

Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Minutes of Meeting

February 6, 2001

9:30 am

Alameda County Public Works Agency

951 Turner Court

Hayward, CA

Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Suzanne Arena	SFPUC
Gordon Becker	Alameda Creek Alliance
Joyce Blueford	Math/Science Nucleus
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Erika Cleugh	CDFG
Manny da Costa	ACFCWCD
Andy Gunther	AMS
Chris Gray	Supervisor Haggerty's Office
Jeff Hagar	HES
Laura Kilgour	ACFCWCD
Jeff Miller	ACA
Josh Milstein	SF City Attorney's Office
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Joe Naras	SFPUC
Peggy Olofson	SFRWQCB
Jim Reynolds	ACWD
Paul Salop	AMS
Barbara Silva	City of Fremont
Carla Schultheis	ACFCWCD
Richard Wetzig	ACFCWCD

Agenda Item No.

1. Announcements

Jeff Miller distributed photocopies of the article on Alameda Creek appearing in the February 1st edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Manny da Costa informed the Workgroup that Michael Love is nearing completion of his preliminary analysis of fish passage issues in Stonybrook Creek. His analysis will indicate that each of the major culverts present in the creek (8 owned by ACFCWCD, 1 by CalTrans) fits the definition of “impassable” using standard criteria.

Richard informed the Workgroup that he has regularly been checking the creek for migrating fish, and has seen numerous carp but no steelhead.

2. Progress Updates

§1135 Project Eric Cartwright brought along a copy of the finalized version of the CH2MHill report commissioned as part of the §1135 proposal. The final version incorporated only minor revisions to the version presented to the Workgroup at the October meeting. Eric will obtain and forward an electronic copy of the report to be posted on the Workgroup website shortly.

Eric added that the USACE has indicated that a project in the \$6.7 million range (\$5 million federal cost plus twenty five percent local project match) is preferred at this time. CH2MHill then developed a scenario that would include construction of a fish ladder at the middle inflatable dam / BART weir, a fish ladder at the upper inflatable dam, and diversion screens at the four most important diversion structures. The current project costs for these efforts are estimated at \$6.75 million. Eric added that the projects to be included under the §1135 program could be altered as cost estimates and required projects become refined over time.

In response to a question from Pete Alexander, Eric indicated that operations at the three diversions not currently included in the §1135 proposal could be altered for the short-term during migratory periods; however, this would not be a long-term solution. The ACWD is therefore investigating other funding options to possibly help cover the costs associated with screening at the remaining three diversion points (e.g., CALFED).

EBRPD Dam Removal Pete Alexander gave an update on the status of two small swim dams in Sunol Regional Park scheduled for removal. As he had explained to the Workgroup at a previous meeting, funding had been lined up to begin the removal in the fall of 2000, but had fallen through at the last minute. Ted Frink of DWR had then been instrumental in obtaining remaining funding required and the work has now been rescheduled beginning August 17th, 2001.

The removal of the dams is expected to take approximately thirty days. EBRPD is now planning a kick-off celebration with a ceremonial demolition to be conducted by Governor Davis. EBRPD plans to invite all parties involved with restoration activities in the Alameda Creek watershed. Pete passed around a contact sheet to obtain the names of invitees to the event. Recommendations for any additional parties to be contacted should be forwarded to Pete.

SFPUC Dam Removal Josh Milstein informed the Workgroup that the SFPUC has submitted a Proposition 13 request to cover costs associated with removal of Niles and Sunol Dams. He introduced Suzanne Arena who distributed copies of the grant request. Suzanne indicated that if the request is funded, construction could begin as early as fall of 2001 and should be completed by 2004.

Josh indicated that there are issues with each removal that need to be worked out, including (1) the accumulation of a large quantity of sediment behind Sunol Dam and if and how to remove it, and (2) the removal of a potentially historic structure in the Niles Dam (and its predecessor directly below it). To assist with the removal process, the SFPUC has obtained reports from Trihey and Associates, Inc. on the impacts of dam removal and JRP Historical Consulting Services on the historical overview of the dams (both documents were distributed at the meeting and will be made available on the Workgroup website).

