



● Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of the activities related to the Bay-Delta for February 2011.

Detailed Report

Long-Term Delta Actions

Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP): Due to Judge Wanger's ruling in December 2010, which found that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Delta smelt Biological Opinion (BiOp) for the joint operations of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) facilities was "arbitrary and capricious", and the remand of the BiOp to the USFWS for reconsideration, efforts have been targeted toward assuring the proper methodology and approach is used to characterize the comparison between proposed long-term operations with "existing" conditions. Technical and legal staff have been working to develop an approach that is compatible with current modeling capabilities and formats, while satisfying state and federal regulatory requirements.

In ongoing efforts to coordinate with the state, Metropolitan executive staff met with representatives of the Brown administration, including Gerald Meral, the newly appointed Deputy Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency in charge of the Bay Delta Conservation Planning Program, to discuss efforts to complete the BDCP. Also, a caucus of state, federal, non-government organizations and water contractor representatives traveled to Washington D.C. for meetings with various federal government representatives on ongoing issues relating to the BDCP.

Delta Habitat Conservation and Conveyance Program (DHCCP): During this past month the Department of Water Resources (DWR) followed through with reducing DHCCP consultant expenditures, in order to allow remaining funds to be used for work on the BDCP Effects Analysis. At the February 17 DHCCP Executive Committee meeting, the water contractors approved a task order for geotechnical investigations. DWR in-house staff will lead the geotechnical effort with the assistance of the consultant. The current schedule calls for preliminary engineering design to start in October 2011.

Delta Stewardship Council (DSC): On February 14, the DSC released the first staff draft Delta Plan (draft Delta Plan) for review. A key part of the DSC agenda for February 24-25 and for a March 10-11, 2011 DSC workshop will be an in-depth discussion on the development of the Delta Plan. The draft Delta Plan is designed to present key findings and conceptual strategies for the DSC to discuss and receive stakeholder input. The draft Delta Plan includes chapters on the purpose of the Delta Plan, water resources, Delta ecosystem, reducing Delta flood risk, and the Delta as an evolving place. Following the Council meetings, revisions will be made to produce the next draft. Three subsequent staff drafts of the Delta Plan are scheduled for release in March, April and May 2011. An official public review of the draft Delta Plan and programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be released in June as part of the formal environmental review process. DSC staff anticipates that several subsequent drafts of the Delta Plan may be necessary later this year to respond to public comments, leading up to the adoption of the final EIR and Delta Plan scheduled for November 2011.

Metropolitan staff is reviewing the draft Delta Plan and working with the state and federal water contractors to develop written comments on the draft Delta Plan. The water contractor comments focus on support for the co-equal goals of improving water supply reliability and Delta ecosystem restoration, recommendations for key elements to include in the draft Delta Plan that would address the Delta policy goals incorporated in the Delta Reform Act of 2009, and specific comments on the draft Delta Plan regarding the appropriate scope for the plan and role of the DSC in activities discussed in the draft Delta Plan.

Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

Near-Term Delta Actions

Habitat Restoration: Progress continued in February on the Lower Yolo Bypass tidal marsh restoration project. The project is located in the lower Yolo Bypass just to the north of Liberty Island. The Notice of Preparation/Initial Study has been finalized and staff is preparing for a public scoping session in March 2011. With Metropolitan staff assistance, State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFCWA) consultants are continuing to work on the newly expanded CEQA documentation and a public draft EIR is currently scheduled to be completed this spring. The SFCWA/Metropolitan team received a draft MOU proposal from Yolo County to exclude the project from their habitat moratorium provisions. Staff is evaluating the agreement language and its impacts on the project costs. Concurrently, the SFCWA/Metropolitan team is beginning to prepare various permits and continuing to develop a habitat restoration plan. Finally, options are being evaluated for the potential acquisition of Yolo Flyway Farms, which would be an integral part of the lower Yolo restoration project.

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB): As reported last month, the SWRCB held a public workshop on January 6-7, 2011 to present and discuss a draft technical report on San Joaquin River flow and southern Delta salinity objectives. The state and federal water contractors provided a written recommendation on February 8 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 objectives are adopted.

Metropolitan staff also worked with the State Water Contractors to provide separate written comments on implementation of revised salinity objectives. The letter emphasizes that the SWP has no measurable impact on south Delta salinity and therefore should have no obligation to meet objectives adopted by the SWRCB – neither through pumping restrictions nor through operation of south Delta barriers. The letter recommends maintenance of the existing Vernalis salinity objective to protect downstream agricultural beneficial uses. The letter also recommends that if salinity objectives are maintained downstream of Vernalis, the program of implementation should send the matter back to the Regional Water Quality Control Board for consideration of local discharge related actions.

Delta Emergency Preparedness

Metropolitan water quality staff is completing modeling analyses to help establish water quality targets for export resumption following disruption from multi-island failures in the Delta. Coordination on water quality targets has taken place with the Municipal Water Quality Investigations Program and South Bay Aqueduct Contractors Water Quality Task Force.

A briefing with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and DWR executives in February provided a status report and continued support of the Delta Flood Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Program (EPRRP), including a commitment to complete a draft EPRRP in 2011. Commitments have been received from USACE Sacramento District staff to sign a Federal Cost Sharing Agreement (FCSA), pending confirmation of local funding commitments by DWR, to facilitate landside levee fill along the emergency freshwater pathway at Bacon Island. DWR Flood Management executive staff has committed to resolve FCSA local funding issues. Landside fill would have the effect of reducing levee slumping during a major earthquake.