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Activists endorse Arroyo project

Mike White, STAFF WRITER

PLEASANTON -- Local creek restoration groups said they support a revised project by the Zone 7 Water Agency that will widen, realign, and restore sections of Arroyo Mocho in Livermore.

Previously, both the Alameda Creek Alliance and Friends of the Arroyos had opposed the Zone 7 Arroyo Mocho Widening/Arroyo Las Positas Realignment Project, because of potential barriers to migratory steelhead and impacts to other sensitive species.

But after talks between a variety of officials, the revised project incorporates design changes, mitigation measures, and a biological resources monitoring program. The efforts will improve fish passage, enhance stream habitat, and address concerns regarding impacts to sensitive species, according to the Alameda Creek Alliance.

"This project will restore a section of the arroyos to a more natural state, providing improved habitat for fish and other aquatic life as well as a more beautiful stream corridor," said Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. "We are pleased that Zone 7 Water Agency worked with us to make changes that addressed our concerns."

The project will realign the confluence of Arroyo Mocho and Arroyo Las Positas, and deepen and widen Arroyo Mocho downstream of El Charro Road for flood control. The revised project scraps two proposed concrete drop structures in favor of fish ladders, to allow for future migratory fish passage through the project area. Two existing drop structures in the arroyos will be removed, improving fish passage.

The estimated cost of the channel work is \$6.5 million. The cost of the additional measures is not known, although Zone 7 General Manager Dale Myers estimated the cost of the additional fish passage work on Arroyo Las Positas alone could cost up to \$200,000.

The changes to the plans are in the form of mitigation measures to the environmental documents. The environmental documents still must be reviewed by various agencies, including the Department of Fish and Game.

Myers said all parties involved agreed to the changes.

"Everybody looked at it and they had the same concerns," he said. "A lot of what we did is clarify the project to the environmental groups. Once they saw the project details, including the wider channels, they agreed the project would be an enhancement to current conditions."

The project also incorporates extensive planting of native riparian vegetation and creation of features within the redesigned Arroyo Mocho channel, such as a meandering low-flow channel and pools with anchored logs or rocks, that will provide significantly improved habitat for native wildlife, according to the Alameda Creek Alliance.