



## ● Bay-Delta Management Report

### Summary

---

This report provides a summary of the activities related to the Bay-Delta for November 2010.

### Detailed Report

---

#### Long-Term Delta Actions

Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP): On November 18, the BDCP Steering Committee released a progress report and a working draft of the BDCP. This is the first time the draft plan has been compiled in one place and it provides an opportunity for the Steering Committee and members of the public to review and formulate opinions about how to best proceed with further development and revisions of the plan in 2011. The November 18 draft represents the progress toward a conservation strategy intended to achieve the co-equal goals, as described in the BDCP “Points of Agreement” (2007) and “An Overview of the Draft Conservation Strategy for the BDCP” (2009). The approach includes integrated elements: new conveyance infrastructure and operational criteria, restoration of habitat for covered species and their communities, measures to address stressors other than water supply operations, and provisions for adaptive management over the plan term. This document represents the collective efforts of Metropolitan and other water contractor staff, the Department of Water Resources (DWR), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), state and federal wildlife agencies, environmental organizations, and other Delta stakeholder groups. While consensus has been reached on many elements of the BDCP (conservation strategy and governance structure) there are still many open elements along with other elements that require refinement (effects analysis and cost allocation) and some issues yet to be defined (near-term operations). Work will continue to refine the BDCP and prepare a final Draft Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan for public review in mid-2011.

Delta Habitat Conservation and Conveyance Program (DHCCP): During the past month, teams of tunneling experts continued to work on the pipeline/tunnel option optimization effort. These teams represent DWR, USBR, state and federal water contractors including Metropolitan, DHCCP consultants and external consultants. The teams are addressing (1) design criteria and analysis, (2) construction, alignment and profile, (3) conveyance system optimization (sizing), (4) barge facilities and gas wells, and (5) maintenance and dewatering. Through the work and deliberations of these expert teams, general agreement has been reached on two important issues. The expert teams have determined that there are a limited number of contractors (8 to 12) that can perform tunneling projects of the size being considered, and that the maximum bonding capacity of these contractors may affect the overall construction schedule. Further, the expert teams have determined that the soil and water outside of the proposed tunnel may not provide enough pressure on the segmental lining system to resist the internal pressures. Additional work on the segmental lining system is needed to develop tunnel lining options to resist the tension. The schedule calls for the teams to complete a draft tunnel configuration and report to a panel of tunnel experts by December 8, 2010.

Delta Stewardship Council (DSC): The DSC held a meeting on November 18 and 19. Most of the two-day meeting focused on the development of the Delta Plan, required by the Delta Reform Act of 2009 to be approved by January 1, 2012, and the DSC also received an update on the BDCP process, with a focus on the November 18 release of the working draft BDCP. The DSC discussed the second draft Notice of Preparation (NOP), the key document to start the environmental review process for the Delta Plan. In coordination with the state and federal water contractors, staff reviewed the second draft NOP and provided comments to the DSC, which focused on concerns regarding the broad scope of the NOP and language that appears to overstate the role of the DSC and Delta Plan. The DSC discussed and made revisions to the NOP at their meeting, and approved the NOP as amended. The DSC is planning statewide scoping meetings in January 2011.

## Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

The DSC also continued their discussion of draft white papers that have been prepared to describe historic and existing conditions and trends related to the Delta ecosystem, Delta flood risks, Delta emergency preparedness, land use and socioeconomics, and agriculture. The white papers and comments on the white papers will be used to develop the Existing Conditions or Environmental Setting sections of the Delta Plan Environmental Impact Report. Staff is coordinating with the state and federal water contractors to prepare comments on the white papers. The Delta Emergency Preparedness and Delta Land Use/Socioeconomics white papers were discussed by the DSC on November 19.

### **Near-Term Delta Actions**

Habitat Restoration: Progress continued on the Lower Yolo Bypass tidal marsh restoration project. The 3,400-acre Yolo Ranch, also known as McCormack Ranch, is located in the lower Yolo Bypass just to the north of Liberty Island. This area presents an ideal location to expand tidal wetlands in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and contribute to the requirements of state and federal wildlife agencies to restore 8,000 acres of tidal wetlands in order to maintain the operations of Delta water exports.

Staff is coordinating with other state and federal water contractors through the State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFCWA) to provide assistance and expertise for the development of this project. As the Yolo Ranch Restoration Project has grown in size and complexity, there has been a reevaluation of the most appropriate environmental documentation. Until recently, a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Negative Declaration was deemed the appropriate documentation with a construction start period of summer of 2011. This schedule assumed that a number of environmental issues could be resolved in order to make that timeline achievable. During November, the SFCWA Habitat Subcommittee and Board are considering shifting the CEQA document from a Mitigated Negative Declaration to an Environmental Impact Report. This change in strategy will push the construction schedule back to a spring of 2012 start.

While much has been accomplished, many important tasks remain. SFCWA staff is continuing to work with Yolo County staff to develop a mitigation strategy to deal with loss of agricultural lands, Swanson's Hawk habitat, and to comply with provisions to exclude the project from their habitat moratorium. Permits, agreements, land acquisitions, financing, and final excavated material reuse plans also need to be completed before construction.

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB): The SWRCB issued a notice to hold a public workshop on January 6 and 7, 2011, to present and discuss a draft report titled "Draft Technical Report on the Scientific Basis for Alternative San Joaquin River Flow and Southern Delta Salinity Objectives". The information and tools described in the draft Technical Report are intended to provide the SWRCB with the scientific information and tools needed to consider potential changes to the San Joaquin River flow and southern Delta salinity objectives included in the 2006 Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (2006 Bay-Delta Plan), and a program of implementation to achieve these objectives. The purpose of the workshop is to solicit input on the proposed technical approach to evaluate a range of regulatory alternatives. Staff has reviewed the draft report and will participate in the public workshop. Staff is coordinating with state and federal water contractors and DWR, and met with SWRCB staff. The SWRCB will provide an independent peer review of the scientific basis and the modeling contained in the technical report following the workshop. Comments received during the workshop will inform what, if any, changes should be made to the technical report prior to the scientific peer review.

### **Delta Emergency Preparedness**

DWR advised the DSC that primary elements of their Delta Flood Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Program (EPRRP) will be completed in draft in 2011 and substantially completed in 2012. Metropolitan is focusing on EPRRP implementation strategies to ensure emergency freshwater pathway response to a plausible multi-island disaster, use of available DWR funding for placement of redundant emergency material stockpiles, and adequate funding of pathway levee improvements to help mitigate seismically-induced levee slumping through ongoing DWR and Army Corps of Engineers programs.