

• **Communications and Legislation Committee**

December 13, 1999 Committee Meeting

C&L 8b

Subject

Proposed Department of Interior Trinity River Decision

Description

When the Central Valley Project (CVP) was originally built, a significant feature included the diversion of water from the Trinity River watershed into the Sacramento River watershed to increase CVP supplies, with corresponding negative effects on the Trinity River fisheries. This was accomplished through the construction of Trinity Dam, which backs water into Trinity Lake, and the associated conveyance facilities that divert approximately one million acre-feet (AF) of water per year to the Sacramento River just below Shasta dam.

The Hoopa Tribe and others have long protested this transfer of Trinity River water. In the late 1950s, Congress passed a law requiring the return of a portion of the water to the Trinity River. However, the law was not implemented until the late 1980s. In the late 1980s, the United States Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) agreed to modify the operation of the CVP and guarantee an annual supply of about 340,000 AF in the mainstem of the Trinity River for fish protection. In 1992, the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) was enacted, including a provision affirming the Bureau's administrative decision and requiring the return of additional water to the Trinity River. The Secretary of Interior (Interior) was required to implement this provision after consultation with the Hoopa tribe.

Current Situation

On October 22, 1999, Interior released a Draft EIS/EIR detailing a proposed plan for Trinity River Mainstem Fishery Restoration. Under the plan, the total amount of water dedicated to the Trinity River for fish protection would substantially increase, ranging from 370,000 to 815,000 AF per year, depending on year-type (higher flows in wetter years). This represents an increase of up to 400,000 AF in some years for fish protection. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) studies indicate that average dry-year water supply impacts in terms of reduced CVP Delta exports are estimated to be about 140,000 AF due to the reduced supply available in the Sacramento River above the Delta. DWR estimates that no direct adverse supply impacts are expected for State Water Project (SWP) contractors. Under the Coordinated Operations Agreement, all of the Trinity water is accounted for as storage withdrawals, which means that all supply impacts from this plan would fall on the CVP contractors.

The SWP could, however, face indirect impacts. Transferring flows back to the Trinity River will create a higher demand on Shasta storage reserves resulting in lower storage levels in Shasta Lake. This could adversely affect winter-run Chinook salmon, a federally-listed Endangered Species, due to the higher temperature of water released from Shasta during the critical egg-incubation and juvenile-rearing period. If winter-run salmon populations are adversely affected, it could result in lower "take" limits at the SWP Banks Pumping plant, which could indirectly affect SWP supplies.

Recommended Position

Metropolitan staff will be tracking the Interior's Trinity River plan as well as other CVP issues in coordination with coalition partners such as the SWP contractors and the California Urban Water agencies.

It is recommended that Metropolitan take a public position on these issues only as part of a broader coalition. The following points are presented to guide staff efforts related to the Interior's Trinity River Plan:

- We should support scientifically based fishery restoration objectives on the Trinity River.

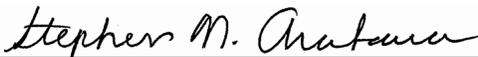
- We should support the integration of Trinity River decisions with other ongoing processes, such as the CALFED Bay-Delta program and CVPIA implementation. Within this broader context, a wider range of management tools may become available to help solve the environmental problems without creating economic problems.
- Any actions taken to restore Trinity fisheries must minimize the amount of flows required so as to minimize negative supply impacts in the Bay-Delta watershed.
- Interior should commit to phased implementation to allow expansion of system capacity (most logically a small expansion of Shasta storage) to mitigate the impacts of any necessary fish flows.
- Interior must assure that there will be no adverse impacts on winter-run Chinook salmon due to temperature impacts in the Sacramento River.

Policy

Federal Central Valley Project Environmental Actions

Fiscal Impact

None

	11/24/99
Stephen N. Arakawa Acting Manager, Water Resource Management	Date
	11/29/99
General Manager	Date