Josh suggested that the SFPUC may attempt to remove both dams under Nationwide Permit 27 but did not know if there was local precedent for requesting this. Jeff Hagar responded that Nationwide Permit 27 has been used in the South Bay recently to undertake dam removals. Josh also added that there will be a February 7th meeting to discuss the planned rubber dam for the Sunol area (which has now been re-sized to 2 feet in height). Finally, Josh also distributed copies of the 1999 Monitoring Report produced by Trihey and Associates, Inc.

ACFCWCD Levee Reconfiguration Carla Schultheis informed the Workgroup that the FCD has distributed Request for Qualifications to firms to evaluate the feasibility of moving / removing levees at the Alameda Creek mouth. They expect to distribute the Request for Proposals around March 2001. Contracts should be in place by June 2001.

3. Fremont Steelhead Festival

Paul Salop and Jeff Miller related the progress of the Steelhead Festival organizing efforts to-date. Paul indicated that the lion's share of the organizing of the 2000 Festival had been performed by Jeff and Forest Frasieur of the City of Fremont. Jeff related that the initial Festival had been very successful with over 100 runners and approximately 350 attendees overall. The Festival had also had nine informational booths and one food establishment.

The date for the 2001 Festival has been set for May 12th. Paul indicated that planning efforts had been divided up this year among a number of organizations. To-date, sponsorship commitments had been received from the City of Fremont, Alameda Creek Alliance, ACFCWCD, Union Sanitary District, and DWR. Additionally, the organizing committee hoped to incorporate additional sponsors, including the SFPUC, ACWD, and EBRPD.

Paul then gave brief updates on several of the task areas currently being worked on by the organizing committee, including permitting (to be accomplished by the City of Fremont and AMS), race logistics (a 5k and 9 or 10k to be organized by the Mission Peak Striders), food (to include more alternatives this year), music (acoustic and perhaps a musician for kids), kids activities (repeat the "build a fishing pole" activity and add others), T-shirts (pro bono artwork arranged by Jeff), and selection of a speaker(s) for the Festival. Current estimated costs are between \$1200 and \$1800, some of which to be reimbursed by sales of T-shirts. The next meeting of the organizing committee has been set for February 28th. Contact Paul for more details.

4. Grant Applications

Andy Gunther announced that he had received news that CDF&G had approved funding for the CCSR grant request submitted on behalf of the Workgroup. The approved two-year budget for the project is \$83,016, which represents complete funding of the proposal with the exception of \$950 of direct expenses associated with the Fremont Steelhead Festival. The grant will support various planning efforts, including facilitation of the Workgroup activities, contacting landowners in the watershed, preparing grant requests, and assisting educational efforts. Andy reiterated Marty Gingras' statement that CDF&G's willingness to fund planning efforts often indicates a willingness to support future restoration activities themselves.

The activities will be carried out by Andy and Paul through a contract between the Flood Control District and the Center for Ecosystem Management and Restoration (CEMAR), a non-profit of which Andy is the Executive Director (more information on CEMAR is available from

Andy). Jeff Miller inquired as to whether CEMAR's efforts would be on behalf of the FCD only or for the entire Workgroup. Laura responded that the intent of the grant request was to support the restoration activities of Work Group, and not the Flood Control District. Consequently, while the FCD will administer the contract, the Work Group as a whole will supervise execution of the scope of work. Erika added that the grant will first have to be reviewed by the CDF&G legal department and she anticipates that these funds will be available no earlier than ninety days hence.

