



● Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of the activities related to the Bay-Delta for February 2012.

Detailed Report

Long-Term Delta Actions

Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)

On February 27-29, the first administrative drafts of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/S) were provided to the fish agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and California Department of Fish and Game) and posted on the BDCP website (baydeltaconservationplan.com) for the public to view. This is **not** a formal public review and comment release but rather part of the state's commitment for an open and transparent process. It also represents an important milestone reached, as targeted in the BDCP Memorandum of Agreement reached earlier this year between the state and federal governments.

The first administrative drafts are expected to be several thousands of pages of text, figures, tables, and technical appendices. These documents should be considered "works in progress." Additional work and refinement of both documents is expected between the first administrative drafts and the release of the second administrative drafts scheduled for May 2012, and the Public Drafts in June 2012.

The results contained in the preliminary first administrative draft BDCP show that the proposed conservation strategy, including the new proposed water conveyance infrastructure, provides a meaningful contribution to the recovery of most of the 63 covered species. The BDCP conservation measures designed to recreate more protective ecological conditions, restore native habitats, and reduce the effects of various other stressors (illegal harvest, predation, invasive species, toxics/water quality, and entrainment in non-project diversions) are a significant step in meeting the legislative directed dual goals of ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability.

For two key species—delta smelt and longfin smelt—additional work is being done to better define habitat requirements, the importance of flow in the various life stages of these fish, and the linkages between the environmental changes expected through BDCP actions (both positive and negative) and the resulting biological responses of these sensitive species.

Metropolitan staff will be reviewing the first Administrative drafts of the BDCP and EIR/S in detail in coordination with the other public water agencies.

Delta Stewardship Council (Council)

Metropolitan filed comments on the Council's draft EIR on February 2, and also worked with other water agencies to prepare comments filed by the State Water Contractors (SWC) and the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority (SLDMWA). The draft EIR examines the environmental consequences of the fifth staff draft Delta Plan's 12 regulatory policies and 61 non-binding recommendations, along with five other project alternatives. The Council plans to meet every two weeks until a final Delta Plan is adopted. During the March meetings, the Council plans to discuss comments received on the draft EIR and proposed directions for a sixth staff draft Delta Plan. At this time, staff expects a sixth staff draft Delta Plan to be released for public comment in April or May 2012. The purpose of the Delta Plan is to coordinate and guide state and local agencies to take actions to achieve the coequal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem.

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. Staff assisted State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFWCA) in developing a solicitation for consulting firms to assist with the preparation of regulatory permits for the project. Meetings with the owner of the property, Westlands Water District, were held to discuss final soil disposal and irrigation modification options. The regulatory crediting Prospectus for the project is nearing completion. The draft Prospectus provides technical justification for over 1,000 acres of both salmon and delta smelt credits to meet the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service requirements in their respective Biological Opinions. With final concurrence of the land owner and the SFWCA Board, the draft EIR could be ready for public comment this spring. Finally, Metropolitan and SFWCA staff and consultants are adding additional resources to keep the project on schedule for construction next year.

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)

The State Water Board is conducting a phased review and update of the 2006 Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay-Delta WQCP). The Bay-Delta WQCP identifies beneficial uses of water in the Bay-Delta, water quality objectives for the reasonable protection of those beneficial uses, and a program of implementation for achieving the water quality objectives. To date, the process has focused on the southern Delta salinity objectives for the protection of agriculture; San Joaquin River flow objectives for the protection of fish and wildlife; and the program of implementation for achieving those objectives. The State Water Board is now starting to consider the comprehensive review of the other elements of the Bay-Delta WQCP and potential changes to protect beneficial uses in the Bay-Delta. At their regularly scheduled meeting on February 21, the State Water Board held an informational item and received comments regarding a schedule of actions to update the Bay-Delta WQCP and the relationship of these actions to the BDCP. Staff coordinated with the SWC, Central Valley Project water contractors, upstream water users, and several power utilities to provide oral comments at the meeting, and worked with the SWC and the SLDMWA to submit written comments on February 21. Our joint interests regarding the proposed State Water Board process center on the need to (1) coordinate with the outcome of the BDCP, (2) use best and updated available science, (3) avoid protracted water rights proceedings, and (4) recognize competing water uses such as hydropower. Our comments also proposed a modified schedule that would ensure a timely, open and transparent process and address our concerns.

Delta Emergency Preparedness

Delta Flood Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Program (EPRRP)

Department of Water Resources (DWR) representatives have indicated that they will conduct a comprehensive simulation exercise in late 2012 to assess emergency operations plans and procedures of the DWR Delta Flood Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Plan, which is expected to be issued as an executive draft in early 2012. The exercise would include participation by local, regional, state, and federal agencies.

A briefing on Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta initiatives was conducted for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) South Pacific Division Commander, Colonel Michael Wehr, to address coordinated Delta emergency operations and flood management planning, as well as water supply and fishery protections. The briefing was attended by DWR, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and USACE executives.