

## Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

### Minutes of Meeting

June 10, 2004

### Alameda County Public Works Agency

#### Attendees

Deirdre Appel	SFPUC
Steve Apperson	SFPUC
Kristine Atkinson	DFG
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Brenda Buxton	State Coastal Conservancy
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Erika Cleugh	DFG
Laurel Collins	Watershed Sciences
Andy Gunther	CEMAR
Craig Hill	ACWD
Laura Kidd	ACFCWCD
Jane Lavelle	SFPUC
Jeff Miller	ACA
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Barbara Palacios	SFPUC
Jeremy Sarrow	SFPUC
Diana Sokolove	SF Planning Department
Gary Stern	NOAA Fisheries
Jennifer Stoltz	SFPUC
Saskia VanGendt	CEMAR

#### **Announcements**

Jane Lavelle announced the Habitat Conservation Plan meeting for the night of June 10<sup>th</sup> in Dublin. The HCP covers SFPUC operations and maintenance in the Alameda Creek watershed.

#### **Updates**

*SFPUC activities.* Jane said that field geotechnical work is complete and that the information is being analyzed to develop information for the reconstructed Calaveras dam. After discussions with the Division of Dam Safety, the PUC is expected to select a preferred type of dam.

The Notice of Preparation for the Niles and Sunol dam removals project was said to be expected shortly, followed by the Initial Study. A scoping meeting for the project is planned for early July. Barbara Palacios noted that a consulting team of Weiss and Entrix is carrying out additional tasks to clarify the design of the projects. Gary Stern added that new information concerning the extent of dam removal is being generated as well as analysis of the quantity of sediment to be removed. Gary speculated that the mostly coarse materials trapped behind the dams typically are not transported as far as the flood control channel, and expressed his desire that these materials

be left in place. He concluded that the new analysis should provide useful baseline data for future monitoring.

Jane announced that a kick-off meeting was held for the PUC's proposed inflatable dam project on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The group discussed the origins of the project and concluded that the planning "landscape" had changed since the project's inception. The group suggested that design should incorporate features reflecting the listed status of steelhead. Part of the project includes plans to install a 12" valve to allow for properly regulated Calaveras outflows.

A meeting about the project between Michael Carlin of the PUC and Carl Wilcox of DFG was scheduled for the day following the Workgroup meeting. Kristine Atkinson informed that group that she should be advised of all DFG-related matters occurring in relation to PUC projects in the watershed.

PUC staff relayed the proposed schedule for the inflatable dam project, with a conceptual engineering report anticipated for September 2004, followed by environmental review including associated environmental studies in fall 2007. Design is planned for 2008, and construction 2009. Gary and Jane agreed to develop a strategy for relating the inflatable dam project and the HCP.

Gary said that the process of establishing a central permitting office for upcoming SFPUC projects was moving ahead. The office would include NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, USEPA and the US Army Corps. Jane added that the PUC was working to include state agencies in the office.

*PAC activities/steelhead restoration planning strategy/Master Plan.* Brenda Buxton asked ACFCWCD and ACWD staff to check the cost estimates that Brenda is developing in relation to proposed projects in the flood control channel. She said that URS was in the process of preparing a scope and cost estimate for the master plan process that should be complete by the end of July. Brenda said that the PUC had volunteered to contribute about \$25,000 for the "stakeholder inventory." Brenda acknowledged the added level of complexity that would be imposed if the Conservancy had to conduct the bidding for this effort.

Eric Cartwright said that ACWD lost a portion of its budget and that the agency might have to defer some capital projects. Gordon Becker read a message from NOAA Fisheries staff stating that there is still no timetable for release of a request for proposals for Bay Bridge money.

### **Agenda Items**

*Supplementation subgroup meeting/In-migrant study.* Gordon summarized the last meeting of the supplementation subgroup where participants discussed the material in Hagar Environmental Science's report on supplementation alternatives and other issues. The group noted a significant supplementation opportunity in potentially moving young of the year (YOY) trout stranded in drying portions of the reservoir tributaries into areas downstream of the dams. While YOY are assumed to have very low recruitment rates into future runs, the fish currently appear to be dying and not contributing to reservoir or resident populations.

