



● Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to the Bay-Delta for March 2021.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Long-Term Delta Actions

Delta Conveyance

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is continuing to develop an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act. DWR has identified a range of reasonable alternatives to analyze in the EIR, and current efforts are focused on analyzing the alternatives' potential impacts on environmental resources. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as part of its permitting review under the Clean Water Act and Rivers and Harbors Act, started preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Field activities under the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for Soil Investigations in the Delta (including cone penetration tests, soil borings, and geophysical surveys) have been on hold during the winter season. DWR and the Delta Conveyance Design Construction Authority (DCA) are scheduled to begin 2021 activities during the week of March 14. DWR added a link to their public information website to help provide information to interested members of the public and will update a map weekly of the near-term planned explorations (<https://water.ca.gov/Programs/State-Water-Project/Delta-Conveyance/PublicInformation>). Additionally, DWR and the DCA are continuing work to obtain temporary entry for soil surveys on private lands. DWR is continuing to pursue permits for soil survey sites that fall under the jurisdiction of the Rivers and Harbors Act (Section 408). Investigations at any given site will not occur until property owners are notified and required permits and approvals for that site are obtained.

DWR continues to compile results from an Environmental Justice survey that was conducted to collect information on how low-income, minority, and other underserved communities rely on resources in the Delta. This information will help assess potential impacts and benefits to these communities. The results from this survey will be shared after the data has been collated and synthesized.

DWR conducted interviews with stakeholders in February and early March on the concept of incorporating a Community Benefits Program as part of the Delta Conveyance Project to help protect and enhance the cultural, recreational, natural resource and agricultural values of the Delta. DWR scheduled three public workshops: April 14, May 6, and May 25, and one tribal workshop on May 17, to have additional discussions and obtain feedback from a wider audience. Registration to participate in the workshops and additional information can be found on DWR's website (<https://water.ca.gov/Programs/State-Water-Project/Delta-Conveyance/Community-Benefits-Program>).

Joint Powers Authorities

During the March 18 DCA Board of Directors Meeting, the board received an update on monthly progress, with an anticipated end of year budget savings of approximately \$1 million for fiscal year 2020-2021. At the March DCA meeting, the board unanimously voted to amend the Management Partners Agreement for Executive Director Services transitioning the existing Executive Director Ms. Kathryn Mallon as a Senior Advisor and Mr. Graham Bradner to serve as the Executive Director on an initial interim basis effective April 1, 2021. Ms. Mallon conveyed to the board she wished to pursue other opportunities more closely related to her experience

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in traditional construction and project delivery. The entire board thanked her for her service and appreciated her willingness to remain onboard for the transition as a Senior Advisor. The DCA Board of Directors Meeting also included updates on planning from DWR and DCA Treasurer and Counsel reports.

There were no DCA Stakeholder Engagement Committee (SEC) meetings scheduled in March. The next scheduled SEC meeting is April 28, 2021.

The March 18 regularly scheduled meeting of the Delta Conveyance Finance Authority (DCFA) was cancelled. The next DCFA meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2021.

Sites Reservoir

In their March meetings, the Sites Project Authority Board (Authority Board) and the Sites Reservoir Committee (Reservoir Committee) approved various consulting agreement amendments and approved a new Accounts Payable Approval Policy to ensure timely and efficient payment of vendor and service providers' invoices. The Authority Board and Reservoir Committee also received a status update regarding a draft Sites Water Storage Policy and reviewed and commented on the proposed allocation of storage space in the reservoir to each Storage Partner based the final proposed formulaic approach of 1-acre-foot capacity share to 6.234 acre-feet of storage space. They also reviewed and commented on the development of the Sites Project Proforma 2.0, an updated project financial modeling tool for use by participants to evaluate long-term project costs and benefits.

Near-Term Delta Actions

Delta Stewardship Council

As reported in December 2020, the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) is conducting a climate change study for the Delta and Suisun Marsh as part of their *Delta Adapts: Creating a Climate Resilient Future* initiative. The study will help the Council assess specific climate risks and vulnerabilities in the Delta and, in coordination with stakeholders, develop adaptation strategies to address those vulnerabilities. The draft Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) portion of Delta Adapts analyzes the vulnerability of various asset types within the Delta from a number of climate stressors and hazards. The Council released its draft CCVA in January 2021 and began conducting scoping meetings for its Adaptation Strategy in late February 2021.

Regulatory Activities

As reported last month, staff co-organized and participated in the Delta Science Program's workshop titled, "Monitoring Steelhead Populations in The San Joaquin Basin". The workshop supports the Biological Opinion on Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP), which aims to develop a plan to monitor steelhead populations within the San Joaquin Basin and/or the San Joaquin River downstream of the confluence of the Stanislaus River, including steelhead and rainbow trout on non-project San Joaquin tributaries. Staff is currently working with the planning committee, including National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) on next steps and ideas for how to incorporate information learned from the workshop into a monitoring plan for steelhead in the San Joaquin Basin.

Science Activities

Staff is participating in a formal training on how to implement structured decision making (SDM) taught by the Compass Resource Management consulting company. The objective of the SDM process is to develop a common understanding among participating stakeholders about the following elements: (1) what could and could not be achieved with different management alternatives, (2) which trade-offs are acceptable, and (3) which uncertainties are most important. Technical fisheries experts from Metropolitan, SWC, DWR, USBR, NMFS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife are all participating in the training. The goal is to ensure that these experts, who are working together in a variety of Incidental Take Permit and Biological Opinion implementation actions, can organize their discussion and selection of management alternatives in a transparent manner through this SDM process.

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Staff co-authored a recently accepted publication in the journal *Ecotoxicology* titled, “Effects of dietary cypermethrin exposure on swimming performance and expression of lipid homeostatic genes in livers of juvenile Chinook salmon, *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*.” In the study, field relevant concentrations of the pyrethroid pesticide cypermethrin were exposed to Chinook salmon to evaluate the effects of the pesticide on salmon following dietary exposure. The study found that the pesticide exposure significantly altered the salmon fatty acid metabolic pathways suggesting impairments to the salmon nutritional status. The study was funded by Proposition 1 grant funding, and Metropolitan provided cost share funding and participated in the study.

Staff continued participating in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program (CSAMP), including participation on the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT). At the March 16 meeting, CAMT received updates on SWP and CVP operations forecast and dry year planning efforts, and on DWR plans to conduct a drought monitoring and synthesis study. CAMT also discussed comments on the draft CSAMP Delta Smelt Organizational Framework document and received a status update on the CDFW Biological Monitoring Survey Design Review process. Staff is coordinating with the SWC to develop and submit technical comments on these efforts.

In March, three scientific papers were published in the *San Francisco Estuary & Watershed Science* journal that reported on results from the CAMT Delta smelt entrainment studies (diversion of fish at the state and federal water project diversions in the South Delta). The purpose of the entrainment studies was to evaluate the factors affecting Delta smelt entrainment at the SWP and CVP facilities. The first paper identified hydrology, water clarity, Delta smelt distribution, and precipitation as significant factors affecting entrainment at the export facilities. The other two papers report on the development and results from a Behavioral Particle Tracking model used in conjunction with hydrodynamics to evaluate the potential effects of Delta smelt swimming behaviors on distribution and proportional entrainment losses. Many unknowns were identified as part of these studies, and overall, the researchers report on an improved framework for evaluating entrainment. CAMT will discuss these published studies and consider next steps. CAMT has representatives from state and federal agencies, public water agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Their work is directed by a policy group of the same entities.