



## ● Bay-Delta Management Report

### Summary

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

### Purpose

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Informational

### Detailed Report

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#### Long-Term Delta Actions

##### Delta Conveyance

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) for the development of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Delta Conveyance Project on August 20. Publication of the NOI initiates the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NOI also signals the start of the federal scoping period, providing an opportunity for public and agency comment on the scope and content of the NEPA review. Information related to the NEPA scoping period, including details on how to comment, can be found on the USACE website.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has made no decisions as to the selection of a specific Delta Conveyance alternative as part of the program planning. Proposed project designs are still in the “Initial Conceptual Design Phase” and project alternatives are being studied. A final decision regarding whether to approve the proposed Delta Conveyance Project or an alternative, including the no project alternative, will not occur until after completion of the environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act and NEPA, and other environmental permitting processes have been completed.

An updated planned program schedule is available from DWR. The schedule has been modified to align the state and federal environmental review processes, as well as to accommodate additional time needed for modeling and funding actions from participants. The updated schedule includes a public Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in 2022 and Final EIR in 2023. DWR expects permitting to be complete in 2024.

Over the summer, DWR completed soil investigation activities in the Delta that were part of previous efforts. DWR and the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) are working to start soil investigations under the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for Soil Investigations in the Delta that was adopted on July 9, 2020. This soil investigation work is anticipated to begin this fall on a limited subset of sites on public lands, consistent with all permit conditions and mitigation requirements. Additionally, DWR and the DCA are working to obtain temporary entry on private lands. DWR is continuing to pursue permits for sites that fall under the jurisdiction of the Rivers and Harbors Act (Section 408) and Fish and Game Code (Section 1602). Those sites are not included in the near-term efforts. Investigations at any given site will not occur until property owners have been notified and required permits and approvals for that site have been obtained.

DWR is preparing a series of “Deep Dive” video interviews with subject-matter experts on topics related to the Delta Conveyance Project. The first video is about soil investigation work. This video can be found on the DWR website (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tR0ar2Zmrm8&feature=youtu.be>). The next in the series will be about the State Water Project (SWP).

##### Joint Powers Authorities

On September 17, the DCA Board of Directors approved Amendment #4 to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement. This amendment provides an accounting of the amount of DWR contribution for planning from \$33.8 million to \$48.8 million. This contribution provides temporary funding to the DCA that will be repaid once

## Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

financing for the participants is secured, likely after additional funding from agencies wishing to participate in Delta Conveyance is secured.

The DCA board also approved the expansion of the DCA Stakeholder Engagement Committee (SEC) to include an additional public committee member, bringing the total SEC membership to 20 members. DCA staff will now be able to initiate the application process for the new committee member. In addition, the DCA Board appointed David Welch, Courtland Fire Department, as an ex officio member to the committee, bringing the total to three ex officio member seats filled of the total of five potential ex officio members.

The Delta Conveyance Finance Authority regularly scheduled September 17 board meeting was cancelled.

The September 23 SEC meeting included DWR planning process updates, an overview of the Environmental Justice survey, and focused updates on alternatives.

A Virtual Tour of the proposed project including an updated map book was made available to the SEC and can be found on the DCA website. It was explained that the locations in the virtual tour are shown for conceptual, preliminary purposes only. A video of the SEC's T-screens facility tour is being developed.

### Sites Reservoir

At their September 17 joint meeting, the Sites Authority Board and Reservoir Committee approved Alternative 1 as the Authority's preferred project for the purposes of the Revised Draft EIR analysis and for the purposes of the federal and state permitting processes. Alternative 1 includes a 1.5 million acre-feet reservoir size and the utilization of both existing and proposed new facilities, all of which will be in northern California in Glenn, Colusa, Tehama, and Yolo Counties.

Stemming from the recent strategic planning session, the Sites Authority Board and Reservoir Committee also approved a new vision statement - "affordable water sustainability managed for California's farms, cities, and environment for generations to come," a new mission - "the Sites Project Authority will build and operate a climate-resilient, 21st Century water storage system to responsibly manage and deliver water; improve the environment; and provide flood control and recreational benefits;" and defined new values and goals.

A legal service contract to provide initial assistance in securing water right approvals for the project was awarded to the firm of Somach, Simmons and Dunn.

### **Near-Term Delta Actions**

#### Regulatory Activities

On September 8-10, staff participated in a Delta Science Program sponsored workshop on the Sacramento River Drainage Spring-run Chinook salmon. The purpose of the virtual workshop was to convene subject-matter experts to develop the best possible approach to accurately estimate the population of spring-run Chinook salmon in the Sacramento River basin, which is a requirement in the DWR State Endangered Species permit (state permit) for SWP operations. Agency and stakeholder input provided at the workshop will be considered to inform the development and implementation of the Juvenile Production Estimate (JPE) for Spring-run Chinook salmon. The JPE will be used to set action triggers for managing State Water Project operations under the state permit.

Staff also continued to participate in the collaborative groups called for in the 2019 federal Endangered Species permit for the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP), and the 2020 state permit for Long-term Operation of the SWP, to address science needs to inform management and operation of the water projects. The Delta Coordination Group is to coordinate the CVP and SWP management for federal listed species and is currently focused on Delta smelt summer/fall actions. The Longfin smelt Science Program is the cooperative science technical team to inform the management of longfin smelt under the state permit.

#### Science Activities

Staff continued participating in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program (CSAMP), including participation on the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT). The September 15 CAMT

## Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

meeting included a presentation on the draft report for the Coordinated Salmonid Science Plan project. The presentation provided a summary of the methods used to identify and prioritize salmon activities, and the results of the project. Staff is reviewing and preparing comments on the report. CAMT also received an update on the efforts to monitor habitat restoration in the Delta and discussed priorities for the CAMT work plan for 2021/22.

Metropolitan's Bay-Delta Initiatives (BDI) staff, Ms. Alison Collins and Dr. Shawn Acuña, with co-authors from Cramer Fish Sciences, ICF consultants, DWR, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, published a paper on a Chinook salmon predation study. Chinook salmon were exposed to largemouth bass in a net pen under different conditions to evaluate the effects of man-made structures and aquatic weeds on predation. The results showed that aquatic weeds were a significant factor in affecting predation by Largemouth bass. The study was supported by grant funding from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Interagency Ecological Program is holding their annual workshop virtually with workshop sessions held in two-hour blocks from August 25 to October 13, 2020. BDI staff is participating in the workshop, and sessions are addressing a variety of Delta science topics including Delta fish abundance and habitats, aquatic vegetation management, environmental stressors and activities in Suisun Marsh. On September 15, BDI staff person Dr. Corey Phillis gave a presentation on an on-going study to model juvenile Chinook salmon response to food web subsidies from rice field drain water in the Sacramento River.