

Proposal Reviews

#134: Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Initial Selection Panel Review

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review

Bay Regional Review

External Scientific Review

#1

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Environmental Compliance

Budget

Initial Selection Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Initial Selection Panel Review

Proposal Number: 134

Applicant Organization: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Proposal Title: Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek

Please provide an overall evaluation rating.

Explanation of Recommendation Categories: Fund

- **As Is** (a proposal recommended for funding as proposed)
- **In Part** (a proposal for which partial funding is recommended for selected project phases or components)
- **With Conditions** (a proposal for which funds are recommended if the applicant contractually agrees to meet the specified conditions)

Consider as Directed Action in Annual Workplan (a proposal addressing a high priority action that requires some revision followed by additional review prior to being recommended for funding)

Not Recommended (a proposal not currently recommended for funding-after revision may be considered in the future)

Note on "Amount":

For proposals recommended as Fund As Is, Fund In Part or Fund With Conditions, the dollar amount is the amount recommended by the Selection Panel.

For proposals recommended as Consider as Directed Action in Annual Workplan, the dollar amount is the amount requested by the applicant(s).

Fund	
As Is	-
In Part	-
With Conditions	-
Consider as Directed Action	-
Not Recommended	X

Amount: **\$0**

Conditions, if any, of approval (if there are no conditions, please put "None"):

None

Provide a brief explanation of your rating:

The Selection Panel agrees with the shortcomings identified by the technical reviews, and does not recommend funding. In addition, there are several barriers to anadromous fish downstream of these two dams, and passage issues need to be resolved at these locations as well. The Selection Panel also recommends greater coordination between with the DWR Fish Passage Program.

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review Form

Proposal Number: 134

Applicant Organization: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Proposal Title: Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Superior: outstanding in all respects;

Above Average: Quality proposal, medium or high regional value, and no significant administrative concerns;

Adequate: No serious deficiencies, no significant regional impediments, and no significant administrative concerns;

Not Recommended: Serious deficiencies, significant regional impediments or significant administrative concerns.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
X Superior	Opening significant reaches of Alameda Creek (which is largely in a natural state upstream) to movement of fish in this region is a high priority. There is and has been excellent coordination and evidence to solve barrier problems basin-wide. Project support from other agencies has been notable. The overall rating is high even though reviewers are concerned about the lack of details on current or future monitoring data to demonstrate success or change. But the potential for opening access to a basin in excellent condition remains superb.
-Above average	
-Adequate	
-Not recommended	

1. **Goals and Justification.** Does the proposal present a clear statement of goals, objectives and hypotheses? Does the proposal present a clear justification and conceptual model for the project?

The goals are appropriate and location for restoration is important in this region. There is a problem with the lack of detail on sediment removal and monitoring. There is no model for channel adjustment or description of extent of expected changes. The ongoing efforts and projects to date increase the access to upstream areas is notable. There was little information presented, however, on the kind of spawning habitat in these upstream regions, whether a significant run of fish could be expected to develop over time, or other benefits to restoration of the natural system. Knowledge about the genetic make-up of the fish is also an attractive feature of the project.

2. **Likelihood of Success (Approach, Feasibility, Capabilities and Performance Measures).** Is the project likely to succeed based on the approach, feasibility and project team capabilities? Are the proposed performance measures adequate for measuring the project's success?

The proposal has a weakly developed plan for monitoring fish or channel conditions. The issue of stored sediment release or disturbance downstream needs attention. The likelihood of successful opening of many additional miles of stream is quite high and the current natural state of these upper regions enhances the project approach. Construction activities seem well planned and experience in the basin shows that such work can be accomplished by the team in place. Given the somewhat remote location and lack of road access, there needs to be additional description of how much and by what means stored sediment would be handled.

3. **Outcomes and Products.** Will the project advance the state of scientific knowledge in general and/or make an important contribution to the state of knowledge of the Bay-Delta Watershed? For restoration proposals, is the project likely to contribute to ecosystem restoration or species recoveries in a significant way? Will the project produce products useful to decision-makers and scientists?

There is high prospect that access will be improved to a significant reach of stream in a relatively natural state. The lack of detail on monitoring leaves a question about whether the biological responses will be adequately measured.

4. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

The budget was confusingly presented and does not add up. There appears to be a significant contribution to the costs but numbers do not add up. The benefits to the stream by removing these barriers would be a long-term benefit to a stream and to species in a region with few other comparable opportunities.

