

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
San Francisco Bay Region
EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

A Monthly Report to the Board and Public

October 2006

The next regular scheduled Board meeting is October 11, 2006.

See <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/> for latest details and agenda

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Bay Area Watershed Coordination Conversation (Dale Hopkins, A.L. Riley)

On September 29, the San Francisco Estuary Project, the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, and the Water Board hosted a regional meeting on Bay Area watershed management, attended by approximately 50 people representing regional watershed organizations, state and local agencies, Bay Area planners, scientists, restoration practitioners, and environmental advocacy groups. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together some of the many people with expertise and diverse points of view who are working on watershed planning, restoration, and management around the Region to exchange ideas and talk about possible ways to coordinate their efforts. At this time in the Region there is a large variety of watershed efforts going on, ranging from the update of the Estuary Project's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) to the development of an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) to water quality indicator and watershed goals projects to the diverse activities of local and regional watershed councils.

During the morning plenary session we focused on two key questions: 1) how do we set regional priorities for watershed science, assessment and restoration projects, given the limited resources available for Bay Area watershed management; and 2) how can we ensure ongoing communication among the diverse interests in the Bay Area? The discussion emphasized a number of common themes, including: the need for both lateral and vertical communication and understanding at all levels of organizations, the need for overarching goals for the Bay Area (what are healthy watersheds and how do we achieve them), the clear need to involve the public and their wide range of needs and interests in any attempt to do watershed planning, the need for funding capacity and building local and regional watershed councils and forums, communicating Bay Area needs and priorities to

Sacramento-based agencies and decision-makers, and the issue of addressing climate change in our planning processes.

In the afternoon, we broke into four subgroups to talk about 1) setting San Francisco Bay regional priorities for watershed science, assessment and restoration projects and data collection, 2) land use issues and watershed planning, 3) overall Bay Area regional collaboration, and 4) developing targets and accountability. Each group came up with some specific action items and people willing to follow up on them. One of the issues to pursue is how to develop regional funding mechanisms for watershed work; another is how to improve land use planning processes to protect water quality. An immediate objective is to provide assistance to the Bay Area IRWMP on how best to prioritize watershed management projects for future potential state funding opportunities. In general the group had positive feedback about the opportunity to meet and talk together and was open to the idea of meeting (possibly in another six months or so). We will be following up by sending out notes of the meeting and bringing some of the ideas from this meeting to future meeting venues. The San Francisco Estuary Project and the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture agreed to remain as the "home" for this fledgling regional forum.

Board and ABAG Memorandum of Understanding (Marcia Brockbank)

The Water Board and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) recently re-signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on their respective roles and responsibilities in supporting the San Francisco Estuary Project (SFEP) and implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the Bay-Delta Estuary. The original MOU was approved and signed in 1994 by both agency boards, and since then the MOU regularly has been reviewed and re-signed.

The SFEP and its many partners carry out the CCMP's actions; it calls for reducing pollution, saving fish, conserving water, protecting wetlands, and promoting environmentally sound land-use decisions. Dr. Tom Mumley, Division Chief for Planning and TMDLs is replacing the retired Larry Kolb as the Chair of SFEP's Implementation Committee.

In 1993, the governor and U.S. EPA Administrator approved the CCMP, but currently the 13-year old blueprint for restoration is undergoing a review and updating process. SFEP is seeking participation in updating critical issues and/or action items missing or that need to be enhanced. For information on the CCMP Update, go to <http://sfep.abag.ca.gov>

San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant Turns 50! (Bruce Wolfe)

The San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant opened 50 years ago as a wastewater treatment facility designed to treat 36 million gallons of wastewater per day at the then state-of-the-art level of primary treatment. Since then, the Plant has grown to be one of the nation's largest advanced treatment facilities with a daily capacity to treat 167 million gallons of wastewater, a service area encompassing 300 square miles, and ability to serve the 1.3 million people in San Jose, Santa Clara, Milpitas, Campbell, Cupertino, Los Gatos, Saratoga, and Monte Sereno.

Over its 50-year lifetime, the Plant and its staff have demonstrated creative program development to meet the Board's stringent water quality requirements, protect the environment, its communities, and the high-tech industries of Silicon Valley through innovative work in heavy metals control, treatment optimization, water quality studies and funding for the South Bay copper and nickel water quality objectives, and to provide industrial technical assistance and partnerships. In addition, the Plant has performed extensive habitat study and protection, met Board-imposed mitigation requirements, invested \$250 million to develop the South Bay Water Recycling Program, which recycles 10 percent of the Plant's influent flow, and implemented water conservation programs to meet the Plant's flow trigger of 120 million gallons per day of dry weather discharge for the past eight years. The Plant has been recognized by the U.S. EPA as one of the best performing treatment facilities in the nation for excellence in wastewater operations, agency management, and biosolids processing. The Plant has now launched a master planning effort to guide its future development and service.

