

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROGRAM
DESIGN REVIEW GROUP**

**MEETING SUMMARY
FEBRUARY 10, 2003**

Attendees:

Hank Ackerman (Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District)
Rick Baker (Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District)
Bob Batha (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission)
Peter Baye¹ (Independent Biologist)
John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program)
Frank Codd (Alameda County Flood Control, Planning and Design)
Josh Collins (San Francisco Estuary Institute)
Joe DiDonato (East Bay Regional Park District)
Terry Huffman (Huffman-Broadway Group)
Rachel Kamman¹ (Kamman Hydrology and Engineering)
Jerry Kent (East Bay Regional Park District)
Phil Lebednik¹ (LFR Levine-Fricke)
Roger Leventhal (FarWest Engineering)
Karl Malamud-Roam¹ (Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District)
Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
Mike Monroe (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
Stuart Siegel (Wetlands and Water Resources)
Moses Tsang (Alameda County Flood Control, Planning and Design)
Carl Wilcox¹ (California Department of Fish and Game)
Fred Wolin (Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District)

¹ Coyote Hills Wetlands Enhancement and Drainage Improvement Project Design Review Team Members

1. Introductions/Review Agenda

Mike Monroe chaired the meeting and opened the discussion with a roundtable of introductions.

2. Finalization of the Draft Letters of Review

John Brosnan stated, of the two draft Letters of Review presently being produced by the Design Review Group, the Crissy Field Monitoring Plan and Protocols Letter was complete and the Lake Merritt Marsh Restoration Letter needed final input from two members before being considered complete. John said that the review team has been very responsive with providing comments for both letters and that he would be working with Review Team members on finishing those this week. After completion, the letters will be sent to the project proponents.

On a related note, Molly Martindale announced that the Golden Gate National Recreation Area was planning to mechanically open the lagoon at Crissy Field. Also referring to the Crissy Field

letter, Josh Collins stated that he was submitting an additional, separate set of comments to the National Park Service with feedback on contaminants and benthic monitoring protocols from reviews outside of the DRG. John announced that Jasper Lament was taking a position with Ducks Unlimited in Memphis, Tennessee, and would no longer be serving on the DRG.

3. Discussion and Evaluation of Design Review Group Process

Mike Monroe opened the discussion on DRG process. The issue had been raised in the past month about the need to formally address any potential conflicts of interest between Design Review Team members and the projects that they review. **John elaborated on the nature of the comments made and suggested that the Review Team members verbally state, for the record, that they do not have a conflict before they begin their review.** This declaration would then be included in the Letter of Review.

Roger Leventhal stated that there would only be a conflict when the review team member stood to financially benefit from the success of the project under review. Karl Malamud-Roam stated that the process must both look and act in a fair manner. **John will email the Conflict of Interest statement around to all members of the DRG. John will also post the Conflict of Interest statement to the DRG page of the website.** Peter concurred that a roundtable of declarations would be a good approach and added that it was a proactive action that would avoid having to be defensive. Josh Collins agreed and felt it was a good statement to make in front of the project proponent. **He added that it was good to note who the review team is comprised of in front of the proponent, as well. Phil Lebednik stated that it would be a good thing to append the Conflict of Interest statement to the Letter of Review.**

Roger Leventhal stated that a more formalized question and answer period following presentations was necessary in the meetings. He felt that the longer period for Q and A with the Breuner project was more helpful than what was provided at the January meeting. Molly Martindale suggested entertaining only one project per meeting as a general rule. Roger stated that if the DRG could get involved with projects very early on, such as in the drafting of the RFP phase, we could have a chance for a greater quantity of informed input and avoid problems later in the project's timeline. Josh mentioned that a hope of the DRG was that projects would be submitted as early on in their planning as possible. **Josh suggested prioritizing those projects that are in their earliest stages.**

Peter Baye suggested that the DRG categorize the type of review it can offer based on the stage of project planning. Stuart Siegel resounded this idea, and stated that the level of project review should correspond with the project's stage in development. Karl Malamud-Roam stated that he foresaw four categories: (1) conceptual project, (2) scoping and RFP stage, (3) preliminary consultant draft documents and project design plans, and (4) review of previously completed, final reports and/or review of recently completed final reports. Roger stated that it is critical that we define what we are looking for from the presentation. Stuart made a similar point, noting that the DRG is unique in that it has one shot at project presentations, whereas some other technical review bodies feature several presentations on one project. Rachel Kamman stated that providing external peer review services is something that the DRG should embrace and something that could be of critical use to project applicants.