The group also determined that even in the face of uncertainty regarding reservoir population sizes, sufficient juvenile production appears to be occurring to support future supplementation activities outside of the reservoirs. Kristine reiterated her recommendation that the SFPUC adopt additional improvements in trapping methods to allow more powerful interpretation of the data produced by on-going fisheries studies.

The group noted that releasing reservoir fish into downstream portions of the watershed is not advisable until an interim operations plan is adopted to provide water for fish habitat. Gary Stern described possible operational changes that could improve habitat conditions in the watershed.

The flood district hopes to conduct in-migrant trapping next winter, with release into Stonybrook Creek. Laura Kidd requested the names of parties willing to participate in the program. The district will coordinate with Gary Stern and DFG staff on study design and permitting issues.

*Workgroup/NOAA Fisheries coordination issues.* Gary described the process by which “resident” Alameda Creek rainbow trout have been proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. He said that should the proposal become a rule, an interim operations plan to support the population would be placed on a fast track. Gary said that a public hearing would be held on the issue, and that a final determination was expected in about June 2005.

Gary stated that the quality of the genetics work done on Alameda Creek watershed *Oncorhynchus mykiss* was largely responsible for the proposed listing. He relayed NOAA Fisheries’ staff opinion that the population could have a role in steelhead recovery beyond the Alameda Creek watershed.

During the period of listing review, watershed actions that could result in “take” are subject to section 7 conferences (as opposed to section 7 consultations) that produce conference opinions. For example, the Niles and Sunol dams removal project may be the subject of a section 7 conference that, according to Gary, will produce a “simple exchange of letters” that will allow the activities to occur. Should listing occur, conference opinions may be used to create biological opinions easily.

Gary shared that providing fish passage at the BART weir had become a high priority within NOAA Fisheries. The group discussed the possibility of monitoring ACWD facilities for impacts on *O. mykiss*, and Kristine requested that the district determine if fish can enter the flood control channel under current conditions.

The group then revisited the in-migrant study discussion, with Gary saying that the biological opinion for the study may allow for operational take coverage during the period of the study. He noted that the opinion also will describe the likely effects of re-introducing ocean fish into the watershed. Gary mentioned again the steelhead recovery team’s interest in possibly using Alameda Creek watershed *O. mykiss* in a regional recovery strategy.

*Stonybrook Creek improvements conceptual design project.* Gordon said that sub-consultants had completed geotechnical work and surveying for the project. The information generated in these efforts will be used to begin conceptual design work of the two road crossing improvements.

*Re-graded channel alternative study.* Gordon said that the project consultant had produced the first drawings of the “ramp” conceptual design. Gordon passed out the drawings, noting that the HEC-RAS model is not configured to produce “user friendly” graphics. The project report will rely on a drawing program to produce more accessible graphical representations.

Eric said that ACWD would need to construct a new pipe between rubber dam 3 and Shinn Pond under the proposed design. The district also would feed Kaiser Pond through a “T” pipe configuration. He said that ACWD has estimated the new pipe length to be about 4,200 feet plus a lateral, and that the new diversion and pipeline were estimated to cost approximately \$4.5 million.

Eric also described the possibility that the Division of Dam Safety would interpret the flood control levee as a dam under the new configuration, thereby involving the issue of an emergency overflow mechanism. Gary Stern commented that his agency supported removal of the middle inflatable dam pond because of reduced impacts on water temperature and predation.

*Reservoir population issues.* The group concluded the meeting with additional discussions regarding managing the SFPUC reservoir trout populations. Gordon stated the possible benefits of implementing bass control activities and stringent grazing management. Kristine said that adding an oxygenation system at Calaveras Reservoir would increase the carrying capacity and increase the necessity of screening the diversion adits to avoid entrainment. Kristine also stated the desirability of screening the San Antonio Reservoir adits. Staff from the SFPUC agreed to consider this issue in discussions regarding the 1991 PUC/DFG memorandum of understanding concerning Alameda Creek fisheries.

*Communications.* Andy Gunther announced that Workgroup members wanting to distribute a message to the entire group should use the address, [alameda\\_creek@ceamar.org](mailto:alameda_creek@ceamar.org). CEMAR requests the discretion of Workgroup members in using this address list appropriately.

*Next Workgroup meeting.* The next Workgroup meeting will be held on June 28th at 9:30 a.m. at ACFCWCD. Workgroup members are invited to contact Gordon with agenda items for the next meeting.