



● Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to the Bay-Delta for February 2020.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Long-Term Delta Actions

Delta Conveyance

With the January 15 release of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed Delta Conveyance project, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) initiated the California Environmental Quality Act scoping period, which started with the release of the NOP and continues until March 20, 2020. During the scoping period, DWR is seeking input on the scope of the Environmental Impact Report, including the range of alternatives, the types of impacts, impact methodology, and potential mitigation measures. Eight public scoping meetings are underway and being held throughout the state from February 3 to March 2, 2020. After the initial release of the NOP, DWR scheduled an additional scoping meeting in Redding on March 2. Written comments on the NOP are due March 20, 2020, and staff will be submitting Metropolitan comments.

Joint Powers Authorities

The Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) held a special meeting on February 6, at which time the board passed a resolution to appoint an additional DCA Stakeholder Engagement Committee (SEC) member. The DCA also held its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on February 20, at which time the board discussed the informational updates on the SEC activities, the findings of the Independent Technical Review Committee report, and intake and launch shaft fundamental updates. The next SEC meeting is scheduled for February 26. The Delta Conveyance Finance Authority Board of Directors also met on February 20, where the board heard a report from the DCA Executive Director.

Near-Term Delta Actions

Regulatory Activities

On February 4, 2020, the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency shared a framework for potential voluntary agreements to improve habitat and flow in the Delta and tributary watersheds. The framework seeks to implement the State Water Resources Control Board Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan through an integrated 15-year program that would include the creation of 800,000-900,000 acre-feet of additional flow, the development of 60,000 acres of new and restored habitat, and the generation of more than \$5 billion in new funding for environmental improvements and a collaborative science program.

On February 18, 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation signed the Record of Decision for the Reinitiation of Consultation on the Coordinated Long-Term Modified Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project. This action formally adopts a new operations plan for the water projects and the accompanying biological opinions from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service. On February 20, the State of California filed a lawsuit challenging the biological opinions, stating their belief that the biological opinions reduce protections for listed species and their designated habitat. The state agencies are continuing to work on the California Endangered Species Act permit for operation of the State Water Project.

Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

Science Activities

Researchers with UC Santa Cruz, under contract with Metropolitan, completed the first year of a five-year study to investigate the impacts of human made structures and other physical features (contact points) on predation of juvenile salmon in the Delta. The published results of year one field study and literature review addressed the effects of predator-prey interactions based on contact points, and the results indicate that the effects of submerged aquatic vegetation and artificial illumination on predation warrant further investigation in the Delta. Plans for the second year of the study include evaluation of these contact points in the field. Another salmon study to evaluate floodplain habitats was also recently completed. The study observed that in the Sutter Bypass, during small-scale flooding, wetland habitats make up approximately 60 percent of the flooded habitat while agricultural habitats make up approximately 40 percent. During larger flooding events, the agricultural habitats make up nearly 75 percent. This highlights the variability in available habitat at a variety of flows that is available for juvenile Chinook salmon.

Staff also conducted field sampling for year two of the Prop 1-funded study addressing “Impacts of climate change on pesticide bioavailability and sub-lethal effects on juvenile salmon reared in floodplain habitats”. Field work consisted of deploying samplers and collecting samples along the lower main stem Sacramento River and northern Delta.

Staff assisted with planning and conducting a science symposium addressing “How to achieve a true consensus for best environmental DNA practices,” which was held at UC Davis. The symposium consisted of international speakers and was livestreamed internationally. The symposium focused on the techniques used to detect environmental DNA, a method of non-lethal sampling in aquatic environments that is rapidly becoming a standard tool for fish surveys.

Staff continued participating in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program (CSAMP), including participation on the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT). The February 5 CSAMP Policy Group meeting included project updates on the Delta smelt structured decision making and Coordinated Salmon Science Plan projects, a review of Delta smelt Resiliency Strategy actions planned this year and a science presentation on the evaluation of hatchery salmon release practices that can impact straying rates for returning salmon. The February 18 CAMT meeting focused on Delta smelt science efforts, including the efforts of state agencies to organize and implement monitoring and studies to evaluate effects of Delta smelt management actions.

Delta Emergency Preparedness

Delta Flood Emergency Management Plan

DWR staff is planning an exercise to be conducted in 2021 that will address operational practices of the Delta Flood Emergency Management Plan under potential extensive multiple island levee failures and island flooding. Specific response measures would include pathway development and reservoir release measures to support its operation. This differs from previous exercises which have responded to consequences of individual levee failures. The exercise would involve and train multidivisional elements of DWR to determine areas of improvement based on real time practices. The exercise would focus on personnel who have an active role during emergencies, including preparedness and response, threats and hazards identification, and testing DWR’s response to competing resource demands.