

Alameda Creek Fisheries Work Group

December 7, 2006 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
1155 Market Street, 11th Floor
San Francisco, CA

Minutes

Attending:

Brenda Buxton, Coastal Conservancy, Chair
Jeff Miller, Alameda Creek Alliance
Ralph Kanz, Alameda Creek Alliance
Darrell Bridgeman, Tri-Valley Fly Fishers
Dan Wilson, Department of Fish and Game
Mary Selkirk, Center for Collaborative Policy
Monty Schmitt, Natural Resources Defense Council
Dave Houts, Zone 7 Water Agency
Scott Chenue, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Laura Kidd, Alameda County Public Works Agency
Carla Schulteis, Alameda County Public Works Agency
Manny da Costa, Alameda County Public Works Agency
Laura Hidas, Alameda County Water District
Thomas Niesar, Alameda County Water District
Tim Ramirez, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Steve Apperson, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Curtis Steitz, Pacific Gas & Electric Company
Erik Olafsson, City of San Francisco
Peter Alexander, East Bay Regional Park District

1. Announcements, review agenda, approval of minutes

Dave Houts asked that the federal proposal for relocation of Caspian Terns to San Francisco Bay be added to the agenda, as this could influence smolt survival and should be discussed. The minutes from the September 21, 2006, meeting were approved for posting on the work group website. **Note:** the final September minutes on the website incorrectly state that Tim Ramirez is the lead on the fish rescue. The correct person is Jeff Miller.

2. Flow Studies Update

The Work Group officially approved the scope of work for McBain and Trush as forwarded by the Flows Subcommittee (Dave Houts confirmed approval of the scope by Zone 7). Thomas Niesar noted that a contract for McBain and Trush has been drafted,

forwarded to them for review, and is on the ACWD Board agenda for approval on December 14, 2006.

The next subcommittee meeting is scheduled for January 2. While McBain and Trush are not expected to have anything to report at this meeting, Tim Ramirez noted that PUC staff and contractors are collecting a lot of data that it would be worth reviewing these efforts. In addition, the PUC is pulling together an annotated bibliography to assist McBain and Trush and will be available no later than January 2.

Andy Gunther noted that the Subcommittee selected the first Tuesday of the month at 1 PM for their meetings, but that he has a conflict in both February and March and will be seeking to reschedule these month's meetings.

3. Update on Fish Rescue

Jeff Miller noted there will be a conference call on December 12 at 3 PM regarding a permit for the fish rescue program for this winter. It was noted that in the last five winters, 17 fish have been captured and moved, with seven being moved last year in the first year of web cam operation. Jeff noted that NMFS is concerned about the possibility of a "genetic bottleneck" if a few moved fish generate many offspring that return, producing a population of limited genetic diversity. In addition, Jeff said NMFS would like to see the fish rescue integrated into the larger restoration effort.

ACA is proposing that the fish rescue effort including tagging of fish and monitoring after releasing them above the PG&E gas line, as the tracking of these fish will produce valuable information about migration timing, fish passage and habitat utilization. ACA is hoping that the PUC can be protected from any ESA liability associated with these fish and their progeny.

Tim Ramirez indicated that the PUC is not completely opposed to such a program, but wants to make sure that these efforts are well thought out so that we will be more educated and prepared for steelhead restoration.

4. Fish Passage Projects

The Work Group discussed next steps regarding fish passage projects in the flood control channel. The Flood Control District's goal with regard to the BART Weir is to select a preferred alternative after reviewing comments on the Wood Rogers report, conduct 30% engineering, commence environmental review, and then seek grants for final design and construction. Carla noted that she was meeting soon with Eric Cartwright to coordinate a preferred alternative at the BART Weir with work at the upper inflatable dam, as the two passages structures will need to work in tandem.

Thomas Niesar noted that as more review has been conducted by ACWD into the concept of adding a second pipeline to feed Shinn Pond and making the middle inflatable dam just for upset/breakdown conditions, his agency is becoming less convinced that this is feasible from an operational perspective.

Dave Houts noted that due to heavy predation on juvenile salmonids, the federal government is proposing to relocate Caspian Terns from Oregon to San Francisco Bay by eliminating habitat up north and creating habitat locally. This will likely increase predation pressure on local fish, and it was agreed that this proposal should be monitored and comments made when appropriate to note the possible adverse impact on local restoration efforts.

5. Communications & Schedule

Brenda Buxton distributed comments from Gary Stern of NMFS on the MOU, and the group agreed to revisions to address Gary's concerns. Brenda noted that she was still awaiting word from DFG on the MOU, and it was agreed that a revised MOU would be distributed for consideration after comments are received from DFG.

The Work Group approved the operating procedures as contained in the agenda packet, but agreed that they did not need to be made an official addendum to the MOU.

The Work Group set the following dates and tentative locations for meetings in 2007:

March 1	East Bay Regional Park District, Glory of the Seas room, Alameda
June 7	Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
Sept 13	California State Coastal Conservancy
Dec 6	Zone 7

The meetings will be from 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM.

6. Calaveras Update

Tim Ramirez noted that the schedule for release of the upcoming reports on fish passage remain unchanged (see Sept 21 minutes), and the draft EIR for Calaveras is scheduled for release in August 2007. The low-flow release valve for the existing dam has been installed, and is scheduled for testing as soon as the concrete cures. The flow below the dam can be monitored on the USGS web site at:
http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ca/nwis/uv/?site_no=11173500&

Tim also noted that as part of the 2007 appropriation request for Water Supply Improvement Program that is going before the Board of Supervisors the Alameda Creek Fisheries Enhancement Project is to be funded. Tim stressed that the SFPUC is no longer considering construction of the inflatable dam as previously described. One possibility to be considered is restoring the filter galleries that once collected groundwater in the area.

Tim also noted that a public meeting was recently held regarding the Alameda Watershed Habitat Conservation Program, which considers covered species in the region except fish. Information is available on the PUC website at: <http://alamedahcp.sfwater.org>

7. Items for upcoming meeting

- a. Update from Carla and Eric regarding integrating upper/middle dam and BART weir project.
- b. Presentation by Wood Rogers on fish passage.
- c. Fish Rescue and interim plan for fish in watershed.
- d. MOU amendment.
- e. Tern relocation.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00.

Next meeting: **March 1, 2007, 9:30 am to 12 noon.** The meeting will be hosted by East Bay Regional Park District at **Glory of the Seas** room at Crab Cove/Alameda Beach. This facility is located on Alameda Island. To get there, take the Webster Tube and keep going until it ends. Right on Central and immediate left on McKay Ave. The facility is located at the end of the street @ 1231 McKay, Alameda, 94501. Parking is along McKay Ave. There is a very nice exhibit of the aquatic life in San Francisco Bay located at the Crab Cove Visitor's center across the street. Carpooling recommended.