

Alameda Creek - Fisheries Restoration Workgroup Meeting - March 13, 2008

I. Introduction: The first meeting of the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup in 2008 was held on March 13 from 09:30 am to 12:00 noon at the SFPUC in San Francisco. Following the Fisheries Workgroup meeting, a Flows Subcommittee meeting was also held from 12:30 to 3:00 pm with most of the same organizations represented.

Attendees at the Fisheries Workgroup meeting included representatives from the water agencies (i.e., the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Alameda County Public Works, Alameda County Water District, and Zone 7), other public agencies (i.e., the State Coastal Conservancy, East Bay Regional Park District, and the National Marine Fisheries Service), Pacific Gas and Electric Company, and private organizations & consultants (i.e., Center for Ecosystem Management and Restoration, the Alameda Creek Alliance, California Fly Fishers, Hanson Environmental, and Jones & Stokes).

II. Review of Minutes, CEMAR WebSite, Workgroup Email List: No comments were provided on the December 6, 2007 workgroup meeting minutes and no changes to the current agenda were proposed.

Andy Gunther (CEMAR) requested comments on the current state of the CEMAR website, and reminded the workgroup that any new documents related to the Alameda Creek restoration efforts could be posted on the site. The site has proven to be a good central location not only for archiving information, but also for providing workgroup members and others with some detailed documentation regarding on-going and future work in the watershed.

Brenda Buxton (Coastal Conservancy) is updating the email list for the Fisheries Workgroup. Brenda distributed hard copies of the current list and asked members to correct, add, or delete names for their respective organizations.

III. Fish Passage Project Updates and Funding:

Fish Capture and Transport in 2008: Pete Alexander (East Bay Regional Parks) provided a detailed account of the collection, tagging, and transport of two adult steelhead on February 26. The two fish, a 28-inch male and a 27-inch female, were captured at the Bart weir/middle rubber dam complex, tagged with radio tags, and transported to a release site on Stonybrook Creek just downstream of the Highway 84 road crossing in Niles Canyon. Both fish have moved up through the road culvert and into the upstream reach of Stonybrook Creek, where they were observed initially exhibiting spawning behavior (e.g., paired swimming, chasing other smaller resident trout in the area, and digging/flashing over a possible redd site). Over the week prior to this week's meeting, they have been holding at the same location. The pair are being

monitored daily, but efforts are being made not to disturb the fish and possibly disrupt any potential spawning.

Any additional spawning behavior that is observed or significant movement will be documented, and passed on to the workgroup members. Jeff Miller (Alameda Creek Alliance) added that a press release was coming out soon that would provide a general update on the successful rescue effort and the spawning activity that was observed, but would not provide detail on the release location to minimize the chance of someone disturbing the fish inadvertently.

Group members noted that the fact that these two fish are being tracked and their movements are being documented is providing the restoration group with valuable information for upcoming studies that are being planned as part of Phase 2. It was proposed that other tagging/monitoring experiments might also provide information on juvenile rearing or smolt migration, for example. As the discussion continued to expand, the issue of next year's rescue permit was raised. The option of obtaining a Section 10 research permit instead that might cover some of these expanded efforts was suggested. It was pointed out that monitoring of downstream migrants or rearing juveniles usually needs to be very extensive to say anything worthwhile. In addition, a research permit can require strict study design, monitoring, and reporting, so any study would need to be detailed and well defined. However, it was agreed that the discussion would continue among selected workgroup members regarding possible focused studies or experiments that might warrant going through the research permit route.

Alameda County Water District and Alameda County Public Works:

Thomas Niesar (ACWD) provided the status update on the Water District's projects:

Lower Rubber Dam. The modification of the lower rubber dam structure is targeted for this summer, and will follow a design proposed by CH2MHill. The structure will be notched instead of completely removed to retain a portion of its flood control function.

Middle Rubber Dam. The two Alameda County agencies are meeting on March 17 to continue their review process of proposals received from three engineering firms for design, final permitting, and initial construction of the fish ladder at the Bart weir/middle rubber dam complex. Included in the proposals will be pre-design and initial permitting for a similarly-designed fish ladder for the upper rubber dam. By the middle of May, a final contract will be awarded. Construction of the ladder at the middle rubber dam is on schedule to be completed by 2010.

Upper Rubber Dam (Fish Screens). The fish screens at the upper rubber dam are installed and in operation. A formal ceremony commemorating completion of the screens is being planned for later this year.

Funding. Thomas and Manny da Costa (Alameda County Public Works) added that there may be significant support funding coming Alameda County's way from the Bay Area's

bridge retrofit mitigation funding program for either or both of the upper two rubber dam fish laddering projects.

Flood Control Channel Sedimentation Workshop. Manny also informed the Workgroup about an upcoming Sedimentation Workshop on April 23th. The goal of the workshop is to allow stakeholders within the Alameda Creek Watershed to have a common forum to discuss technical issues related to sediment sourcing and transport. The twice-annual forum will provide a venue for stakeholders to share scopes, timelines, preliminary findings, and lessons learned within the watershed. Some of the specific flood control channel issues identified in the flood control channel include scour in the upper section, deposition in the lower section, and the potential impacts of the dredging operation on restoration efforts.

SFPUC: Tim Ramirez (SFPUC) provided the update on SFPUC's major activities in the Alameda Creek Watershed. An integrated Alameda Creek schedule was distributed that shows how those activities fit with other planned projects in Alameda Creek (i.e., the Alameda County's Bart weir fish ladder and the Flows Subgroup Restoration Work Plan). The SFPUC activities include the Alameda Creek HCP, the Calaveras Dam Replacement EIR, and the Fishery Enhancement Project. The Programmatic EIR for the WSIP is a large, permitting effort encompassing San Francisco's water supply system that will overlay the Alameda Creek efforts. The SFPUC is pushing hard for consistency within the three environmental permitting documents (i.e., the HCP, the Calaveras Dam EIR, and the WSIP Programmatic EIR). Members of the Workgroup expressed their hope that steelhead would be covered in more detail within the final versions.

The status of San Francisco's negotiations with the Sunol Valley gravel operations lessee was also covered. An agreement is expected in June of this year, and at that time, the study efforts in Sunol Valley related to the bankside revegetation, cutoff wall, and gasline crossing passage efforts are anticipated to begin.

IV. Action Items:

- A selected group of Workgroup members from East Bay Regional Parks, Alameda Creek Alliance, NMFS, CDF&G, and Alameda County will continue the discussion related to next year's permit (i.e., rescue permit verses Section 10 research permit). The discussion will cover not only the collection and transport of adults from the Bart weir complex, but also potential targeted studies/experiments of smolt migration or juvenile movement and rearing.

V. Next Meeting Schedule: The next Fisheries Workgroup meeting is scheduled for June 5 at the ACPW office in Hayward.