Relative to the discussion of Design Review Teams versus Design Review Group member input, John Brosnan stated that he has been attributing comments captured in the Letter of Review to either Review Team members or Design Review Group members. Karl stated there is a need to know who is responsible for providing John with written feedback. Peter stated that we should advertise that all members may participate in the Q and A session, but that we should follow the peer review model. Stuart stated, given that the meeting summaries are the basis for the feedback, that the summaries are reviewed for accuracy. Karl suggested that John continue to call people, as necessary, on specific points that require clarification. **Stuart suggested that the letters be circulated to all DRG members, in addition to the Review Team members.**

Peter Baye suggested creating an "edit bin" where all non-Review Team member comments could be collected. Rachel stated that it is the responsibility of the Review Team members, individually, to steward their comments. She suggested that John provide the project proponent's contact information to the review team. She also suggested that the teams have a team leader. Karl asked if we could have a "lessons learned" clearinghouse, where some stock language could be compiled. John raised the possibility of extending the Letter of Review process beyond 30 days, and the group generally agreed that it would be best to maintain the current 30-day commitment.

In terms of John obtaining the Review Team members' sign-off on the documents, Mike Monroe stated the need for a formalized procedure. **Karl suggested that the Design Review Team members rely on a positive sign off method by supplying John with a brief email that says they are complete. He suggested relying on a negative sign off for the DRG members; if they do not provide comments by a specified date, then the letter will be considered complete.** The group agreed to this approach.

The final issue was the matter of recipients of the Letter of Review. Mike Monroe asked if we should continue to send the letters only to the project proponent. Rachel suggested posting the Letter somewhere; John presently posts them on the website. Bob Batha expressed concern about sending the letters to regulatory agencies, which could give a semblance of a regulatory action. Peter stated the need to focus the Letter's feedback on consistency with the Habitat Goals report. The group generally agreed that posting the Letters to the website and sending a copy to the project proponent was sufficient.

4. Coyote Hills Wetlands Enhancement and Drainage Improvement Project Presentation

Mike welcomed the guests from the East Bay Regional Park District and Alameda Flood Control and Water Conservation District. The Review Team members identified themselves. Joe DiDonato presented to the project to the DRG. Roger Leventhal and Josh Collins have provided consulting services to the project proponent; although their comments are recorded in this meeting summary, they will not be included in the Letter of Review.

Joe stated that this is a conceptual plan and that the Park District has only recently begun talking with consultants about the project. The project is located along the eastern edge of the Bay in Fremont. There are 455 acres of uplands on the site and 512 acres of wetlands. The focus area of the project is the wetlands area that is east of the Coyote Hills. Most of this area is dominated by cattails (*Typha* spp.) and some seasonal wetlands remain in small quantities. The

Park District has come to the DRG to (1) share flood management scenarios, (2) share habitat management scenarios, and (3) discuss alternatives.

Water conveyance on the site is through two main corridors: the P-line, which is an open, flood water conveyance channel, and the DUST marsh, or Demonstration Urban Stormwater Treatment marsh just south of and parallel to the Alameda Creek Flood Control channel. The Coyote Hills are a bedrock formation that were historically circumnavigated at their north and south ends by tidal channels. The past few years have seen an increase in the amount of freshwater that collects at the site to the east of the hills. Stormwater only drains from the site at lower low tide. The P-line channel was designed as a 3-foot deep channel with a 10:1 slope that traverses the site from the southeast to the northwest; the P-line was designed to pond water until the water level in the main flood control channel goes down. The water level in the P-line is managed, as there are four 48" gates at Alameda Creek that separate it the P-line.

Joe presented a series of aerial photograph slides that showed the progression of the project site from 1959 to the present. These slides showed the conversion of agricultural land, increases in freshwater entering and remaining on the site, and the accompanying rapid growth of cattails. Joe stated that there is very little sediment accumulation in the flood control channels, likely due to their close proximity to urban runoff sources. Peter Baye mentioned that the root mass and peat generation from the cattails could be a substantial factor in maintaining a high elevation at the site. The project team stated that not much excavation has occurred at the site since the installation of the P-line and that the line has received no maintenance in the past 10-15 years. The DUST marsh was installed as an ABAG stormwater/flood control project to capture urban runoff. Tidal influence at the site was interrupted in the late 1950's and 60's. Peter Baye pointed out that some of the site was farmland for 60 years and that the area was not entirely salt marsh. The farmed areas were once irrigated by wells and the land was disked during the summer months.

Joe stated that the crux of the current problem is the excess of freshwater on the site and its contribution to a monotypic cattail population; these factors affect the necessary flood storage capacity of the site. Local development, expected in the near future, is anticipated to increase the flood capacity demand for the site. Only a few deeper water open habitats remain. Between 1987 and 2002, the site changed from a mix of seasonal wetlands with pickleweed populations and open grasslands to the majority of site being dominated by cattails. The only potential special-status species habitat is located in the North Marsh area. Recently, the Park District used an Aquamog to cut 11 acres of cattails along the sides of the P-line. Plans for the future include using the Aquamog all the way up to the North Marsh. The "brontosaurus" (a Caterpillar-type Front Shovel) is also an effective, low-impact means of removing the vegetation.

The goals of the project are to restore the flood storage capacity, create a variety of wetland types, and reduce cattail dominance. The ultimate goal is to have a habitat mix close to that found on-site in 1987. The Park District is now considering an alternative P-line alignment and cutting new channels (the flood basin is considered everything below 5' elevation). The concept would feature flood storage covering the bulk of the site during the winter and low flow channels providing a conduit for surface water drainage during the summer. Joe asked the

group: Do we need to cut new channels? Can we move water from pond to pond? Joe stated that creation of deeper channels would hopefully avoid a recurrence of the *Typha* influx.

