

DRAFT
**Alameda Creek Fisheries Work Group
Flows Subcommittee**

September 17, 2008 2 PM – 4 PM

Conference Call

Meeting Summary

Attending:

Jeff Miller, Alameda Creek Alliance
David Houts, Zone 7 Water Agency
Brian Sak, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Tim Ramirez, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Eric Cartwright, Alameda County Water District
Thomas Niesar, Alameda County Water District
Pete Alexander, East Bay Regional Park District
Stuart Moock, representing Pacific Gas & Electric Company
Manny da Costa, Alameda County Flood Control District
Scott Chenue, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Gary Stern, National Marine Fisheries Service
Josh Fuller, National Marine Fisheries Service
Wes Stokes, Department of Fish and Game
Amy Evans, Resource Conservation District
Bill Trush, McBain & Trush
Steve Leach, URS

1. Announcements

It was announced that Andy Gunther, Brenda Buxton and Krissy Atkinson would not be available for the conference call. Eric let the committee know that Krissy had expressed in interest in participating in discussions regarding the characterization of Niles Canyon as potential rearing habitat. Tim Ramirez also requested that the agenda include a discussion of the follow-up to the August workshop on flows and temperature.

2. Phase 2 Flows Study Update

Bill Trush led a discussion of the Phase 2 Flow-Habitat Assessment studies. Key items discussed included:

July Workshop Follow-up: Bill indicated that the best approach for developing a base map of the study reaches would be to use balloon photography. With this approach, photos would be taken under the tree canopies in the late fall (November). These base

maps (for 3 reaches at 1500 feet each) will take approximately 2 weeks to develop (6 field days and 4 days in office to process). McBain and Trush are developing cost estimates and anticipate having these estimates complete in the next two weeks.

Amphibian Issues: Bill indicated the need to continue coordination with Sarah Kupferberg and Steve Bobzien to make sure that the reaches being considered for habitat mapping would also include yellow-legged frog and red-legged frog habitat. Bill will set up a meeting with Sarah and Steve in the field to make sure that amphibians are adequately addressed. Bill also indicated that another short reach can be included in the flow-habitat mapping if needed to address amphibians.

Habitat Availability and Adult Passage: Bill discussed the need for conducting flow-habitat assessments at several reaches. For the Sycamore Flood Plain Reach (downstream of the Sunol Water Treatment Plant Bridge), it was agreed that a flow-habitat assessment would not be required in this reach, however, the reach should be included as part of the field study to evaluate potential passage constraints.

A second reach, extending from the San Antonio confluence to the Sunol golf course was also discussed. Bill reported that this reach is characterized by a deep, trapezoidal channel, with willow trees encroaching into the channel, and year-round water in the channel (perhaps as a result of discharges from upstream quarry operations). Wes indicated that DFG would like to conduct a field visit at this reach before deciding on an approach for the flow-habitat assessment. Gary indicated that the quarry discharge would also need to be further evaluated. According to Tim, new cut-off walls will be installed by the new quarry operators which will help to address infiltration into the quarries, and reduce the need for the quarries to de-water the pits and discharge to the creek.

Habitat Mapping Team: Bill discussed a proposed approach to utilize core team for the habitat mapping. The proposed core team would consist of Bill Trush, Scott Schenue, and Pete Alexander. At least one member of this team would need to be available to conduct the habitat mapping when flow conditions were appropriate. The core team members would likely need assistance from other volunteers from the workgroup (two people minimum required). Bill mentioned that the mapping will be required for approximately 6 flow conditions (between 5 and 80 cfs) for each of the three reaches, and would take up to one day per reach per flow condition. As an action item, SFPUC and EBRPD agreed to look into staff availability for participation as core team members. Gary Stern also asked Bill to look into an alternative approach whereby McBain and Trush would fully staff the core team (and not rely on agency participation). Bill indicated that it would likely be much more expensive, but would get cost estimates for both alternatives.

Bill also brought up the issue of uncertainties regarding rainfall conditions this fall/winter, and if the dry conditions occur, there may not be sufficient streamflows to conduct the required field surveys. A question was asked of the SFPUC if flow releases from Calaveras Reservoir could be provided for these studies. Tim indicated that it would be very difficult for the SFPUC to provide these releases because of the ongoing dry conditions and need to conserve existing supplies.

Temperature Thresholds and Growth Rates: Bill indicated the need to develop temperature thresholds and impacts on growth rates which would be used to help determine habitat suitability under various flow/temperature conditions. Bill suggested that Krissy Atkinson, Josh Fuller and Chuck Hanson develop recommendations based on their experience in working on Central Coast steelhead issues. It was also recommended that the Sarah and Steve be contacted early in the process so that amphibians could also be addressed.

Little Yosemite Canyon: Bill brought the issue of fish passage at Little Yosemite, and whether or not steelhead would have access to habitat above Little Yosemite. Josh indicated that, under high flows, fish would need to jump 3' to 4', and under these conditions, he believed it was passable. Bill requested that any pictures/videos of Little Yosemite at high flow conditions be sent to him. Gary asked whether a SFPUC fish passage study was available for review by the workgroup. Tim indicated that the report was not currently available, but would be in the next several months.

Methodology for Field Work: Bill indicated that Chuck Hanson had previously suggested that the field work for one of the reaches be conducted at lesser intensity and then determine if this coarser level of effort would provide the same level of accuracy. Bill suggested that this approach may be advantageous for conducting surveys in other parts of the watershed, and therefore, will include this in the plan.

Desired Outcomes: Bill indicated that he had provided a “staw-man” list of the desired ecological outcomes for the Phase 2 studies. After discussion, it was agreed that a list of desired ecological outcomes would require much more discussion among all the stakeholders in the workgroup. However, it was also agreed that the list of outcomes was not a priority item at this point, and will not be developed at this time.

Next meeting

It was agreed that the next Subcommittee meeting would be held (via conference call) on Wednesday October 8 (1:30 pm). Prior to the conference call, Bill Trush will provide follow-up information on the scope and costs for the development of base maps, and cost estimates for two alternatives for providing core teams to conduct the flow-habitat mapping.

3. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00.