

## **Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup**

### **Minutes of Meeting**

**March 3, 2004**

#### **Alameda County Public Works Agency**

#### Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Deirdre Appel	SFPUC
Krissie Atkinson	DFG
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Brenda Buxton	State Coastal Conservancy
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Erika Cleugh	DFG
Laurel Collins	Watershed Sciences
Chris Gray	Supervisor Haggerty's Office
Andy Gunther	CEMAR
Craig Hill	ACWD
Dave Houts	Zone 7 Water Agency
Laura Kilgour	ACFCWCD
Jay Kinberger	U.S. Army Corps
Jane Lavelle	SFPUC
Jeff Miller	ACA
Josh Milstein	SF City Attorney's Office
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Barbara Palacios	SFPUC
Brian Sak	SFPUC
Carla Schulteis	ACFCWCD
Larry Serpa	The Nature Conservancy
Gary Stern	NOAA Fisheries
Richard Wetzig	ACFCWCD

#### **Announcements**

Jeff Miller said he and ACWD staff sighted an approximately 14-inch fish believed to be a steelhead at the BART weir on Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. The fish appeared to be attempting to ascend the weir and would have been stranded as bypass flows were stopped and the inflatable dam was raised. ACWD staff adjusted flows to allow the fish to move downstream.

The Steelhead Festival will not be held this year, but may return on a biennial basis. The rationale for this decision centers on the belief that new audiences will be better reached by having Alameda Creek Alliance members and other collaborators exhibit at various other events in the county regarding progress on steelhead restoration issues.

Richard Wetzig announced the Alameda Creek Watershed Management Steering Committee meeting would be held the afternoon of March 3<sup>rd</sup>. The meeting was hosted at ACFCWCD.

Jeff Miller stated that the PUC's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) public meeting was well-attended and represented a good start to that process. Additional public involvement opportunities will be available throughout the HCP development process. Jeff suggested that agencies with interest in the HCP process should comment during the scoping period.

Josh Milstein said that geotechnical investigations are underway to determine the suitability of a new dam site at Calaveras Reservoir. The draft Conceptual Engineering Report is expected within one year.

Barbara Palacios said that the PUC had filed a pre-construction notice and a wetland delineation in regard to the Niles and Sunol dam removals project. Plans for the disposition of trapped sediment at the Sunol site have not been finalized, with the flood district originally requesting removal and other considerations suggesting leaving the material in place. Gary Stern cited continuing concerns regarding engineering aspects of the project such as the depth to which the dams will be notched and whether the Niles Dam south abutment will be removed. Barbara noted that she had not received written comments from NOAA Fisheries and DFG, and requested that they be sent as soon as possible. Anna Roche said that the SFPUC will be contacting local agencies to collect information for the cumulative impacts analysis portion of the environmental review.

## **Updates**

*§1135 Process.* Jay Kinberger told the Workgroup that the Corps had revoked funding for §1135 projects not currently under construction, including the Alameda Creek flood control channel improvements. Jay remains optimistic that money will become available in the third or fourth quarters of the fiscal year as well as in the next fiscal year. Jay stated his willingness to consult with ACWD and ACFCWCD staff regarding pursuing the General Investigations funding route for Alameda Creek work. He also noted that developing a champion for Alameda Creek projects in Congress could increase the likelihood of obtaining Corps funding.

*Other funding issues.* Eric Cartwright said that CALFED voted not to fund a proposed project to remove ACWD's lower inflatable dam, screen the diversion at the upper inflatable dam, and provide a connection between recharge areas on the north and south sides of the channel in the vicinity of the lower dam. Eric noted that additional requests for proposals were on the horizon. ACWD and DFG committed to increased cooperation in future proposal preparation regarding lead time for, and delivery of, letters of support. Brenda Buxton, Gary Stern and Erika Cleugh said that they would look into meeting with CALFED staff to develop support for Alameda Creek projects. Eric also contacted Maura Melandry of Caltrans who indicated her expectation for a Bay Bridge funds RFP within two months.

Jeff Miller suggested that the setback regarding §1135 funding should lead ACWD and ACFCWCD to examine other funding alternatives, including rate increases to pay for passage improvements. The Workgroup also considered the prospect of splitting out smaller projects to increase the chance of funding them. This approach was embraced although the group acknowledged problems associated with providing passage without screening intakes. Staff from NOAA Fisheries and DFG said a phased approach may be acceptable with sufficient assurances of completing the suite of restoration projects proposed for the flood control channel.

Craig Hill expressed his belief that steelhead restoration represents a regional benefit whose costs should be born regionally. He stated that the cost share amount contained in the §1135 project represented a reasonable commitment from ACWD. Carla Schulteis noted that a mechanism exists to raise flood control fees, but that it would involve a potentially difficult balloting process. The Workgroup agreed to convene a funding subcommittee meeting to explore fiscal issues further. It will be held on April 5<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 at ACFCWCD.

### **Agenda Items**

*Supplementation planning.* Hagar Environmental Science prepared a draft report outlining possible strategies for “jump starting” the Alameda Creek steelhead run. The report may be found on the Workgroup Web site. After preliminary review, Dr. Jerry Smith, Krissie Atkinson, and Gary Stern have concerns about basing strategic planning on the results of SFPUC trapping in San Antonio and Calaveras reservoir tributaries. In particular, the number of fish collected in traps is believed to be significantly lower than the number using these tributaries. Larger storms “blow out” the traps, resulting in no captures on high flows, and the possibility exists that fish are able to leave the traps. Jeff Hagar will revise the report to reflect comments he receives from reviewers, after which it will be posted on the Workgroup Web site. CEMAR will schedule and convene a subgroup meeting to discuss supplementation strategies after participants have had an opportunity to review the revised report.

*Steelhead Program planning.* Andy Gunther said that he had prepared a draft scope of work for creating a steelhead restoration Master Plan and circulated the scope to Conservancy and SFPUC staff. The draft subsequently was circulated to the full Workgroup. Comments on the document are requested and should be given to Andy.

*Re-graded channel alternative study.* Gordon Becker reported that the study team had created a conceptual design for fish passage at the BART weir that involved a “ramp” that would slope at about two to three percent, and whose upstream end would be near the base of the middle inflatable dam. The ramp would be created between the north wall of the flood control channel and the adjacent UPRR bridge support to avoid additional costs associated with strengthening the support’s foundation. The ramp design has been used in Europe for at least 15 years, allowing for performance evaluation. ACWD staff indicated that water supply redundancy may be provided through means other than maintaining the middle inflatable dam, and that design analysis could include options that

encroached on the existing foundation location. Gordon and Erika will coordinate the participation of George Hiese of DFG in reviewing potential designs.

*Stonybrook Creek improvements conceptual design project.* Gordon said that agency staff and the engineering team had conducted site visits and had established constraints on the conceptual designs. The sites will be surveyed and geotechnical factors will be analyzed in preparation for beginning conceptual design. Gordon has received notice that at least \$7,500 toward the cost of the project will be donated by American Rivers/NOAA. He also noted that Caltrans was looking for mitigation related to the proposed Highway 84 widening project at the Stonybrook Creek confluence, and that he had directed Melissa Barrow of Caltrans to Jim Salerno of the SFPUC.

*Next Workgroup meeting.* The next meeting of the Workgroup is scheduled for Thursday, April 29, at 9:30 a.m. at ACFCWCD. Items to be included on the agenda include an update regarding the Alvarado sewer crossing from Gary Stern, an update on Zone 7 diversions, and a report on the funding subcommittee meeting. Workgroup members are invited to submit additional agenda topics to CEMAR for inclusion in the agenda, which will be circulated prior to the next meeting.