



• Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to the Bay-Delta for August 2018.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Long-Term Delta Actions

California WaterFix

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) proceedings for the California WaterFix petition for additional point of diversion are ongoing. The evidentiary portion of Part 2 of the hearings, which consider the effects of the proposed project on fish and wildlife, concluded on April 25, 2018. The rebuttal phase of the hearing started on August 2, which includes the presentation of rebuttal testimony and cross examination. Staff is coordinating with other State Water Project contractor agencies to prepare rebuttal testimony and participate in the hearings. Bay-Delta Initiatives staff testimony addresses the modeling analyses to support the permit applications and the existing conditions of listed species in the Bay-Delta.

Joint Powers Authorities

The Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) held a meeting on August 16. The DCA Board adopted several resolutions establishing policies for the newly formed agency including, Bylaws, Ethics Policy, Investment Policy, and a Protest Policy for competitive bidding solicitations. Proposed designs for an agency logo were also discussed. The Delta Conveyance Finance Authority also met on August 16. At this meeting, actions included approving an operating budget of \$550,000 for the current fiscal year, and approving resolutions adopting a debt management policy and an investment policy.

The DCA has established a transition staff that will support activities until it completes its effort to recruit a long-term staff, expected by the end of this calendar year. Metropolitan has provided five staff for the transition team supporting the areas of engineering, information technology, environmental, contracting, and real property.

Near-Term Delta Actions

State Water Resources Control Board

The SWRCB held a public meeting on August 21 and 22 to receive oral public comments on proposed amendments to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan (WQCP) for the Lower San Joaquin River and Southern Delta as part of the Phase 1 process. The draft final proposal would update water flow objectives in the Lower San Joaquin River and its major tributaries, the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers, and would amend southern Delta salinity objectives. Staff worked with the State Water Contractors (SWC) to develop and submit comments on the proposed WQCP amendments on July 27, 2018. After two full days of public comment, the SWRCB announced it will reconvene on the topic on November 7, 2018. Continuing the meeting and deferring final action on the proposed amendments will provide the SWRCB members with additional time to weigh and consider the information and comments, including the status of efforts to develop settlement agreements.

Science Activities

The experimental operation of the Suisun Marsh Salinity Control Gates, as part of the state's Delta Smelt Resiliency Strategy, started on August 1 and is scheduled to continue through the end of August. The operation is designed to lower salinity in Suisun Marsh in an effort to create more hospitable habitat for Delta smelt. The

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California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will conduct monitoring to examine Delta smelt distribution, as well as monitor habitat parameters, such as water quality, flow, plankton and clams. The SWC are supplementing DWR's operations and monitoring program with additional monitoring to further evaluate the potential benefits of the project for Delta smelt.

A scientific paper co-authored by Corey Phllis and David Fullerton in collaboration with consultants at ESSA Technologies Ltd. was accepted at the peer-reviewed journal *Limnology & Oceanography*. The manuscript systematically reviews and retests relationships describing how fish populations respond to environmental variables in the Bay Delta, many of which are formerly or currently used to inform regulatory actions and constraints (e.g. Fall X2 requirements in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biological Opinion). The study finds that the relationships generally have held up with more years of data, but the amount of variation described by the environmental variables has declined, suggesting the variables have diminishing value as policy tools.

Staff is participating in the Central Valley Salmon Habitat Partnership (CVSHP), a multi-agency group made up of state and federal agencies, water districts, and non-profit organizations working together to advance recovery and maintenance of viable, self-sustaining salmon populations. At the August 2 management board meeting, the group discussed several pilot projects that could be considered, and that they plan to decide which projects to support at the next quarterly board meeting. The CVSHP science committee is developing an implementation plan that will rely on the best available science to identify priority restoration projects to support a variety of habitats for salmon and steelhead. Staff is providing input to the implementation plan.

Staff continued to participate in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries process to improve the Winter-run Life Cycle Model (WRLCM), which was used for analyses in the National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion for California WaterFix. The workshops provide stakeholders an opportunity to understand the model, address model structure and capabilities, identify knowledge gaps, and propose improvements. Staff participated in the August WRLCM workshops, which addressed changes to the model framework to improve how the model characterizes uncertainty, and addressed the capabilities of the model to evaluate salmon behavior with the enhanced Particle Tracking Model. Understanding how the model functions and the model assumptions enable us to better review the utility of this model to estimate effects of California WaterFix on salmon populations.

Staff continued participating in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program (CSAMP), including participation on the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT). In August, the CSAMP Policy Group developed a set of priorities for 2019-2020 focused on Delta smelt and salmon actions, development of integrated science plans for Delta smelt and salmon and continuing the development of structured decision making tools. The CSAMP Policy Group will consider approving the priorities in September 2018. Staff also participated in CAMT and salmon subcommittee discussions on the feedback received at the CAMT Salmon Research Workshop held in June 2018. The feedback is being used to develop recommendations for scientific salmonid studies that CAMT could support.

Staff participated in the Sutter Bypass workgroup to discuss the results of juvenile salmon survival from a study conducted this spring and to identify next research projects that are needed to better understand how fish benefit from the Sutter Bypass and Butte Sink habitats. These studies are helping to identify how juvenile salmon use this habitat and what restoration actions are needed to improve salmon use and survival.

Staff toured the UC Davis hydraulics lab to learn about the types of experiments that can be conducted to test different diversion screening methods to reduce entrainment and how hydrodynamics affect fish routing and behavior. Staff is developing ideas for proposed projects that would use this facility to test methods to reduce entrainment of fish into diversions and to better understand how changes in velocities that may result from water project operations influence fish behavior.

Delta Emergency Preparedness

Delta Flood Emergency Management Plan

In August, DWR completed a series of workshops with their executive, engineering and operations staff, to coordinate final input to the Delta Flood Emergency Management Plan (DFEMP). DWR plans to use in-house and consulting staff to incorporate input into a final draft DFEMP in October and a final DFEMP in fall 2018.

DWR also completed analysis in August to determine optimum volume and timing of reservoir releases from Sacramento and San Joaquin River reservoirs to support freshwater pathway development and export resumption. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has assigned a new emergency operations manager to participate in Delta flood emergency management and implementation with federal and state agencies.