Rachel Kamman suggested that identifying the causes for changes in the hydrologic regime are the critical issues here. Before beginning a restoration design, the sources of water to the site (current and past) should be identified and their contributions characterized. Someone noted the Balance Hydrologics report, and stated that the Park District used to have to pump to keep wetlands on the site. **Carl Wilcox stated that the culverts at 4' are too high and that lowering the elevation of the culverts seemed to him the means of managing the problem.** [STUART asked a question about scoping that I missed here] Karl Malamud-Roam asked about the boundary conditions at Alameda Creek. He asked what the invert in the channel was and wondered how independent the North and South Marshes are. Joe stated that Alameda Creek is silted in on the sides and that the levees between the North and South Marshes were intact. Josh Collins stated that the majority of the P-line water source could be the landscape irrigation water from the nearby industrial park.

Joe asked: Do we keep the DUST marsh? What about bypassing the DUST marsh and routing water directly into the flood control channel? Overall, Joe stated that the site needs a system that provides efficient flooding control, results in preferred wetlands habitat, and is sensitive to special-status species.

Rachel Kamman suggested conducting water quality tests as part of the groundwater monitoring program. The proper suite of parameters can be used as a "fingerprint" to identify surface and groundwater sources. She stated the need to know where water comes from in order to effectively manage it. **Phil Lebednik suggested introducing saline water into the North Marsh, preferably naturally during high tides.** He wondered how far south that water would travel and if it could be used as a *Typha* control mechanism. **Karl stated the need to characterize the present salinity.** Josh Collins shared that there was one piezometer effort that took place during the 1980's. Phil suggested looking at increasing the populations of willows in the area by decreasing the elevations of ponds. He asked about the availability of upland transitional habitats. Joe said that these areas exist, but that there is room for improvement in their condition. He added that there is habitat planning for black rail populations.

Rachel suggested that given the high management costs associated with working on site under current (wet) conditions that the DRG provide thoughts on dewatering the site (completely or in phases) as part of restoration efforts. Peter stated that cattails invade where they will succeed and that even dewatering and removal might not prevent them from reestablishing. **Carl Wilcox said that the only way to deal with water is to reengineer the way that the site drains; this site will take significant intervention to make it drain well.** Karl Malamud-Roam suggested contacting the local mosquito control district, as they have good historical records of water and salinity. He added that good topographical surveys were necessary to avoid data gaps relative to tidal datums. He stated the need to accurately characterize Alameda Creek invert heights.

Roger Leventhal stated that the scopes that Philip Williams and Associates is developing for the water budget of the site might be useful for review and comment. Rachel asked about potential

opportunities (using microtopography or modifying drainage patterns) to keeping floodwaters and summer low flow discharges out of tidal areas. **Phil stated that the water quality of the P-line input should be quantified.** Phil also asked if the sediments were anoxic and stated that the current wisdom is that anoxic sediments lead to the methylation of metals. **Peter suggested determining the summer pore water/surface water quality while the cattails are dying back.** He stated that seasonal salinity is an important factor to consider in tandem with tidally-influence salinity. **He suggested wedding the hydrological and vegetation management. Peter also suggested monitoring the peat thickness and the salinity of the summer pore water.**

Joe closed with a few final questions: What is the possibility of filling some of these areas? What are the trade-offs between habitat types? Josh Collins asked if pumping water out into Alameda Creek was under consideration as a long-term management option. Karl asked if water could be moved to the south end of the site. Fred Wolin responded that it could potentially be transferred to Dumbarton Quarry. **Peter Baye suggested removing the cattails when the ground is wet, as removal during a dry period will not fully extirpate the plants.**

5. Closing Business and Next Meeting Date

Mike Monroe thanked the project proponent team. He announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 17. The meeting was adjourned.

DRG ACTION ITEMS:

- Conflict on Interest - The Review Team members will verbally state, for the record, that they do not have a conflict before they begin their review of any project.
- Conflict on Interest - John will email the Conflict of Interest statement around to all members of the DRG.
- Conflict on Interest - John will also post the Conflict of Interest statement to the DRG page of the website.
- Conflict on Interest - Phil Lebednik stated that it would be a good thing to append the Conflict of Interest statement to the Letter of Review.
- Review Teams - Josh noted that it was good to note who the review team is comprised of in front of the proponent.
- Review Teams - Josh suggested prioritizing those projects that are in their earliest stages.
- Review Teams - Stuart suggested that the letters be circulated to all DRG members, in addition to the Review Team members.
- Review Teams - Peter Baye suggested creating an "edit bin" where all non-Review Team member comments could be collected.
- Sign Off on Letters of Review - Karl suggested that the Design Review Team members rely on a positive sign off method by supplying John with a brief email that says they are complete. He suggested relying on a negative sign off for the DRG members; if they do not provide comments by a specified date, then the letter will be considered complete.