Andy then informed the Workgroup of additional efforts being undertaken by CEMAR that are of potential interest to Workgroup members. First, he mentioned that he will be working with the SFPUC and the Natural Resources Defense Council to explore potential funding mechanisms to assist with dam removal operations. Second, he added that CEMAR has received funding from the Coastal Conservancy, the Rose Foundation, the Greenbelt Alliance, and the William H. Donner Foundation, to organize a regional steelhead symposium. The purpose of this project is to convene a symposium on the restoration of steelhead trout and salmon runs in San Francisco Bay Area watersheds. This two-day meeting (and subsequent publications) will document the status of threatened fish populations in local creeks, and provide a forum for local government officials to interact with specialists from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G). Any Workgroup members interested in the symposium, or with suggestions for potential venues, should feel free to contact Andy.

5. DWR / CALFED Workshop

Ted Frink was unable to attend today's meeting, so Laura Kilgour updated the Workgroup on activities associated with the proposed Workshops. Laura informed the Workgroup that four workshops had been set up to explain funding opportunities available and to assist with the process of developing proposals. Only one of the four meetings, however, is scheduled for the Bay area. The meeting was originally scheduled for Friday, February 16th from 7 – 9 pm at the EBRPD headquarters in Oakland. Pete added that the meeting time was subsequently changed to either begin at 9 am or 10 am in hopes of attracting more attendees.

Laura added that she has been in discussions with Ted about the possibility of having DWR develop a watershed map to assist restoration efforts. This project was envisioned as having both a standard map-type product for display purposes (especially with the media) and a GIS component to be tailored to fit the needs of the various entities involved in the restoration work. The Flood Control District is currently working on an ownership layer for the GIS. Barbara Silva added that the Regional Board and SFEI are currently working on watershed

layers that could be helpful to the project. Andy suggested that both a standard watershed map and a library of GIS layers in ARC/INFO would be a valuable tool for collaborative restoration planning in the coming years.

Eric asked if there was a point person designated for the Workgroup to interface with DWR on the project and as to whether this is a task that could be bundled within the CCSRP activities. Andy commented that spending a little time organizing the efforts on behalf of the Workgroup would go a long way toward producing a beneficial product in the long run, and there was general agreement that a single person should be designated to facilitate interactions between DWR and the Work Group. Laura responded that she will identify a contact person at DWR that the Workgroup point person can interact with

6. Fish Transport

Pete informed the Workgroup that the transport operations for steelhead were ready to go if and when steelhead began migrating. The Flood Control District and EBRPD are cooperating on an additional radiotracking study and should receive the transmitters within approximately six weeks (seven to eight units total).

Jeff Miller added that agency personal and ACA volunteers are checking the creek regularly, especially after precipitation events. Andy inquired as to whether there were any efforts being made to record fish monitoring efforts. Jeff Hagar agreed that this information can be extremely valuable and added that it is just as important to know when fish are not present as to know when they definitely are. Richard Wetzig suggested developing a form to track monitoring effort, including tracking when and where looked, water flow, water turbidity, etc. Andy inquired as to whether it would be beneficial to develop a monitoring form that could be placed on the website. The Workgroup agreed that development of a datasheet would be helpful AMS will work with Jeff Hagar to develop a draft form for presentation at the next Workgroup meeting.

7. Fish Genetics Study

Jeff Hagar informed the Workgroup that Andy and Laura had submitted a successful grant application to the Coastal Conservancy to support sampling and genetic analysis. Jeff added that the original intent of this sampling was to assist decision-making regarding any fish propagation efforts to occur in support of the restoration. He also mentioned that if propagation

efforts are agreed to, that there is a two to four year lag period between initiation of propagation and first return of adult steelhead.

Manny da Costa asked about the implications regarding straying of steelhead and other creek restoration efforts in the Bay area. Jeff replied that this was a legitimate concern and suggested convening another meeting of the fish propagation subgroup to examine this and other issues related to fish propagation. Andy added that NMFS considers Alameda Creek part of the Central California Coast ESU and doesn't differentiate among the various local creeks (as was pointed out in the original assessment, we do not know if the Central Coast ESU fish that have been captured returning to Alameda Creek are strays or native to the watershed). Jeff responded that NMFS is also interested in preserving as much diversity in creeks as possible.