5. **Regional Review.** How did the regional panel(s) rank the proposal (High, Medium, Low)? Did the regional panel(s) identify significant benefits (regional priorities, linkages with other activities, local involvement) or impediments (local constraints, conflicts with other activities, lack of local involvement) to this proposal? What were they?

Regional review ranked this project HIGH based on excellent involvement with local groups and coordination with a staged series of projects for opening the stream. The project is in an area seldom considered and meets a great need for steelhead activities. Project activities will continue an integrated approach to restoring access to an otherwise mostly natural stream system while providing water through the SWP.

6. **Administrative Review.** Were there significant concerns about the proposal with regard to the prior performance, environmental compliance and budget administrative reviews? What were they?

Environmental compliance has no problems but inconsistencies in actual budget requested must be addressed.

Miscellaneous comments:

Reviewers were all concerned that a project of such high potential lacked details on documenting biological responses over time. Even though other upstream activities may be required for complete access, the proposed project could result in substantial improvement of access by steelhead and should be measured.

Bay Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 134

Applicant Organization: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Proposal Title: Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek

Overall Ranking: -Low -Medium **XHigh**

Provide a brief summary explanation of the committee's ranking:

stellar watershed stakeholder process; removal of these dams will remove fish passage barriers on 5 miles of high quality stream shaded riverine aquatic habitat and 2.5 miles of high quality stream habitat; the overall project will restore 75 miles of prime steelhead spawning and rearing habitat; opportunity to educate a large urban population about restoration.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

XYes -No

How?

Yes many agencies are working together to restore 75 miles of prime steelhead spawning and rearing habitat. The Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Work Group (FRW) with members from agencies and the public is working to remove barriers to fish passage in this waterway. The professionals and agency personnel involved in the FRW are familiar with CEQA, engineering design requirements, (de-)construction difficulties, and permitting requirements. Agencies in the FRW likely to issue permits include RWQCB, DFG, USACE which increases the likelihood that permits will be issued, and in a timely manner.

2. Does the project pursue the restoration priorities applicable to the region as outlined in the PSP?

XYes -No

How?

Yes MR-3 (Implement environmental education throughout geographic scope)+ BR--5 (Restore shallow water, local stream + riparian habitats to benefit at-risk species). The project location is outside the ERP ecozones, and addresses the Central California Coast ESU steelhead, a NMFS federal ESA listed species.

3. Is the project adequately linked with other restoration activities in the region, such as ongoing implementation projects and regional planning efforts?

XYes -No

How?

Yes many agencies are working together to restore steelhead spawning and rearing habitat in this watershed. This past summer the EBRPD removed two dams. This proposal is to removed the Niles and Sunol dams, which will provide access to 5 miles of high quality stream shaded riverine aquatic habitat and 2.5 miles of high quality stream habitat, respectively. Several other agency landowners are members of the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Work Group and are actively pursuing barrier removals on their properties. A planning grant to reconfigure the flood control channel at the mouth of the Creek will address habitat and fish passage issues. This is a very strong link to both implementation projects and regional planning efforts.

4. Does the project adequately involve local people and institutions?

Yes -No

How?

Yes this is an example of an excellent watershed stakeholder process. The Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Work Group (FRW) is comprised of agencies and the local public, including the Alameda Creek Alliance, a local environmental group.

Other Comments:

1) The map in the application poorly defines the boundaries of the nearly 700 square mile watershed, and the sub-watershed with 75 miles of restored tributary which is the ultimate goal. 2) The Bay Regional panel suggests that the CalFed technical review panel should address 1) the significance of the Central California Coast ESU steelhead to CalFed goals, 2) the significance of Alameda Creek to the species, and 3) the enhanced ability to deliver SWP water as a result of this project. 3) The Bay Regional panel suggests that, due to the project location, the CalFed Final Selection Panel should address whether this solid watershed stakeholder process and significant dam removal opportunity meets the CalFed Program goals.

External Scientific: #1

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **134**

Applicant Organization: **San Francisco Public Utilities Commission**

Proposal Title: **Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

Correct

Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

I have worked with staff of Environmental Science Associates on a number of projects and proposals in the last 19 years. I am not currently involved in any projects with the firm.

