

Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Minutes of Meeting

December 8, 2000

9:30 am

Alameda County Public Works Agency

951 Turner Court

Hayward, CA

Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Pat Coulston	CDFG
Cheryl Davis	SFPUC
Bill DeJager	USACE
Michael Ferry	Graduate Student
Andy Gunther	AMS
Jeff Hagar	HES
Craig Hill	ACWD
Isabel Jimenez	SWRCB
Laura Kilgour	ACFCWCD
Chet Lelio	Alameda County Fish and Game Commission
Jeff Miller	ACA
Josh Milstein	SF City Attorney's Office
Mark Mueller	SFPUC
Joe Naras	SFPUC
Anna M. Roche	SFPUC
Paul Salop	AMS
Carla Schultheis	ACFCWCD
Larry Serpa	The Nature Conservancy
Gary Stern	NMFS
Richard Wetzig	ACFCWCD

Agenda Item No.

1. Announcements

At the request of Laura Kilgour, Andy Gunther gave a brief summary of the progress of the Workgroup to-date and upcoming milestones, including the formation of the Workgroup, preparation of the watershed assessment, submission of proposal to the USACE, and production of engineering drawings for fish passage structures.

Pat Coulston announced that he has accepted a new position within CDFG working out of the Bay / Delta office. He added that he has enjoyed working with the Workgroup and that no replacement has been named as of yet.

2. Progress Updates

§1135 Project Eric Cartwright informed the Workgroup that Darryl Hayes of CH2MHill gave a presentation to the USACE similar to the one he gave to the Workgroup at the October meeting, along with a draft report detailing CH2MHill's findings. Darryl is now in the process of receiving final comments to the draft report and will finalize it in the near future. The report will be available for Workgroup members at that time.

Eric added that an important next step in the USACE process is to determine what components (i.e., fish passage structures and diversion screens) will be included in the overall §1135 project. Darryl's estimates for the costs of all required passage and diversion structures in the area of the inflatable dams currently run to approximately \$10 million, well above the amount available through the §1135 program. At this point, the co-sponsors have asked the Corps to include all proposed items in the project plan.

Bill DeJager expanded upon the funding issues, adding that the maximum federal funding available through the §1135 program is approximately \$5 million. Including a required match of approximately \$1.7 million from local sponsors, this brings the total project cost to \$6.7 million. This figure is well below the CH2MHill-produced estimate for identified restoration projects within the flood control channel. There are other options, however. One is to initiate a USACE General Investigation Study, which would take more time and require Congressional authorization, but would support a larger-scale project. A second option would be to split off the structural improvements to the upper and lower inflatable dams as separate

projects, bringing the cost for the diversion screens and passage facility around the middle inflatable dam and BART weir to around \$7 million. Bill added that he is awaiting word from the regional office on whether the project can go forward with a \$10 million budget by increasing the local cost share. It is a possibility, though the §1135 program is really targeted at smaller projects.

Chet Lelio asked if another possibility would be to split off diversion screening for a later time. Craig Hill responded that the assessment had recommended the screens as an essential action for restoration and they should be included at this point. Gary Stern added that CDFG will play a large role in determining what is an acceptable project plan and that NMFS will not buy off on a project without CDFG support. Gary then added another possibility for consideration – to install diversion screens first and employ a trucking operation to move fish upstream until barriers are removed.

Bill added yet another alternative, to install all required screens and a passage facility around the middle inflatable dam / BART weir; this scenario would come with a price tag of around \$7 million. Jeff Miller agreed that these actions would fulfill the minimum required actions, with other projects to be initiated separately. Andy added that we have evidence that the lower dam is passable, but that we have no evidence to support a similar conclusion for the upper dam.

Josh Milstein inquired as to whether it is possible to obtain outside funding to account for additional costs not covered by USACE or by local sponsors. He added that the City of San Francisco is investigating funding sources to support removal of Niles and Sunol Dams and could potentially include other projects as well. Eric concluded the discussion by mentioning that Darryl's report will be available for review in the upcoming weeks.

EBRPD Dam Removal Pete Alexander gave an update on the status of two small swim dams in Sunol Regional Park, one of which serves as a partial barrier to native trout. EBRPD has been investigating funding sources to cover the \$100k cost of removing both dams, however, the last \$25k that was promised fell through. Fortunately, Ted Frink was able to line up the final \$25k and EBRPD is now hoping to have removal and required restoration completed by October 15, 2001.