The original schedule called for the sampling to occur spring of 2001. Due to contracting delays, however, it appears as though the work will need to be delayed to the spring of 2002. Laura explained the contracting problems in that grant money would not be available from the Coastal Conservancy until after the March meeting of their Board, and the Conservancy will not reimburse the FCD for any expenses incurred prior to the execution of the contract. Jeff responded that he had hoped to conduct sampling in April and May, but that there are several issues (including access to sampling sites) that require work before April.

Jeff Miller reiterated the importance of these efforts and asked if there was any possible way that the work could still be completed in 2001. Jeff Hagar replied that it was still possible – that the study does not rely on sampling smolts, just trout in the watershed. Optimally, this sampling would occur in the late spring to gather information on any smoltification that may be occurring in the watershed, especially in those regions such as Arroyo Mocho and Upper Alameda Creek where we do not yet have any smolt survey data. Josh added that studies planned by Chuck Hansen and Tom Taylor may add information that would assist in making decisions regarding propagation efforts.

The Workgroup agreed that it would be beneficial if sampling efforts could proceed in 2001. Carla added that in any case, we need to begin outreach efforts to landowners to gain access to the creek where needed, especially in the Arroyo Mocho area. Josh added that the PUC has easements for potential access points and Andy added that Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories also had an easement to the creek. Andy, Laura, and Jeff Hagar agreed to investigate if there was a way to get sampling underway in time to survey for smolts at the same time that fin clips are taken for genetic analysis.

8. Other Issues

Richard Wetzig introduced Peggy Olofson of the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board to the Workgroup. Peggy has been working on various issues within the Alameda Creek watershed. . She envisions a forum for holding discussions between the water supply agencies and other interested parties regarding how the watershed “works” with reference to dam operations and other flow management activities. She is interested in receiving feedback on the proposed workshop, and can be contacted at pro@rb2.swrcb.ca.gov.

Suzanne Arena distributed copies of the CALFED Watershed Program Proposal Solicitation Package information sheet. She mentioned that the SFPUC will be submitting a proposal and recommended that the Workgroup investigate the possibility also. Paul inquired as to whether Suzanne thought there was a geographical bias that would be working against the Workgroup. Suzanne and Jeff Miller both commented that they had heard that CALFED was looking for a high profile Bay area project to fund. Jeff added that he may be able to enlist lobbying assistance on the Workgroup’s behalf. Concept proposals are due February 23rd.

9. Agreements / Action Items

- 1) Josh and Eric will forward copies of all available meeting handouts to Paul for posting on AMS’ website.
- 2) Contact information for additional invitees to the EBRPD dam demolition kickoff should be forwarded to Pete Alexander.
- 3) The next scheduled meeting of the Fremont Steelhead Festival organizing committee is scheduled for February 28th. Contact Paul for more information.
- 4) Andy will work with Laura to review the proposal process for the CALFED Watershed Program prior to February 23rd deadline and will assist in preparation of a proposal if warranted.
- 5) Andy and Paul and Jeff Hagar will develop a draft monitoring datasheet for fish observers and bring to the next Workgroup meeting; they will also investigate the possibility of posting the sheet on the web (Note: Richard developed a draft datasheet that will be posted on the web).
- 6) The Bay area DWR / CALFED grants program workshop is scheduled for Friday, February 16th time TBA.
- 7) Laura will coordinate with DWR to determine a contact for the mapping / GIS project.
- 8) Paul will coordinate with Gary Stern of NMFS in setting up a meeting for the fish propagation subgroup.
- 9) Workgroup members with feedback for the proposed Flows Management Workshop should contact Peggy Olofson at the Regional Board.

9. Items for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Workgroup was scheduled for Tuesday, April 3rd at 9:30 am at the ACPWA Turner Court offices. Possible agenda items for the meeting include: 1) progress updates from Workgroup members, 2) update on the Flows Management Workshop, 3) report from the propagation subgroup meeting, 4) discussion of the draft fish observer monitoring datasheet, and 5) a status update on the proposed SFPUC rubber dam.