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	The proposal is to remove two obsolete dams that are barriers to steelhead migration in a stream of great habitat potential. The dam removal is part of a larger effort to restore a steelhead run to Alameda Creek. In terms of benefits to steelhead for the cost of dam removal, this is a high-value project. The proposal is weakened by lack of detail on methodology for monitoring and evaluating sedimentation impacts of dam removal, and by the confusing presentation of the budget.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

Yes, the goals, objectives and hypotheses are clearly stated. Removal of the two migration barriers is timely and important.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

The dam removal proposal has been developed in the context of a large cooperative effort to restore steelhead to Alameda Creek. The full-scale project seems justified.

No conceptual model for changes in channel morphology or riparian conditions is spelled out. For the dam removal itself, the conceptual model is simple: no upstream migration, no spawning.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

The approach to dam removal seems well thought out; alternatives have been developed and analyzed. The success of the project in improving access to usable habitat seems very likely.

There is no way to evaluate the likelihood that post-project monitoring will contribute to the base of knowledge, since no methods for monitoring are spelled out.

A successful project (defined by population increases in reaches above the dams) would provide useful information on the costs and benefits of dam removal.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

The feasibility of the project has been documented in a previous study, which considered several alternatives. The proposed alternative--dam removal--seems likely to succeed. The scale of the project is consistent with the objectives of restoring spawning and rearing in upper reaches.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

The proposal presents no detail on the monitoring methods that will be used. Will out-migrants be trapped and counted? Will returning adults be counted? Will cross-sections be surveyed and resurveyed above and below the dam sites to measure changes in channel morphology and riparian vegetation?

Monitoring plans are not explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures (undefined) will be adequately assessed.

Since the project will cause downstream increases in sediment transport and deposition, some discussion of the methodology for evaluating the sediment impacts would be appropriate.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

A likely product will be increased production of juvenile steelhead, once some additional downstream barriers have also been removed.

There is no way to evaluate whether or not useful products will result from the monitoring component.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

The Department of Water Resources certainly should have the resources to carry out the project.

ESA has a staff of competent and experienced biologists, and a track record of following through on restoration projects.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

The budget is poorly organized and hard to follow (this may be the fault of the requested format).

The total amount requested is \$1,550,000. I could not find any totals in the detailed spreadsheets that correspond with this amount.

The PUC has budgeted \$1.2 million for "environmental work and design" (which seems rather on the high side), but the budget summary spreadsheet includes items for permits and design documents. This is confusing.

One of the CALFED in-house reviewers should take a look at the budget, and see if they can understand it better than I.

Miscellaneous comments:

Alameda Creek is misspelled in numerous places, as "Alemeda Creek". ("Alamo" is spanish for poplar or cottonwood, an important component of the riparian vegetation along the creek).

External Scientific: #2

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 134

Applicant Organization: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Proposal Title: Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
XExcellent	This project has come from a well-integrated program for restoration and holds substantial potential for improving a native ecosystem with contributions to overall salmonid recovery.
-Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

The goals are clearly stated and important objectives for restoration efforts and the larger efforts in the Alameda Creek basin.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

The proposal makes a good case for this dimension of the overall restoration efforts in the basin and has developed a sound assessment already of various alternatives. There is a substantial contribution from previous work and to the proposed work by a large group of

interested agencies and the public. Assessment of conditions and opportunities for enhancing the stream system for access by anadromous fish are well presented. There was little information presented, however, on the kind of spawning habitat in these upstream regions and whether a significant run of fish could be expected to develop over time. Are there other species resident in the stream which may also benefit from removing barriers to movement?

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

The analysis of construction details and timing of activities is thorough and considered. There could have been additional detail on the length of reach affected behind the dams and what plans exist for channel modification. These areas are probably small relative to the access provided to basically natural channels upstream but some detail would have helped. It was unclear if downstream deposition of material currently stored behind the dams will be completely avoided.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

The project to remove two small concrete dams appears entirely feasible. There was little detail given on the scope of the problem of stored sediment removal in what was described as a somewhat isolated area.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

The performance measures have largely to do with full removal of the dams. There could have been more discussion of how downstream conditions will be monitored to ensure minimal disturbance. There was no discussion of measures of fish use after dam removal but given the ongoing nature of additional upstream modifications, this level of monitoring may be premature. It is unknown to what extent survey data of fish use of the creek now exists. Mention was only made of stream use by anadromous salmonids but are other fish species present and potentially affected?