Gary asked if a USACE permit was required for the removal / restoration activities. Pete responded that it was his understanding that it was not required, and that all required permits had been obtained. Jeff Miller asked if a public ceremony was planned in association with the

removal / restoration. Pete didn't know of any, but added that Golden West Women Flyfishers may attempt to gather publicity surrounding their efforts in the area.

SFPUC Dam Removal Josh informed the Workgroup that the SFPUC has obtained a historian's report for Sunol and Niles Dams in preparation for expected challenges from historical societies regarding removal of historic structures.

Josh added that Tom Taylor is currently developing an analysis of sediment load behind Sunol Dam. Josh expects that Tom's findings will indicate that there are no apparent reasons that would prevent removal. Josh added that funding for the removals has not been investigated in great detail yet, that a full EIR will probably be required to support removal, and on a related note, that the proposed rubber dam in the Sunol area has been downsized to two feet in height, but will also probably still require an EIR. Gary echoed Josh's comments regarding EIRs that a Section 7 consultation will probably be needed.

Cheryl Davis inquired as to whether anyone was documenting Workgroup and restoration activities. Paul Salop responded that in the past AMS has compiled documentation on the project, including photos, reports, funding possibilities, informational presentations, and timelines. Richard Wetzig added that he is currently developing a presentation on Workgroup progress and plans. Andy added that an initial set of funding requests has been submitted on behalf of the Workgroup, and that as funding decisions are received, the picture becomes clearer what future steps are required. Laura Kilgour added AMS has undertaken these activities through the support of the Flood Control District, but that the District has funding limitations and any other agencies that would be able to support future activities of this nature would be welcomed. Andy responded that efforts such as this would be supported if the CCSRP grant request submitted on behalf of the Workgroup is funded.

3. Grant Applications

Laura reported to the Workgroup that the Flood Control District has received \$20k from the Coastal Conservancy to support fish genetics studies to take place in the spring of 2001. Pete asked if this grant would cover smolt trapping or other investigations to determine downstream migration timing. Jeff Hagar responded that this project grew out of the "jump start" meeting held earlier in the summer, in which one outcome was a recommendation to try to identify an appropriate genetic stock that could potentially be used in jump starting the fishery. Jeff added that this project is targeting populations in and around Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs,

and that the project will cooperate with Tom Taylor's efforts on behalf of the SFPUC. Andy recommended including Arroyo Mocho in any attempts to determine migration timing.

Andy added that this grant request was submitted with a request for \$30k in 2002 to support Workgroup activities and a \$500k placeholder in 2003 to support construction efforts. Determinations on those potential allocations will be made in future years.

Andy informed the workgroup that the grant request to the Watershed Assistance Grant program (USEPA funding) administered by the River Network program had been denied. For this program, approximately 400 grant requests were submitted but only 20 were funded. Looking over the projects selected by the WAG for funding, Andy's initial feeling is that the Workgroup may be perceived as having other potential funding sources due to the large number of cooperating agencies, and so our grant was considered lower priority.

Andy also informed the group that he has received no word on the CCSRP application. If funded, this grant will support planning, public involvement, and education efforts for the Workgroup. A final decision is expected shortly.

Andy also mentioned that Prop 13 represents another large pool of funding, and that he has obtained a copy of the RFP and contacted Linda Spencer (the Prop 13 contact) at the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. Carla added that she had met with Linda Spencer to raise the visibility of the project. Upcoming application deadlines are scheduled for February and May. Richard added that he has attended Prop. 12 and 13 workshops, and that the potential funding levels are now at \$4 billion, with a chance to increase substantially in the near future. Cheryl added that the SFPUC considered submitting an application to support removal of Niles and Sunol Dams, but has not yet submitted one.

Jeff Miller displayed a publication produced by the American Rivers Council entitled *Paying for Dam Removal* (for more information, email wisrivers@wisconsinrivers.org). Andy added that Barry Nelson from NRDC would be attending the afternoon field trip at his request, and had expressed interest in dam removal projects currently lacking funding.

5. Fish Transport

Pete informed the Workgroup that the transport operations for steelhead were scheduled again for this year (weather and returning fish permitting). Pete has received a six-month grace period from NMFS to continue scientific operations while his permit renewal application is reviewed. Gary added that NMFS hopes to have new permits issued before the grace period

expires. He also commented that he has reviewed Pete's application and that the transport activities are covered under the grace period.

Pete explained to the Workgroup that he typically attempts to capture fish at the BART weir, then measures, weighs, and obtains a fin clip from them before releasing the fish above Mission Boulevard. In the past, ACWD has cooperated fully by regulating water flows and ACA has supplied manpower to operate seine nets to help with the capture. Pete added that he has used electroshocking in the past, but has experienced increased mortality with its use and asked of Gary if electroshocking would be allowed this year. Gary responded that unless NMFS forwarded comments specifically prohibiting its use, then it would be OK to electroshock.

In response to Cheryl's question of when transport efforts are expected to begin, Pete replied that the migration is usually triggered by flow, and generally starts as early as late December. Pat added that the returning steelhead to Alameda Creek have been found to migrate relatively late as compared to other steelhead runs, probably an adaptation to long-term climate conditions in the area.

Andy inquired as to whether Pete had considered including informational tags as part of the transport process or had considered releasing trapped fish above the Sunol Dam, in hopes of providing information for monitoring efforts. Gary added that it might be possible to install a trap to help with capture efforts, though there may be logistical difficulties involved with this. Jeff Miller replied that there is one area near the north bank of the creek at the BART weir where such a trap may be appropriate.

Gary informed the workgroup that genetic information shows landlocked trout are part of the Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) even though they are not covered by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to the presence of an impassable barrier at the BART weir. The re-introduction of steelhead into the watershed with the transport efforts could complicate permitting issues involved with any restoration efforts. Craig inquired of Gary whether he believed that the transport activities are making the restoration efforts more difficult. Gary responded that this was possible, though the number of fish transported is very small. Pete added that the only current alternatives to transport are unsuccessful spawning efforts or stranded fish, neither of which is desirable.

Craig inquired whether or not transport efforts raise a liability issue for volunteers. Richard replied that volunteers are required to sign a release before participating in transport activities.

6. Sediment Source ID

Richard began the discussion by giving background information regarding the sediment issues in the watershed. He explained that the USACE built the flood control channel, but that the ACFCWCD maintains the channel through a maintenance agreement with the Corps. The main issue with sedimentation within the channel is that sedimentation decreases the capacity of the channel and therefore increases the risk of flooding. Desilting is an expensive operation (approximately \$1 million for each 100,000 cubic yards, plus the cost of mitigation for the loss of wetland habitat). The ACFCWCD is now trying to determine sources of the sediment, to hopefully identify actions that can be taken to prevent the sediment from entering the channel. . To this end, the District has now hired USGS to investigate sources; the USGS will be monitoring TSS and bed loads at eight sites within the watershed. The initial feeling on the part of the District is that a significant portion of the sediment is eroding from Zone 7 lands. Another potential sediment source is resuspension of Bay sediments that are carried into the channel on the high tide.

Pete asked whether the rework of the mouth of the creek is still being considered. Carla responded that the District will be issuing an RFP to examine possible rework. Bill added that this could also form a potential Corps project.

7. Update on SFPUC / ACWD Monitoring Activities

Josh informed the workgroup that the 1999 Pre-project Monitoring Report developed by Tom Taylor will be issued soon.

8. Agreements / Action Items

- 1) Persons wishing to attend the afternoon watershed tour should meet in the parking lot at 1:00 pm.
- 2) Eric will bring a final version of the CH2MHill report to the next Workgroup meeting (if available).
- 3) Josh will bring a final version of the dam removal study to the next Workgroup meeting (if available)
- 4) Richard will investigate the possibility of installing and using a webcam to assist with fish transport operations.
- 5) Carla will investigate the issues surrounding waivers for fish transport volunteers.

9. Items for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Workgroup was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 5th at 9:30 am at the ACPWA Turner Court offices. Possible agenda items for the meeting include: 1) update on the §1135 process; 2) a discussion of the genetics study; 3) the results of Tom Taylor's dam removal study; 4) update the Steelhead Festival; 5) an update on grants; and 6) discussion of fish transport operations.