

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
August 5, 2010

ALAMEDA CREEK FLOW STUDIES

File No. 06-076-01
Project Manager: Brenda Buxton

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to augment the Conservancy's October 5, 2006 authorization by disbursing an additional amount of up to \$30,000 to Alameda County Water District for technical studies of water flows necessary to restore steelhead fisheries to Alameda Creek, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara Counties.

LOCATION: Alameda Creek watershed, Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara Counties (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Coastal Conservancy resolution and staff recommendation for Alameda Creek Flow Studies \(File No. 06-076-01, October 5, 2006\)](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby augments its October 5, 2006 authorization to disburse an additional amount of up to thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to Alameda County Water District to conduct additional technical studies necessary to determine water flows for restoration of steelhead fisheries to Alameda Creek. This authorization remains subject to the Conservancy's October 5, 2006 authorization's conditions.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project remains consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31165)

regarding the Conservancy's mandate to address resource goals of San Francisco Bay Area;

2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends Conservancy authorization to disburse an additional amount of up to \$30,000 to Alameda County Water District (ACWD) to augment its October 5, 2006 funding for technical studies of water flows necessary to restore steelhead fisheries to Alameda Creek, a nearly 700 square mile watershed which flows through Alameda, Contra Costa and Santa Clara Counties. (See Exhibit 1). On October 5, 2006, the Conservancy authorized \$120,000 towards these technical studies. This additional funding would cover the increased costs associated with these studies and will be matched by other participating agencies in the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Work Group (Work Group). The Work Group, made up of local flood control agencies, water supply agencies, state and federal resource agencies, and environmental groups, has been working since 1999 to restore steelhead to the creek and improve riparian resources. The work is being conducted in several phases. The first phase of the technical studies has been completed. The first phase is a scope of work by fisheries restoration consultants hired by ACWD to estimate the range, magnitude, timing, duration and frequency and location of flows necessary to restore steelhead fisheries (as well as other native fish and riparian species) while minimizing the impacts to water supply.

The second phase, data collection, has begun. The consultants have completed a base map using balloon photography showing the habitat created under different creek flows. However, original cost estimates for these studies were preliminary and not based on a detailed scope of work. The technical studies and data collection and analysis have turned out to be more costly than originally anticipated due increased time needed to collect data. This proposed authorization to augment funding will cover this additional cost.

The purpose of the second phase of work is to develop a common understanding of the existing conditions in the watershed that is agreed to by all the Work Group members. To date members of the Work Group, including fisheries consultants and biologists, have participated in scoping and data collection efforts. Additional funding will allow this collaboration to continue. Specifically, the Work Group and consultant team will be able to complete the Sampling and Analysis Plan (available at www.cemar.org/alamedacreek) which will provide key information on habitat quality and quantity under variable stream flows so that Work Group members can better understand how stream flows will influence fish and riparian habitat.

Using a shared understanding of the creek's existing conditions, the Work Group then will undertake the third and last phase of the flow studies. This will consist of development and analysis of specific water management alternatives that will allow the restoration of steelhead and riparian resources while minimizing the impacts to water supplies.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROJECT HISTORY:

The proposed authorization remains consistent with the Conservancy's October 5, 2006 authorization with respect to the site description and project history sections. (See Exhibit 1).

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy (this authorization)	\$30,000
Coastal Conservancy (10/05/06 authorization)	120,000
Alameda County Water Agency (ACWD)	70,000
Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)	50,000
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SF PUC)	70,000
Zone 7 Water Agency	70,000
Alameda County Public Works Agency	40,000
Total Project Cost	\$450,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is from an appropriation from the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 50). These funds may be used for coastal watershed protection pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. This funding will enable completion of the technical studies required to understand the impacts of water flow regimes and other actions in the Alameda Creek watershed that influence the protection and restoration of fishery and riparian resources. These funds will be matched with \$180,000 from other members of the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Work Group.

On October 5, 2006, the Conservancy authorized \$120,000 for the technical studies to support the Flow Studies from California Clean Water, Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40). This funding was matched by \$30,000 each from Alameda County Water District, Pacific Gas & Electric, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and Zone 7 Water Agency.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION; STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S); AND THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY PLAN:

The proposed authorization remains consistent with the Conservancy's October 5, 2006 authorization with respect to the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives, and San Francisco Bay Plan. (See Exhibit 1).

CONSISTENCY WITH THE CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed authorization remains consistent with the Conservancy's October 5, 2006 authorization with respect to the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines and is consistent the Conservancy's new Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines, adopted by the Board on June 4, 2009, in the following respects:

Required Criteria:

Vulnerability to Sea Level Rise: Sea level rise would not directly affect the Alameda Creek watershed – the watershed’s hydrology will be more altered by changed weather conditions (see below). However, the wetland complex adjacent to the mouth of Alameda Creek is part of the South Bay Salt Pond project planning and wetland restoration efforts which do factor in the impacts of increased sea level rise in project design.

Additional Criteria:

Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise: The purpose of these studies is to better understand the existing hydrology and water flows of the Alameda Creek watershed so that watershed managers can analyze different steelhead restoration scenarios. These scenarios will include a variety of water operations and climatic conditions in order to accommodate both present and future conditions. These studies are an essential component of understanding existing conditions as well as the impacts of climate change projections on the watershed.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA: The proposed authorization only increases the amount of funding under the Conservancy’s previous October 5, 2006 authorization. It does not alter the physical nature of the work to be done and therefore does not have the possibility for a significant effect on the environment as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). 14 Cal Code of Regulations Section 15378. In the alternative, if the proposed authorization is considered a project under CEQA, the proposed project is statutorily exempt from the provisions of the CEQA because it involves only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions, as provided under 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15262.