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

The outcome from this project will be another significant step in allowing the creek to become free-flowing for a major distance with access to upstream portions by anadromous fish more likely.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

The proponents have shown strong evidence of accomplishing other similar actions in the area and have prepared a solid framework for this next step by planning and building a collaborative network.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

The cost for heavy construction in a somewhat remote, natural area seem quite reasonable. The likely benefit will certainly be the potential for access to upstream areas. It is unknown whether this access will be to high quality (although natural) spawning conditions. However, access by steelhead may have the additional benefit of creating a year-round presence of salmonids (and perhaps other native species) in reaches now inaccessible. Thus the number of fish may be less important than the large potential of reestablishing a fairly complete natural stream system in this part of the Bay Area.

Miscellaneous comments:

The integrated nature of this work to an overall effort to restore much of the Alameda Creek system enhances the project. The contribution and leverage from other funds also makes the CalFed contribution attractive.

External Scientific: #3

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 134

Applicant Organization: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Proposal Title: Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	While the project will probably result in beneficial changes in habitat for fish, there is inadequate attention to what sorts of data will be collected pre- and post the removal of the dam in order to see what effects it will have had.
XGood	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

The goals are important and there is increasing evidence that the removal of dams improves habitat for important fish species. This is a timely concept.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

Since the fish ladders are dysfunctional, there is good justification to remove the dams. However, since there are other dams in the system that can impede fish migration, they should have discussed them as well as the two dams that are the focus of the proposal. Are

the additional river miles (which I calculate as 7.5) worth the 1.5 million dollars, given that there are other impediments in the river?

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

Their approach was initially to consider other alternatives - cut the dam without notches, cut the dam and cut notches, cut notches only, drill holes through the dam, and remove dam completely. They decided to remove it completely, and list 4 advantages and 5 disadvantages to this option. They do not, however, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the other options, even though they state they have concluded that complete removal is the best alternative. We don't know why they reached that conclusion. They mention the possibility that release of trapped sediments may contribute to mercury contamination of the system. They should consider removing the sediments before removing the dam and thus protecting the river from whatever contaminants are present in the sediments. On pg 11 they mention responses of steelhead and other fish but do not mention what they will measure. They mention monitoring, but do not say anything about what they will monitor. They say they will evaluate the approaches to dam removal, but don't say what or how.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

It appears feasible to remove these dams. The project will be more successful if the contaminated sediments are removed before the dam, so as not to add toxic risks to riverine biota.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

The performance measures are related to improved biological condition after removal of the dams. They mention responses of steelhead etc. but do not give any informatin on what will be measured in the fish populations of this or any other species. Also, they mention monitoring but do not say of what. These are important issues that should have been addressed.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

Products are likely to be improved habitat for riverine species. The monitoring component is not described, and there will be no demonstrable proof of this improvement unless the proper data are collected both before and after removal of the dams.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

They appear to be capable of doing this project.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

Having never been involved in a dam removal project, I cannot comment on the reasonability of the budget.

Miscellaneous comments:

The project will probably produce benefits, but the proposal was not very well written and important issues of monitoring for habitat improvements and fish populations were not described.

Environmental Compliance:

Proposal Number: 134

Applicant Organization: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Proposal Title: Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek

1. Are the legal or regulatory issues that affect the proposal identified adequately in the proposal?

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

2. Does the project's timeline and budget reflect adequate planning to address legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal?

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

3. Do the legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal significantly impair the project's feasibility?

-Yes No

If yes, please explain:

Other Comments:

Budget:

Proposal Number: 134

Applicant Organization: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Proposal Title: Removal of the Niles and Sunol Dams on Alameda Creek

1. Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each year of requested support?

-Yes No

If no, please explain:

Proposal requests 2 years funding but only identifies one year of costs in the Budget Summary.

2. Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each task identified?

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

3. Does the proposal clearly state the type of expenses encompassed in indirect rates or overhead costs?

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

4. Are appropriate project management costs clearly identified?

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

5. Do the total funds requested (Form I, Question 17A) equal the combined total annual costs in the budget summary?

-Yes No

If no, please explain (for example, are costs to be reimbursed by cost share funds included in the budget summary).

17a is \$1,550,000 and Budget Summary Grand Total is \$48,874.00. Attachment 4 of the proposal identifies a Budget Schedule Grand Total of \$1,626,000, but does not identify Budget Summary Grand Totals. Unable to determine reasons.

6. Does the budget justification adequately explain major expenses?

-Yes No

If no, please explain:

Unable to match detailed expenses on Budget Summary

7. Are there other budget issues that warrant consideration?

Yes -No

If yes, please explain:

Unable to clearly identify costs for each task.

Other Comments: