

Meeting Minutes FINAL
Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup

Thursday December 8, 2011
Zone 7 Water Agency

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

2. Nuts & Bolts

The group noted that information regarding Arroyo de la Laguna (ADDL) flows and water rights was lacking generally. Gary Stern suggested that a future Workgroup meeting might include a presentation by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) on its operations and rights at Del Valle Reservoir. Elke Rank will inquire with DWR about this possibility.

Krissy Atkinson noted that the Proposal Solicitation Notice for the Fisheries Restoration Grants Program would be available in February. She recommended that potential Alameda Creek proposals focus on projects in mainstem Alameda Creek.

Gordon Becker announced that the Alameda County Resource Conservation District (RCD) intended to undertake projects to improve fish passage in Stonybrook Creek in early 2012.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is processing the authorization to move immigrating fish at the BART weir. The intent is to implant transmitters for tracking if fish are collected. Peter Alexander said that 2008 was the last year steelhead were seen at the BART weir. The Webcam was installed and is operating.

Jeff Miller announced the third annual bird count in the Alameda Creek watershed on Friday December 16.

Elke noted the dates for 2012 Workgroup meetings as March 8, June 14, September 13 and December 13.

3. Project Updates

Evan Buckland said that the two Alameda County Water District (ACWD) fishways are scheduled for completion in summer 2014. Phase 1 at the BART weir is expected in 2013 and Phase 2 at the upper dam is expected in 2014. Environmental review for the projects will begin in early 2012, with the first step being an ACWD internal review. There will be a meeting with DFG, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board to update the agencies on the process. Evan

noted that volitional fish passage may be possible in 2013 because the upper dam is lowered during high flow conditions.

PG&E is looking for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's (PUC) plans for Sunol to inform the design of modification of the gasline crossing for fish passage. Tim Ramirez said that the PUC is close to ready to coordinate on this issue. A stakeholder meeting to discuss the Alameda Creek trail is being organized by ACWD. [confirm]

Krissy said that DFG is working with the Flood Control District (ACFCWCD), the RWQCB and the Army Corps to develop plans for fish passage in the flood control channel. As part of ongoing desilting efforts, a pilot in-channel revegetation project is expected. The design of this project needs to account for vegetation maintenance so that flood capacity in the channel is not decreased below the Corps' standards. The Workgroup discussed the challenges of maintaining a low flow channel and achieving the multiple objectives for the flood control channel established by agencies and ACFCWCD.

Josh Fuller asked about monitoring in association with the fish passage project at the BART weir. This issue is expected to be discussed further at a January ACWD/agency meeting.

Tim told the Workgroup that the Calaveras Dam Replacement Project (CDRP) is underway. The project contractors have requested reservoir drawdown during winter, which must be balanced with the PUC's needs to supply water and care for the waterways downstream from its facilities. The PUC is currently working out a plan with the CDRP contractor for operation of the reservoir during construction this winter. Tim said that significant rainfall this winter likely would result in flow releases from the dam and/or bypasses from ACDD. The PUC intends to provide as much notice of such releases as possible and to minimize the potential effects on trout in the reservoir, and the native species downstream, during the winter.

Gary asked about conditions for the adfluvial population. Tim responded that outmigration via the Calaveras "cone valve" was not desirable. The PUC also is considering the issue of fish movement between upstream tributaries and the reservoir. Krissy offered to work with the SFPUC on authorization to relocate fish as needed.

Tim announced that a new streamflow monitoring gage is being installed on Calaveras Creek to reflect the new location of the spillway. The project is being carried out by the U.S. Geological Survey and the PUC.

A meeting regarding the PUC's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) was announced for the evening of December 8. The meeting would not include discussion of the fisheries portion of the HCP, which is expected to be covered in an April meeting. Another public meeting is being scheduled for May, to be followed by environmental review of the HCP.

The Sunol/Geary Road bridge needs to be repaired, and crossing is currently occurring via the creek channel. Bridge replacement is expected in 2013, and an environmental review document for that project is expected next year. The bridge constructed at the "siphons location" is being used as a model for the Geary Road bridge project.

It was announced that no work has been performed on the Niles gage weir other than resurveying the channel.

Elke said that the gage at Arroyo Valle near Livermore (AVNL) will include temperature monitoring in the future.

Jeff Miller said that settlement negotiations are ongoing regarding the CalTrans' Niles Canyon projects. An announcement was expected very shortly regarding Phase 1.

A modification of fishing regulations was announced whereby bass catch and release fisheries will be allowed in ponds.

The PUC is producing a watershed and environmental improvement program (WEIP) program for the Alameda Creek watershed. As part of this program, the PUC intends to acquire land in the upper Alameda Creek watershed. Last year, the PUC purchased land in the San Antonio Creek drainage, and another acquisition is expected. Other future possibilities in watershed lands involve The Nature Conservancy, the Alameda County RCD and others. Special outreach and protective efforts are underway upstream from the Alameda Creek Diversion Dam in association with construction of a fishway there.

The PUC is planning a project to improve the offices and establish a watershed visitors' center near the water temple. Construction may occur around 2014-2016. The PUC is collecting reports concerning Sunol Valley resources to help develop conceptual restoration designs. A presentation will be made when the Sunol plan is drafted. Lastly, a final report is expected from the San Francisco Estuary Institute on historical ecology of the Alameda Creek watershed in early 2012.

4. Lunch break

5. Hydrology working group update.

Evan said that the group has been working to improve the predictive ability of the watershed hydrology models. He was provided the model to McBain and Trush and to ICF to aid their work. This step completed the technical task.

Scott McBain said that he is preparing the report on the flows studies. He, Ahmad and Evan expect to complete the report by the end of January. This step may mark the dissolution of the hydrology microgroup. Gordon asked about including ADDL

parameters in the model and was told that the model is structured to incorporate additional nodes.

Gabe Rossi said that the group is looking at four nodes in the Number of Good Days (NGD) model. The group used PUC data on fish growth from Arroyo Hondo and San Antonio Creek to inform the growth rate estimates for mainstem Alameda Creek. Gabe said the model is being run for several life history tactics (LHT) show how they respond to different water year types. He Intends to meet with Krissy and Josh about the results.

Gabe said that an important consideration is the size of smolts reaching the lower Niles Canyon. The model is being extending next into the flood control channel and the creek mouth. Gabe expects to complete the modeling in early January and report soon after.

The first life LHT considered is steelhead spawning at Little Yosemite and juvenile rearing to age 1+ in the same area. The model can be used to evaluate an additional year of rearing at that location or downstream movement. Gabe expects to be able to analyze four LHT permutations.

A conference call for the NGD group will happen in January, and Elke will send a participation request out. A technical group meeting will occur in early February, with a presentation to the Workgroup at the March meeting.

6. Update on independent review of EDT analysis

Tim said the report on the flows studies will be used in a formal Scientific Review Process. The process will produce white papers as background, including a Flows Studies Report. ICF will develop a white paper to characterize the EDT process.

Tim distributed a process memo for the Independent Science Review. Dr. Johnnie Moore will be the convener of the panel. Tim said requested nominations for the Review Advisory Committee. The science review is anticipated to end in May. The first action will be to define the group's charge, or what it is expected to accomplish. It was noted that the group would not be reviewing the HEC-RAS model on which analysis has been based.

7. Summary/Action Items/Next steps

Elke will announce the location of the next Workgroup meeting as soon as possible.