

Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Minutes of Meeting

July 28, 2005

East Bay Regional Parks District

Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Kristine Atkinson	DFG
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Brenda Buxton	Coastal Conservancy
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
David Houts	Zone 7
Laura Kidd	ACFCWCD
Jane Lavelle	SFPUC
Jeff Miller	ACA
Josh Milstein	SF City Attorney's Office
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Ivana Noel	Alameda County RCD
Brian Sak	SFPUC
Gary Stern	NMFS

Progress Updates

Jane Lavelle said that the Section 7 consultation for the Niles and Sunol Dam projects had produced delays in the environmental review for the project. Jane also said that DSOD had approved the conceptual design for the Calaveras Dam rebuild and the Turnstone/EDAW consulting team had started CEQA/NEPA review for the project. She expects the Conceptual Engineering Report to be released in August.

Jane announced a new position within the PUC under Michael Carlin titled Natural Resources Division Manager. The manager is expected to begin work in September and will represent the PUC at the next meeting of the so-called Big Group. Jane said that several PUC projects would become the responsibility of the new Natural Resources Division manager, including the Habitat Conservation Plan for the watershed lands.

Jeff Miller asked about the proposed inflatable dam project and the lack of funding for advancing the project associated with recent appropriations by the City and County of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors. Jane said that the SFPUC will re-evaluate the project and relayed that the appropriation process had dedicated funds to fishery-related studies.

Brian Sak reported that the PUC's fish traps were non-operational for a large portion of the migration season due to the heavy rains. He said trapping indicated a large number of juvenile fish migrating this season. The PUC likely will not sustain the trapping effort of recent years into the future due to the large cost and diminishing information returns. Brian also noted that early results suggest that bass in the reservoirs seem to have an extremely broad diet with trout comprising a relatively small proportion. He reminded the group that these results are not definitive due to the nature of the sampling program.

Kristine Atkinson said that she, Gary Stern, and PUC staff had toured watershed lands in mid-June, in part to examine the hydrologic connection between the reservoirs and the tributaries known to offer spawning habitat. She reported that such a connection appeared to exist, and that there might be a follow-up trip in January.

Eric Cartwright reported that the PAC meeting in July focused largely on the Master Plan and flows studies. The next meeting will be September 14th and will be moderated by Mary Selkirk of the Center for Collaborative Policy. The PAC will examine the draft Master Plan outline being produced at a subgroup meeting on Wednesday, August 31st at 9:30. Gordon will send out an agenda for that meeting about a week in advance.

Eric said that ACFCWCD, EBRPD, Union City Sanitary, and ACWD were pursuing Proposition 50 grant money for so-called Phase 2 facilities including passage at the BART weir and the upper inflatable dam, and the intertie pipeline. In a meeting with DWR staff, Eric was told that projects with a strong water supply component were likeliest to receive funding. Partly in response to this criterion, the interagency group is proposing a project that includes an infiltration gallery upstream of the upper inflatable dam. Eric noted that such a facility would allow diversion to occur at high flows, a change from current operating procedures. Developing an infiltration gallery could allow ACWD to forego diverting some dry season flows in the future.

Eric said that approximately \$1.5 billion in requests had been made for the available \$150 million. The interagency project would cost about \$11.8 million, and the group is requesting 90 percent support. The funding program will involve inviting a small portion of the applicants on for a second round of proposal materials. Eric said that support letters would be appropriate if the interagency group is invited into the second round.

Jeff Miller said that Pete Stark likely would be the lead on federal assistance for Alameda Creek steelhead projects. Currently, the proposal is to direct \$1 million to the watershed through the USFWS.

Eric then reminded the Workgroup that about \$50 million would become available in the next several years through Proposition 40. This program is intended to implement habitat restoration projects.

Agenda items

Stonybrook Creek fish passage issues. Gordon Becker gave a presentation on the preliminary findings of the consultants retained to design modifications of two culverts under Palomares Road. The culverts can be removed and new road crossing facilities provided at an estimated cost of about \$950,000. Evaluation of downstream culverts on private lands indicates that adult steelhead likely can pass several culverts at a range of flows and that resident rainbow trout do not appear able to migrate through the pipes in the upstream direction. Gordon expects a draft of the Stonybrook Road Crossings report to be available for review near the end of August.

This project was created by CEMAR in order to utilize fine money from the City of Fremont. Grants from the Coastal Conservancy and NMFS/American Rivers allowed CEMAR to retain Winzler & Kelly Consulting Engineers (Eureka) and Michael Love and Associates (Arcata) to develop conceptual designs and assess the feasibility of the road crossing improvements.

Gordon also talked about Caltrans proposed project at the crossing of Highway 84 and Stonybrook Creek. He showed a figure depicting a two-barrel culvert with velocity break baffles in one of the barrels. The project also involves weirs in the upstream portion of the creek to allow migration through an area of large grade change. Gordon noted that he, Jeff Miller, NMFS, and USFWS had submitted comments to Caltrans regarding inadequacies of both the project design and the accompanying environmental review.

Key staff on the Caltrans project are Ron Kiaaina, project engineer, and Ed Pang, environmental review coordinator. Jeff Miller has requested a public hearing on the project.

Fish rescue activities. Gordon told the Workgroup that he and Gary had discussed fish rescue activities in water year 2005-2006 since the last Workgroup meeting. Gary indicated his support for continuing rescue activities under the 4(d) rules of the ESA, provided that a program is in place to assure the presence of a person experienced in handling steelhead at rescue events. Stuart Moock volunteered to be part of the rescue team in the next season.

Gordon said that he is being supported to develop the rescue protocol and would seek the input of the Workgroup members. Pete Alexander said that the program should have at least three vehicles capable of transporting rescued fish. Kristine Atkinson requested that CEMAR invite comments on the draft protocol. The protocol will be the basis for requesting an authorization letter from NMFS and DFG.

SFPUC project integration. Gary expressed his view that multiple SFPUC projects and programs related to water supply operations in the Alameda Creek watershed had overlap that should be considered in planning. He cited on-going efforts related to reservoir operations, the HCP, the proposed inflatable dam, and the interim operations plan. Jane noted that these activities would be coordinated by the new Natural Resources Division manager.

Jeff asked about the status of the interim operations plan and the manner in which the creek alliance could submit comments. Jane responded that a meeting was scheduled to discuss the plan in the end of August, and that comments should be given to Jim Salerno as the lead in that

process. Jeff noted that ACA was interested in cattle exclusions and the status of evaluating possible decommissioning of ACDD.

Gary inquired about the operational flexibility of the reservoir oxygenation system being designed for Calaveras. Brian Sak said that he believed the system could be adjusted to change the target dissolved oxygen level of the receiving water. (Gary also updated that Workgroup that NMFS deferred the decision to include/not included reservoir populations of steelhead in the Evolutionarily Significant Unit.)

Master Plan process. The Workgroup discussed the manner in which the Master Plan and flows studies outline/scope would be created. Various members volunteered to attend a subgroup meeting wherein a draft scope/outline would be created. Gordon offered to coordinate this effort on behalf of ACFCWCD. The subgroup meeting was scheduled for August 31st.

Next steps. Laura Kidd said that the PAC members had expressed interest in receiving proposals for methods of governance for future steelhead restoration activities and planning efforts in the watershed. This topic will be on the agenda for the next combined Workgroup/PAC meeting which is scheduled for September 30th.