

Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Minutes of Meeting

October 26, 2005

Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

Attendees

Pete Alexander	EBRPD
Gordon Becker	CEMAR
Brenda Buxton	Coastal Conservancy
Eric Cartwright	ACWD
Laurel Collins	Watershed Sciences
Kara Demsey	EDAW
Craig Freeman	SFPUC
Andy Gunther	CEMAR
Jeff Hagar	Hagar Environmental Science
Laura Kidd	ACFCWCD
Bill Martin	URS
Jeff Miller	ACA
Josh Milstein	SF City Attorney's Office
Stuart Moock	PG&E
Ivana Noel	Alameda County RCD
Tim Ramirez	SFPUC
Dave Rogers	SFPUC
Monty Schmitt	NRDC
Carla Schultheis	ACFCWCD
Diana Sokolove	City of San Francisco
Jason Yim	ACWD

Announcements

Gordon Becker said that Caltrans staff were continuing work on the design of Highway 84's crossing of Stonybrook Creek and would appear at a future meeting. Gordon told the group that the final conceptual design and feasibility report for a natural fishway at the BART was completed and could be viewed on the CEMAR Web site. He also announced that the draft conceptual design report for the Stonybrook Creek road crossings could be reviewed via CEMAR's Web site.

Diana Sokolove announced issuance of the draft EIR for the Sunol/Niles dam removals project. The draft will be the subject of public meetings in San Francisco on December 1 and in Fremont on November 30. Diana said the review period will close on December 7.

Tim Ramirez introduced himself as the new Natural Resources Division manager for the SFPUC. He will be working with Jim Salerno's biology group and Joe Naras' watershed group under Michael Carlin.

Progress Updates

Activities of the SFPUC were put off to the "agenda items" portion of the meeting. According to Brenda Buxton, she and several members of the PAC committed money to the Master Plan process at the last PAC meeting.

Eric Cartwright and Jason Yim described the two Phase 1 projects for which ACWD has received \$1 million in grant funding. The first project consists of a pipeline to be buried beneath the flood control channel connecting Pits T-1 and T-2 to Lago Los Osos. The pipeline would allow ACWD to remove the lower inflatable dam, and would involve modifying the remaining concrete sill, which acts as a grade control structure. The second project is installation of a fish screen at the upper inflatable dam. This screen would function at diversion rates up to 150 cubic feet per second.

The projects are being considered together for environmental review purposes. Eric said that Hanson Environmental is expected to produce a draft Mitigated Negative Declaration in about one or two months. Construction is planned for the summer of 2006. Permits from the Corps and the National Marine Fisheries Service will be required to implement the projects.

Eric and Laura reminded the group that ACFCWCD and ACWD submitted an application for Prop 50 funds in the amount of \$11 million to fund Phase 2 projects, including providing passage at the BART weir. They expect to hear in December if the Department of Water Resources will invite the agencies into the next phase of the grant process.

Agenda items

Master Plan process. Andy Gunther referred to the draft request for qualifications (RFQ) that CEMAR prepared and distributed to the Workgroup for review. Andy said that he had received comments from Gary Stern that in part would lead to expanding the RFQ's desired consultant qualifications to include specific experience with instream flow assessment methods.

Eric noted that his agency would prefer to administer only one contract and requested changing the RFQ structure to solicit single team qualifications packages. Brenda proposed adding the flow studies memorandum to the RFQ to provide prospective applicants with more information about the work to be undertaken.

Tim suggested distributing the RFQ to entities with which the Workgroup members had familiarity. He mentioned the importance of the consultants' credibility and trustworthiness and stated that the potential consultant pool should include all types of organizations, including university groups.

Eric stated his opinion that the consulting contract should specify an initial task to develop the studies scope of work. Jeff Miller queried the group about the proposed management structure of the contract and reiterated his position that the consultant should report to the Workgroup. Jeff revisited the possibility of CEMAR managing the contract, and in response Andy suggested the Workgroup would need to determine its desires for CEMAR's role independently.

Monty Schmitt relayed his experience that difficulties with multi-stakeholder processes like the proposed flows studies should be viewed as inevitable, but capable of being overcome with rapid response from the project managers. Tim expressed his opinion that management of the studies should not be "farmed out." He mentioned positive experiences with a watershed group based at UC Davis and led by Jeff Mount, citing possible benefits from retaining a consultant with their impartiality and cost effectiveness.

Led by Monty's comments, the group explored the issue of maintaining efficiency, transparency, and credibility with multiple consultants operating under multiple related contracts. Eventually, the Workgroup agreed to change the wording of the RFQ to reflect a desire for strong subconsultant management skills without including a Workgroup interaction component as a contract task. Andy said that CEMAR would edit the RFQ and re-distribute it for review.

Calaveras Dam. Diana reported that a Notice of Availability/Notice of Preparation was issued for this project on October 24th and that public scoping meetings in Fremont and San Francisco would be conducted on November 14 and 15, respectively. She then introduced the project engineer, Dave Rogers, who reviewed the project.

Dave explained that the replacement project stemmed from chronic problems related to longitudinal cracking at the dam. In 1997, work at the reservoir revealed additional cracks that subsequent analysis determined could lead to substantial damage in the event of an earthquake of "maximum credible" magnitude. Resulting studies produced a preferred alternative of replacing the dam "in kind" immediately downstream from the existing dam location. The new dam would have an oversized clay core in the event that the SFPUC sought to expand the reservoir capacity by raising the dam in the future.

In responding to Workgroup questions, Dave said that continued operation of the Alameda Creek Diversion Dam was an assumption of the project. He also estimated that the maximum release rate from the new dam would be approximately 1,000 cfs, and an improved valve structure would make the dam capable of efficiently releasing flows less than 10 cfs. He said that a flows recapture facility was not part of the project as proposed. Dave conveyed his understanding that the rate of reservoir sedimentation was relatively low. Laurel Collins offered that sediment information collected as part of the Calaveras project would be useful to other restoration related analyses in the future. Staff from the SFPUC told the Workgroup that the dam would take about two and one half to three years to build, and that construction was expected to begin in the winter of 2009.

Jeff Miller expressed his belief that the project did not place appropriate priority on fishery restoration issues such as ACDD operations and instream flows, but instead was presented as

only a construction project. He said that as currently configured, the Calaveras project would not be supported by the Alameda Creek Alliance.

Interim operations. Josh Milstein told the Workgroup that in meeting with NMFS and DFG staff, the agencies expressed interest in additional studies that would characterize the effects of an interim operations plan for SFPUC facilities. The SFPUC has agreed to conduct additional modeling and analysis to inform this issue.

Jeff Miller stated that his review of recent SFPUC documentation led him to believe that lowering the Calaveras reservoir level had not substantially impacted water supply. He then proposed that the SFPUC should be releasing water in keeping with the existing MOU for Alameda Creek habitat restoration. He requested that such releases be planned for summer 2006. Jeff also expressed dissatisfaction with the SFPUC's progress regarding grazing management in the watershed. Tim offered to provide evidence of recent activities related to reducing the impacts of grazing.

Next steps. The next Workgroup meeting was set for Tuesday, December 6 at 10:00 at the Castro Valley classroom of EBRPD. Possible agenda items include presentations by Caltrans regarding Route 84 project issues and Laurel regarding the results of her sediment studies, as well as continuing discussion of the Master Plan process. Workgroup members wishing to add topics to the agenda should contact Gordon.