

Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Minutes of Meeting

December 6, 2005

East Bay Regional Park District, Castro Valley Classroom

Attendees

Hank Ackerman	ACPWA
Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Derrell Bridgman	TriValley Fly Fishers
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Laurel Collins	Watershed Sciences
Marcia Grefsrud	DFG
Andy Gunther	CEMAR
David Houts	Zone 7
Laura Kidd	ACFCWCD
Jeff Miller	ACA
Josh Milstein	SF City Attorney's Office
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Ivana Noel	Alameda County RCD
Tim Ramirez	SFPUC
Monty Schmitt	NRDC
Carla Schultheis	ACFCWCD
Mary Selkirk	Center for Collaborative Policy
Gary Stern	NMFS
Larry Wise	ENTRIX

Announcements

Jeff Miller announced an article concerning steelhead in the Wednesday *East Bay Express*. Gordon Becker said that a piece on Bay Area steelhead would appear in the Thursday *San Francisco Chronicle*. (Both of these articles appeared and have been posted to the news section of the Alameda Creek Alliance web site.) Gordon also mentioned that Roger Leventhal of FarWest engineering would be presenting the conceptual design of a natural fishway at the BART weir at the Salmonid Restoration Federation conference in Santa Barbara in late February.

Progress Updates

Eric Cartwright told the Workgroup that draft environmental review for ACWD's two Phase 1 projects would be completed in January. Eric anticipates a meeting with DFG staff shortly to discuss the design of the fish screen to be installed at the upper inflatable dam. He noted that the

intake for ACWD's diversion at that location likely would be placed off-channel to minimize its effects and that a rotating drum-type fish screen likely would be selected. He also cited the technical challenge presented by creating a breach in the flood control channel levee for the diversion. He proposed a presentation regarding these issues at the next Workgroup meeting.

Eric's update on Prop 50 funding was that applicants had been asked to consolidate proposals due to the extraordinary amount of funding requested through the program. In discussions with other Bay Area entities involved in the Prop 50 process, it was indicated that the amount of ACWD's request would be decreased from \$11 million to \$3 million through consolidation. The agency therefore declined to participate in such a process. Eric said that a consultant is preparing and refining cost estimates for flood control channel projects.

Carla Schultheis said that a \$1 million appropriation request to Congress regarding BART weir passage and related projects was rejected. Tim Ramirez suggested revisiting funding issues in January after the Prop 50 process was further advanced.

Agenda items

Master Plan process. Eric said that he had been developing a schedule for the flows studies and Master Plan with Mary Selkirk that would be released prior to the next joint Workgroup/PAC meeting. He distributed a handout consisting of an organizational chart (modified by the PAC from the chart prepared after the last Workgroup meeting by Jeff Miller, Monty Schmitt and Andy Gunther) for accomplishing the flows studies that the group discussed at some length.

Important concepts related to the organization chart included:

- possible involvement of DWR or the State Board to ensure proper authority for possible fish flows from Lake del Valle;
- including the flows subgroup in the task to develop the work plan (Note 8 on the chart);
- attempting to limit the number of persons in the flows subgroup for the sake of efficiency;
- possibly separating the Workgroup consultant from agency consultants in individual "boxes" to indicate the functional separation in the flows studies process; and
- adding the PAC to the chart.

Gary Stern also mentioned the desirability of NMFS and DFG staff billing flows studies related efforts through the proposed SFPUC joint permitting office.

The last item was the subject of extended discussion. Concerns focused on issues of responsibility for management, transparency, efficiency, and independence. Due to the complexity of these and other related topics, several Workgroup members agreed to continue speaking about them in a context outside of a Workgroup meeting. Tim, Eric, Jeff, Monty, and CEMAR staff will report on this item at the next meeting.

Watershed Sciences sediment studies. Laurel Collins gave a presentation regarding her work analyzing sediment movement in the Alameda Creek watershed. Important take-home messages included:

- the need to account for sediment movement in designing restoration projects;

- the situation facing ACFCWCD of maintaining flood protection (i.e., desilting) and its resulting increase in local sedimentation rates;
- the apparent substantial decrease in runoff lag times in the watershed over time despite the installation of major impoundments (due largely to urbanization); and
- the difficulty of estimating a “natural” condition due to the very early (late 1800s and earlier) human alterations of the landscape.

Fish rescue. Gordon said that he believed technical difficulties with the Webcam were largely resolved and that the system was expected to function well during the 2005-2006 water year. He described the Web-based interface developed by CEMAR’s David Asbury and the protocol for conducting rescues.

The Workgroup has not heard from DFG regarding its proposal to conduct rescues. Gordon will inquire with Kevan Urquhart about the status of authorizing these activities, and will add to the protocol a task of informing the DFG warden when rescues are being conducted.

SFPUC activities. Tim told the Workgroup that the Commission adopted the Water System Improvement Program (WSIP), which includes the Calaveras Dam Replacement project, at their November 29th meeting. He noted that there were several changes made to project descriptions from the October 2005 version of the WSIP, including changes to the Alameda Creek Fishery Enhancement Project and the newly-titled Watershed and Environmental Improvement Program (WEIP). These changes can be found at http://sfwater.org/detail.cfm/MSC_ID/104/MTO_ID/NULL/MC_ID/7/C_ID/2699/holdSession/1 By clicking on Appendix C, “Proposed Program Changes.”

In particular, the WEIP provides \$20 million for land acquisition (easements and title) and habitat restoration, within the guidelines provides by the Proposition A language. Tim also mentioned that implementation of these and other WSIP projects within Alameda Creek would be coordinated through the Workgroup. Finally, time noted that the Commission has requested a briefing on SFPIC Alameda Creek activities to address steelhead issues at their January 24th meeting.

Josh Milstein next described planning related to quarrying operations in Sunol Valley. Continuing operations by RMC during the next three years will entail mitigation for impacts to red-legged frogs and California tiger salamander. After the three-year extension, the SFPUC will apply to the county for a revised permit. Subsequent operations would involve creating a cutoff wall between the Alameda Creek channel and the quarry pits to correct seepage, bank restoration on Alameda and San Antonio creeks, a \$200K study to redesign the Alameda Creek channel through the Sunol Valley, and other environmental enhancements. Josh said that the scope of this study should be guided by Workgroup input.

Josh explained that Alameda County would be the lead agency in future environmental review. However, the SFPUC will continue to be able to include permit conditions in a new, future mining lease.

Steelhead/rainbow trout listing status. Gary reported that the federal government is proposing to treat steelhead/rainbow trout using the distinct population segment, or DPS, approach. Resident rainbow trout would comprise a DPS, while steelhead would comprise another. Gary noted that this policy would place resident rainbow trout, include landlocked populations in the Alameda Creek watershed under jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Jeff Miller stated that he expected a lawsuit from environmental organizations regarding the new approach.

Next steps. The next joint Workgroup/PAC meeting will be January 19th at 9:30. The location has not been determined but will be announced at least a week before the meeting. The meeting will focus largely on the Master Plan and flows studies processes. Workgroup members wishing to add topics to the agenda should contact Mary or Gordon.