

**Alameda Creek Fisheries Work Group
Flows Subcommittee**

March 13, 2008 12 PM – 3 PM

1st Floor Conference Room
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
San Francisco, CA

Meeting Summary

Attending:

Brenda Buxton, Coastal Conservancy
Jeff Miller, Alameda Creek Alliance
Andy Gunther, Center for Ecosystem Management and Restoration
David Houts, Zone 7 Water Agency
Elke Rank, Zone 7 Water Agency
Brian Sak, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Tim Ramirez, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Thomas Niesar, Alameda County Water District (ACWD)
Pete Alexander, East Bay Regional Park District
Stuart Moock, representing Pacific Gas & Electric Company
Manny da Costa, Alameda County Flood Control District
Chip McConaha, Jones & Stokes, representing San Francisco PUC
Paola Bernazzani, Jones & Stokes, representing San Francisco PUC
Chris Kern, San Francisco Planning Department
Scott Chenue, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Gary Stern, National Marine Fisheries Service
Josh Fuller, National Marine Fisheries Service
Bill Trush, McBain & Trush, representing CEMAR
Chuck Hanson, Hanson Environmental, representing ACWD

1. Announcements, review agenda

Andy Gunther agreed to Chair the meeting in Eric Cartwright's absence. He noted that several individuals had to leave at 3, and suggested the agenda be re-ordered and shortened in order to complete the meeting by that time.

2. Program Manager's Report

Andy noted there was nothing new to report.

3. Reorganized Project Matrix

Andy handed out a revised project matrix that organized the work to be done by major study and then by management question, as such questions were identified at the previous meeting as being of value in helping the Subcommittee plan Phase 2 work. The matrix also sub-divided projects by reach, and then by lead agency (Andy indicated his entries regarding lead agency were just illustrative at this point). He also called attention to management questions emailed to the group by Krissy Atkinson.

In general, there was agreement that this recasting of the Phase 2 work was valuable as the matrix serves as a short planning tool that can be easily updated, and that the Subcommittee has reached general agreement on what should be done (major projects to be undertaken in Phase 2). The Subcommittee should now on who does the work, when, and precisely how this is to be done. All agreed that much of the detailed descriptions for each project contained in Section 5 of the Phase 1 report will be valuable for the latter.

Andy agreed to use the discussion to create a revised version of the matrix, include Krissy's questions, and distribute via email for comment.

4. Priority Projects for 2008

The discussion then turned to identifying 2008 priorities for projects. Tim Ramirez kicked off the discussion by distributing a memo prepared by Jones and Stokes that included a list of five key research requirements for the SFPUC Habitat Conservation Plan. Given the SFPUC schedule for preparing this document, the research needs to be addressed in the coming year to support the HCP.

A key need identified by Chip in summarizing the memo was identification of steelhead habitat over a range of flows in the watershed, as this will be essential for identifying impacts and possible mitigation in the HCP. This is a key overlap with one of the goals of Phase 2. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the details of accomplishing this goal.

In general, for the HCP there is a need to develop estimates of habitat quantity and quality, and use these as inputs to a model that estimates as an output the number of fish that would result. Chip noted that the number of fish is a "coin of the realm" that can be used to compare impacts and mitigation. Bill Trush suggested that rather than a number of fish, which is very difficult to predict and influenced by many factors, the goal of "good days for fish" might be a better target. Creating "good days" through manipulating habitat (including temperature) and barrier passage by flow releases is the direct output of management activities, while recognizing that the actual goal is for those good days to create more fish. Chip agreed that this approach could also be used as part of the HCP.

Bill also pointed out that a key issue is the shape of the relationship between flow and "good days," as nonlinearities are likely to exist that influence how many "good days" can be created for a given flow increment. This would suggest there might be optimal set of flow releases that might increase the number of "good days," but beyond this point

much less benefit might be derived from further releases. In addition, Bill reminded the group that in the end the actual application of the results of flow studies to permit conditions requires judgment. For example, how many “good days” is enough?

Gary Stern noted that the sequence of studying the impact of flow releases on good days is important to his agency. In particular, he suggests the first step is to determine what flow regimes would be best for fish and what are the capabilities of the watershed's hydrology. Once that determination is in hand, the next step is to see how water supply operations can be changed to accommodate the needs of the fish. He noted this is the sequence of study that was used to develop the flow conditions for facilities operated by the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

The Subcommittee agreed that preparation of an assessment of habitat quality and quantity under alternate flows for key reaches of the Alameda Creek watershed is important in Phase 2 and for the HCP. After discussion, the Subcommittee agreed that the habitat-mapping approach proposed by Bill Trush would be an appropriate alternative for Phase 2, as it would provide NMFS with the information they need for regulatory purposes and could likely be accomplished relatively quickly and economically. The subcommittee requested that Bill and Chip, with the assistance of Brian Sak, prepare an initial scope of work for an instream flow assessment to be conducted in the 2008. Bill, Chip, and Brian agreed to hold a conference call on Thursday, March 20, and the draft document would first be shown to Gary Stern to integrate his comments before distributed to the Work Group for review.

5. Next meeting

It was agreed that the next Subcommittee meeting would be on April 15th, at 9:30 AM at the offices of the Coastal Conservancy (Brenda indicated she had a conflict and will be unable to attend but would still be able to make the conference room available).

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.