

Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Minutes of Meeting

December 1, 2004

Alameda County Public Works Agency

Attendees

Deirdre Appel	SFPUC
Kristine Atkinson	DFG
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Derrell Bridgeman	ACA and NCFFF
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Andy Gunther	CEMAR
Craig Hill	ACWD
Jane Lavelle	SFPUC
Jeff Miller	ACA
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Barbara Palacios	SFPUC
Brian Sak	SFPUC
Carla Schultheis	ACFCWCD
Gary Stern	NOAA Fisheries
Jennifer Stoltz	SFPUC
Richard Wetzig	ACFCWCD

Announcements

Gary Stern announced that NOAA Fisheries had re-designated “critical habitat” for steelhead and salmon in West Coast ESUs. Staff used CalWater hydrologic units to indicate important steelhead resources, and this information was used by an economics team to assess fiscal impacts of steelhead restoration. According to the San Francisco Chronicle report, the amount of critical habitat has been reduced by approximately 80 percent since the earlier designation.

Updates

SFPUC and PAC activities. { CONTACT _Con-44ECBC8A17E \c \s \l } said that the PAC met two weeks previous to the Workgroup. One of the major topics of discussion was the proposed inclusion of Alameda Creek watershed rainbow trout in the ESU. Various Workgroup member agencies submitted comment letters on the proposed rule. Carla distributed a letter to Congressman Pete Stark from Workgroup member agencies. The letter requests federal assistance with implementing identified passage barrier improvement projects in the flood control channel. Carla reported that the PAC agreed to begin the Master Plan process after completion of the proposed stakeholder audit.

Jane Lavelle said that the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) process would include several workshops to be conducted beginning in January on such topics as grazing, trails, and quarries. She told the Workgroup that a post card would be sent out to interested parties indicating progress on the HCP process.

The SFPUC is reviewing alternatives to the proposed inflatable dam project. Also, Jane announced a January meeting to discuss further possible sediment impacts associated with the Sunol and Niles dams removal project. Jane is in the process of scheduling a second SFPUC internal meeting to address fisheries planning issues.

Kristine Atkinson said that DFG, NOAA Fisheries and the SFPUC planned to meet to discuss the issue of hydrologic connectivity between Calaveras reservoir and Arroyo Hondo. In particular, participants would address strategies for reservoir elevations and maintaining a fish passable channel in the portion of Arroyo Hondo exposed by decreasing lake levels. Brain Sak commented that recent storms had re-cut the channel, and that flow existed allowing passage between the arroyo and the reservoir.

Agenda Items

SFPUC watershed graphics. Jane posted large-scale maps developed by the SFPUC for internal planning purposes. The figures are based on aerial photographic bases and indicate the locations of various facilities and fish passage barriers. Jane requested and received comments on the figures.

Fish rescue and in-migrant study. Gary reviewed NOAA and DFG policy regarding moving steelhead upstream of the BART weir under a rescue provision of the ESA "4d" rule. Only wild steelhead are to be moved and only by individuals registered with Kevan Urquhart in the rescue program. Gary said that reporting was required to conduct the program as well as notification of rescue events. Gary noted that the proposed in-migrant study would be permitted under ESA section 10 and likely would involve a more complicated permitting process.

Gordon Becker noted that only the tagging component of the in-migrant study would not be accomplished by moving fish as part of a rescue program. Pete Alexander, Carla, and Gordon agreed to form a group to develop the research program including components, staffing, financing, and permitting.

Stakeholder audit and Master Plan. Brenda Buxton reported via e-mail on progress on these issues. According to Brenda, the Center for Collaborative Policy and the Conservancy has nearly completed the contracting process for the audit and may be able to begin work in mid-December. Brenda relayed that anyone wanting a copy of the scope of work should contact her by email.

Brenda conferred with her supervisor who agreed that the several Memoranda of Understanding necessary to allow repayment were not worth the associated administrative time. Therefore, the Conservancy will fund the project. Brenda requested that each participating organization designate an individual to be part of an oversight committee. The committee first will finalize the list of stakeholders to be interviewed. Several Workgroup members volunteered for these positions. A representative from PG&E will be determined and the name forwarded to Brenda.

Brenda also conveyed to the Workgroup that the Conservancy was considering authorizing \$125,000 for evaluation of the steelhead restoration potential of San Francisco Estuary watersheds. (This authorization was subsequently granted.) Gordon reported that the project entailed developing evaluation criteria in cooperation with a technical advisory committee, screening watershed using the criteria, and developing information useful to agencies and funders in focusing restoration efforts.

Funding opportunities. Andy Gunther and Eric Cartwright described their progress on proposals to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for the CALTRANS mitigation funds. The two met with NOAA representatives in Santa Rosa and are developing descriptions of two projects for which funds will be requested (proposals due December 15): 1) installation of a fish screen at the ACWD upper inflatable dam; and 2) removal of the lower inflatable dam and installation of a pipeline to replace the capability for recharging the groundwater basin south of the channel. Eric requested letters of support for the proposals, noting that a sample support letter is available on the Web site. Eric indicated that NFWF had requested that letters be sent to him for inclusion in a proposal packet.

The proposal is intended to describe how these projects fit in to a set of improvements for the flood control channel. According to Eric, ACWD envisions movement away from the “2001 concept” of three fishways and six fish screens toward the “2004 concept” of one fish ladder, one natural fishway (i.e., the re-graded channel alternative for the BART weir), one fish screen, and pipelines to replace abandoned diversion points. Phase 1 of the 2004 concept consists of removing the lower inflatable dam, installing a pipeline under the creek to allow recharge pits south of the channel to be filled, the fish screen on the diversion above the upper inflatable dam, and the interim movement of in-migrating adults. This phase is expected to cost approximately \$2 million. Phase 2 will include the remaining fishway, screen, and pipelines projects at the middle and upper inflatable dam sites, which will obviate the need to move migrants.

Alameda Creek watershed map. Pete Alexander presented a draft copy of the Alameda Creek watershed brochure that is being prepared under the direction of the Alameda Creek Watershed Management Steering Committee. The brochure is scheduled to go to print in December. A number of requests were made for copies of the draft to be used to show coordination of effort within the watershed. Pete indicated that “draft” status should be applied to the map, but that he could make copies available.

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