There may be more than one RFP, depending on the number of successful applications received by the administering body. Fish ladder projects are likely to be well-received, and applications to fund intake screens will be considered if proponents can demonstrate a clear benefit to steelhead. A likely proposal for this funding opportunity would consist of funding fish screens associated with ACWD's upper inflatable dam. Workgroup members are invited to contact CEMAR staff with additional proposal suggestions so that we can develop information regarding such projects prior to the next Workgroup meeting.

Next Workgroup Meeting. The next meeting of the Workgroup is scheduled for Wednesday, July 23rd, 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 the Bay Bridge mitigation fund application process. Workgroup members are invited to submit additional agenda topics to CEMAR for inclusion in the agenda, which will be circulated prior to the meeting.