



● Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

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

Detailed Report

Long-Term Delta Actions

Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP): Metropolitan took the lead in coordinating the state and federal water contractor review of the revised BDCP Effects Analysis document issued on February 22, 2011. In March, work also continued on refinements to the proposed BDCP project operations. The potential water supply implications associated with the proposed modifications to operations will be presented in early April 2011. Consideration of issues related to Delta outflow requirements to meet the X-2 salinity criterion is still under debate, but it is expected that a proposal from the federal fish agencies will be presented shortly. Technical and legal staff will evaluate the federal agencies' approach to X-2 to evaluate how the proposal aligns with Judge Wanger's ruling on the Delta Smelt Biological Opinion.

Delta Habitat Conservation and Conveyance Program (DHCCP): During this past month, Department of Water Resources (DWR) and DHCCP consultants continued to work on the geotechnical investigation. On February 28, 2011, Metropolitan staff along with a number of water contractors met with the project staff for the Brightwater Tunnel Project in Washington State for wastewater. This is a 13-mile long soft soil tunnel project with many characteristics similar to the tunnel being proposed by DHCCP. The project staff included the program manager, construction management, contractor, and tunnel boring machine supplier representatives. They shared their experiences regarding program organization, contracting methods, geotechnical investigations, and lessons learned. Metropolitan staff is reviewing the All Tunnel Conceptual Engineering Report to identify areas where Metropolitan can assist DWR in the preliminary design of the conveyance facilities. The current schedule calls for preliminary engineering design to start in October 2011.

Delta Stewardship Council (Council): The Council held two meetings in March and continued to work on development of the Delta Plan. The Council held a public workshop on March 10 and 11, to receive input on priorities that should be addressed in the Delta Plan. The workshop was organized around three panels addressing the following topics: (1) protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem, (2) providing a more reliable water supply for California, and (3) reducing risks to people, property, and state interests in the Delta. Panelists representing different stakeholder interests were invited to participate and comment on Delta Plan priorities. Roger Patterson participated on the panel addressing Delta ecosystem restoration, representing Metropolitan.

The Council released the second draft of the Delta Plan on March 18. The "findings" (defined as conclusions reached after examination or investigation) included in the first draft have been removed from the second draft because they are under review by the Independent Science Board and Council staff. It is anticipated that the previously published findings will be modified. A new addition to the second draft Delta Plan is the inclusion of "regulatory policies" and "recommendations" in several areas including governance, water resources management, ecosystem restoration, water quality, reducing Delta risk, Delta as an evolving place, and finance planning. The second draft Delta Plan was discussed at the Council meeting on March 24 and 25, and will be discussed at the April 14-15, 2011 Council meeting as well. Written comments on the draft are due April 15, 2011, and the Chair of the Council has strongly encouraged comments by April 1, 2011. Staff is reviewing the draft policies and recommendations in the second draft Delta Plan, and is preparing comments to submit to the Council. Metropolitan's comments will address the authority of the Council, the scope of the Delta Plan, and draft policies.

Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

Near-Term Delta Actions

Habitat Restoration: Progress continued in March on the Lower Yolo Bypass tidal marsh restoration project. The 1,100 acre tidal marsh restoration project is located in the lower Yolo Bypass just to the north of Liberty Island. A public scoping session was held on March 15 in West Sacramento to provide information and receive public comments on the Notice of Preparation and Initial Study. The meeting was lightly attended and revealed few surprises. With Metropolitan staff assistance, State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFCWA) consultants are continuing to work on the newly expanded CEQA documentation. A public draft environmental impact report is currently scheduled to be completed this June. Concurrently, the water contractor team is preparing various permits and continuing to develop a habitat restoration plan. The wetland delineation was recently submitted to Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the permit application will be submitted to the ACOE soon. The SFCWA/Metropolitan team is also continuing to work with Yolo County representatives to consider a draft memorandum of understanding from Yolo County to exclude the project from their habitat moratorium provisions. 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.

In addition to habitat restoration in the lower Yolo Bypass, the SFCWA/Metropolitan team is considering restoration opportunities in the Suisun Marsh. Both regions have attributes which make them a high priority for providing near-term fish benefits. Portions of the Suisun Marsh and Lower Yolo Bypass are two of the best locations to restore new tidal wetlands in the Delta to meet the Endangered Species Act regulatory requirements, which require restoration of 8,000 acres of tidal wetlands in order to maintain the operations of Delta water exports. As a means to facilitate the creation of a new tidal marsh, SFCWA has entered into an initial planning contract with a habitat restoration contractor to restore over 300 acres of habitat in the Suisun Marsh through a public-private joint venture. With Metropolitan staff assistance, SFCWA consultants are developing draft contracts, preparing easement appraisals, planning restoration activities, advancing crediting/funding agreements and coordinating with the state and local interests.

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB): The State Water Contractors (SWC) and the San Luis & Delta Mendota Water Authority (SLDMWA) have begun initial discussions with the San Joaquin River Group (SJRJG) regarding the potential to develop a San Joaquin River flow criteria to assist in the ongoing SWRCB proceedings. The purpose would be to propose a flow standard to the SWRCB that would be in effect while the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission processes play out on the tributaries. The SWC and SLDMWA have been brainstorming what would be contained in this type of accord. Staff is considering what opportunities might be available to develop a flow standard on the San Joaquin River that would benefit fish while also providing water supply benefits. Such opportunities may include (1) providing shorter pulses to cue fish to move out during the spring, then relaxing export restrictions in the Delta after the fish have moved to help provide water supply, or (2) providing water in the fall that may be available for export. A possible program of implementation may be designed as an experiment to help develop better science for flows, other stressors, and allowable Delta exports.

Staff, through SFCWA, is participating with SJRG and several interested power utilities to develop modeling tools that will be used to evaluate the impact of proposed SWRCB flow criteria on hydropower generation. A request for proposals (RFP) to develop such tools was released and a bidder's conference was held on March 22 to entertain clarifying questions related to the RFP. Consultant proposals are due March 28.

Delta Emergency Preparedness

A briefing is being planned for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) executive management to advise on the status of the Delta Flood Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Program, and to help clarify FEMA oversight roles in response to a multi-island failure scenario. DWR Flood Management staff has advised they are further clarifying state and federal roles in emergency response in the process of establishing state and federal cost sharing agreement funding commitments for Bacon Island pathway levee improvements. DWR has issued a draft Delta Risk Management Strategy Phase 2 report, currently under staff review, which incorporates Metropolitan's emergency preparedness plans addressing advance materials stockpiles for implementation of an emergency freshwater pathway.