The Plant will host a community open house on October 14 to celebrate its 50-year anniversary and to receive community input on the master planning effort. The Open House will include opening ceremonies at 10:00 a.m. and three sessions that include a poster presentation, Plant tour and interactive session starting at 10:30 a.m., noon, and 1:30 p.m. More information is available at www.sanjoseca.gov/esd/Plant50.htm.

San Francisco PUC Removes Dams from Alameda Creek (Brian Wines and John West)

On September 21, 2006, I attended a ceremony hosted by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to commemorate the removal of Sunol and Niles Dams from Alameda Creek in Niles Canyon and to pledge agency and stakeholder cooperation in ongoing efforts to restore a sustainable steelhead run in Alameda Creek. What had once been a significant steelhead run had managed to survive, despite obstructions like Niles and Sunol Dams, until man-made obstructions in the lower watershed effectively blocked access to the creek about 40 years ago.

Removal of these dams is a key component in the restoration of the steelhead run. Niles Dam was built in the 1880s, followed about 20 years later by construction of Sunol Dam. When the Hetch Hetchy system was completed in the 1930s, these two dams were no longer needed to provide drinking water to the PUC. By that time, the dams' usefulness had already been significantly compromised by the accumulation of sediment behind the dams. About 10 years ago, the Alameda Creek Alliance (ACA) organized to campaign for the restoration of the steelhead run in Alameda Creek. The ACA identified Sunol and Niles Dams as two of the barriers to steelhead passage. Since the dams no longer served a useful function, funding was the major obstacle to their removal.

The Water Board became involved in the project in 2002. Board staff recommended that the State Board approve the PUC's grant application for the dam removal project. The Proposition 13 grant, which is administered by Board staff, provided \$1 million of the estimated \$5 million dollar cost of the removal project.

Since both federal and State permits were required for the removal activities, Board staff coordinated with the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop permit conditions that safeguarded habitat values for resident wildlife in Niles Canyon during the removal process. Sediment trapped upstream of the dams emerged as the most controversial element of the removal project. The Alameda County Flood Control District (District) was concerned that this sediment would be eventually deposited downstream in the District's flood control channels, resulting in significant costs to the District to obtain dredging permits, as well as to dredge the sediments. The PUC and the District eventually reached an agreement on the management of the mobilized sediments prior to the issuance of permits.

Although removal of Sunol and Niles Dams is a major milestone in the effort to restore a steelhead run in Alameda Creek, several barriers to fish passage remain to be resolved. These barriers include: a concrete weir near the BART tracks in Fremont; inflatable rubber dams operated by the Alameda County Water District, downstream of Niles Canyon; and a PG&E gas line that crosses the creek near Sunol.

The dams' removal appears to be giving the restoration campaign added momentum towards attaining the ACA's goal of removing all significant barriers to fish passage by 2011. PG&E has agreed to modify the gas line, one of the rubber dams is slated for removal in 2007, and options for providing fish passage at the weir are being evaluated. At the celebration on the 21st, the PUC pledged an additional \$240,000 toward further studies of the measures needed to restore the steelhead run. Board staff will continue to cooperate with the many stakeholders as specific projects are developed.

Hamilton Army Airfield (John Kaiser)

Board staff attended the September 12 Novato City Council Meeting, where the Council heard the Todd Road Working Group's recommendations for an alternate construction road alignment. The working group has been formed as the result of local residents' complaints about the traffic, noise, dust, and perceived health effects caused by the construction truck traffic related to the Hamilton wetland restoration project. Todd Road runs immediately adjacent to several homes within the new Hamilton Development. Core members of the working group include the legislative aides to State Senator Migden, Congresswoman Woolsey and Senator Boxer; representatives of the State Coastal Conservancy; the Army Corps of Engineers; the City of Novato; several environmental organizations; and several Hamilton residents.

The City Council voted unanimously to adopt a resolution that appropriates \$50,000 to begin the design of the recommended alternate road alignment. Although the City still has various legal and cost sharing issues to work out with both the State Coastal Conservancy and the Army Corps, I am pleased with the progress that has been made to date. This will help to reduce delays that might be experienced on a wetland restoration project that is of profound regional importance, but at the same time conduct project operations in such a way so as to be sensitive to residents' concerns.

Remaining activities of the working group will focus around establishing "rules of the road" for Todd Road construction traffic, so as to mitigate some of the impacts experienced during the interim period that the alternate road is designed and built. I will keep the Board informed of progress.

