



## ● Bay-Delta Management Report

### Summary

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

### Detailed Report

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#### Long-Term Delta Actions

Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP): In response to the November release of the Working Draft BDCP document, in December the state of California and the federal government released separate reports on the BDCP. The California Natural Resources Agency's report titled *Highlights of the BDCP* describes the background and status of the BDCP and outlines the major components of the state's anticipated 2011 proposal for its completion. On December 15, six federal agencies jointly released the *Interim Federal Action Plan Status Update for the California Bay-Delta: 2011 and Beyond*. In describing the status of the Delta and the need for a solution, both the state and federal documents clearly identify new SWP/CVP conveyance and operations as a fundamental element of a comprehensive fix. The federal document further articulates support for several other key Metropolitan positions including restored water supplies, legal status for water contractors as permittees, and maximum regulatory assurances. These documents illustrate a positive affirmation to the successful completion of the BDCP, and a commitment to the co-equal goals of improving water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration.

Delta Habitat Conservation and Conveyance Program (DHCCP): During this past month the DHCCP continued its work on the Pipeline/Tunnel Option Optimization effort. Teams of tunneling experts representing the Department of Water Resources (DWR), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), water contractors, DHCCP consultants and external consultants completed their work addressing design, construction and conveyance system optimization, and submitted a draft report for review and evaluation to the water contractors and the panel of technical experts (PTE). The PTE met for two days, on December 7 and 8, to evaluate the draft report. Based on their review of the draft report the PTE provided a number of recommendations addressing tunnel design, construction and schedule. The PTE and water contractor comments will be incorporated in appendices at the end of the report. Further work on this effort is deferred pending decisions on additional BDCP and DHCCP funding, as a result of discussions between the water contractors and DWR.

Delta Stewardship Council: The Delta Stewardship Council (DSC) held a meeting on December 16 and 17. 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. The DSC also received an update on the BDCP process, with a focus on the State Natural Resources Agency's report on *Highlights of the BDCP*, which was released on December 15. The DSC published the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Delta Plan on December 10. This is a key document to start the environmental review process for the Delta Plan. The DSC has also scheduled seven public scoping meetings throughout the state in January 2011. Written comments on the NOP are due by January 28, 2011. Metropolitan will coordinate with other state and federal water contractors to participate in the scoping meetings and submit written comments.

The DSC also continued their discussion of Delta Plan development in December. The Delta Plan will guide state and local agencies to help achieve the coequal goals of improving water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration. The DSC discussed two new white papers focused on agriculture and water resources that describe historic and existing conditions and trends related to the Delta ecosystem. The process of DSC discussion of the white papers and comments on the papers is being used to identify opportunities and

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strategies for the Delta Plan alternatives and to develop the Existing Conditions sections of the EIR. The first draft of the Delta Plan is scheduled to be presented at the February 2011 DSC meeting.

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

Habitat Restoration: Habitat restoration efforts are now proceeding on two fronts. In addition to restoration in the lower Yolo Bypass, Metropolitan is working with other water contractors to also investigate restoration opportunities in the Suisun Marsh. Both regions have attributes which make them a high priority for providing near-term fish benefits. Because Suisun Marsh land elevations are near or slightly below the intra-tidal elevation ranges, there will be less excavation required but potentially more levee building as compared to the Yolo Bypass.

Progress continued in December on the Lower Yolo Bypass tidal marsh restoration project. 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 the project. With Metropolitan staff assistance, SFCWA consultants are continuing to work on the newly expanded CEQA documentation and are preparing for a public scoping session in mid-January. A decision was made by SFCWA to develop an EIR. A public draft EIR is currently expected to be completed next spring. The SFCWA/Metropolitan team is working with Yolo County staff to develop a memorandum of agreement to exclude the project from their county habitat moratorium provisions. Concurrently, the SFCWA team is developing a mitigation strategy to deal with loss of agricultural lands and Swanson's Hawk habitat in a manner complementary to Yolo County's Habitat Conservation Plan.

Another key aspect of the project is the beneficial reuse of about two million cubic yards of excavated material generated by the project. One potential option would be use of the material to improve Delta Pathway levees. In other words, material removed to create important fish habitat could be used to precondition levees needed to restore an emergency freshwater pathway through a brackish Delta following a major earthquake.

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB): The SWRCB will hold a public workshop on January 6 and 7, 2011, to present and discuss a draft technical report on San Joaquin River flow and southern Delta salinity objectives. The purpose of the workshop is to solicit input on the proposed technical approach to evaluating a range of regulatory alternatives. Metropolitan provided joint comments on the draft technical report with state and federal water contractors. In addition to providing technical comments, the contractors recommended that the draft technical report be peer reviewed by independent experts. On or before the February 8 deadline, the contractors will provide a comprehensive recommendation on how the SWRCB should proceed in order to ensure that the best scientific and economic data are utilized to balance the competing beneficial uses before new flow and water quality objectives are adopted.