Castro Cove Cleanup Project (Elizabeth Christian)

A tentative Site Cleanup Requirements Order (Order) and CEQA documents for Castro Cove, an embayment of San Pablo Bay located in Richmond, were distributed for public review and comment on September 26. Site investigations have indicated that historic releases of residual hydrocarbons from refinery operations and other discharges have contaminated near-surface sediment, primarily with mercury and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs).

The proposed remedial action calls for removal of contaminated sediments, via hydraulic dredging. Construction activities will include removal of sediments from the intertidal area of Castro Cove and disposal of these sediments in an inactive treatment pond located on Chevron Richmond Refinery property. Construction is expected to occur over a nine month period. Upon completion of the project, the inactive treatment pond will be graded and capped and will be available for typical refinery industrial uses.

Ecological restoration of the cove will be conducted after sediment removal. Site elevations and connection to tidal influence will be restored and the site will be monitored to ensure that wetland vegetation is reestablished. If after three years of plant recolonization, natural vegetation does not exceed 30 percent of the area, active restoration of the wetlands will be undertaken.

Implementation of the project would eliminate the potential risk that the constituents such as mercury and PAHs in the cove pose to sediment-dwelling organisms. The project would remove between 140 and 190 pounds of mercury from bay sediments and will support the Board's San Francisco Bay Mercury TMDL. This will reduce the amount of mercury available to aquatic organisms that feed on smaller sediment-dwelling invertebrates as well as birds and mammals higher on the food web.

Board staff has prepared a Fact Sheet, summarizing project documents, and have distributed it to identified community stakeholders. Staff will host a public meeting to provide a project overview, answer questions and take public comment on October 4 at the Richmond City Council Chambers. We expect to bring the Order to the Boards for its consideration at its November 13 Board meeting.

Stream Workshop (Marla Lafer)

Board staff member Marla Lafer hosted a 3-day workshop in Marin County on stream bank stabilization techniques. The course, entitled *Stream Investigation, Stabilization and Restoration Workshop*, was taught by Dave Derrick, Research Hydraulics Engineer, and Dr. Rich Fischer, Research Biologist of the Corps of Engineers' Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC) in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The objectives of the workshop

were to introduce methodology and procedures for planning, analyzing, and designing sustainable river and stream stabilization and restoration projects. In addition to the ERDC instructors, local practitioner Steven Chatham of Prunuske Chatham Inc. provided a lecture on local biotechnical bank stabilization projects. The 3rd day of the Workshop was mostly spent in the field touring several restoration and bank stabilization sites in urban and rural parts of Marin County.

The Workshop was attended by more than 100 participants, including Federal, State, and municipal government staff, consultants, and non-profit groups working in the restoration field. The course was provided free-of-charge. Several people/organizations including Board staff (Leslie Ferguson), Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (Paola Bouley), Marin Resource Conservation District (Nancy Scolari), and Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (Liz Lewis, Kallie Kull, and Jo Charlton) volunteered to coordinate and host the field trip sites.

What is the significance of this Workshop? Each year, our and other staff review permit applications for numerous creek bank repairs. This year, as a result of the damage caused by the severe winter storms, the number of permit applications increased by as much as fifty percent. Individually and cumulatively, bank repairs may result in further destabilization of the creek, loss of vegetation, adverse impacts to protected species, and impairment to many of the other beneficial uses that we are charged with protecting. All bank stabilization projects should be designed to help the stream attain a stable creek structure and incorporate features that create and sustain instream habitat. Consequently, staff is working in coordination with the other regulatory and resource agencies to promote and require biotechnical and bio-engineered solutions to bank repair and restoration.

In-house Training

Our September training (8-hour health and safety refresher) was cancelled due to the unavailability of the State Board trainer; State Board staff will be arranging an internet-based course to take its place. Our October training will be on sexual harassment prevention, a topic we are required to cover every two or three years.

Staff Presentations and Outreach

On September 20, Keith Roberson of the Groundwater Protection Division gave an invited presentation to the Pacific Industrial Business Associates (PIBA) at the Oakland Chamber of Commerce. Keith's presentation was entitled "Automated Sampling of Perchlorate Contamination in Surface Streams at a Former Rocket Manufacturing Site in Northern California." Keith Roberson, PHD, is our representative on the State Board's Perchlorate and Emerging Contaminants Panel. The announcement for this event can be viewed on the PIBA website using the following link: <http://www.piba.org/EventInfo/Perch920.pdf>

On the evening of Sept. 20, Brian Wines and Jan O'Hara presented information on stormwater requirements to a standing-room-only crowd of almost 70 members of the Association of Environmental Professionals (AEP) in San Francisco. Brian covered Section 401 certifications and CEQA, and Jan discussed stormwater treatment

requirements for new/redevelopment projects. AEP is considering holding a half-day workshop on these topics in the future.