



● Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

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

Detailed Report

Long-Term Delta Actions

Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)

A BDCP public meeting was held on June 20. The meeting topics included an update on the BDCP planning process, potential changes in conveyance facilities, and initial findings of an economic benefits analysis regarding the BDCP. Jerry Meral, Deputy Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency, indicated that the BDCP is changing as a result of input from the public. Key changes could include a reduction in the number of intakes for proposed conveyance facilities, relocation of a proposed forebay, accelerated investments in habitat restoration, and the adoption of a decision tree approach to establish operating criteria for new conveyance facilities.

A reduction in the number of proposed intakes from five to three is being considered, with a cumulative maximum capacity of 9,000 cubic-feet per second, to lessen impacts associated with construction and operation of the facility along the Sacramento River. The tunnels that would convey water to the existing State Water Project and Central Valley Project facilities in the South Delta would operate by gravity flow, resulting in lower electricity demands and fewer emissions than the pumped system previously considered.

Dr. David Sunding, a UC Berkeley professor and economist with the Brattle Group, presented findings of an economic benefits analysis of BDCP alternatives. The analysis, which is not yet complete, is aimed at assessing whether the benefits of the BDCP are sufficient to justify the costs to public water agencies that would receive water supplies from the project. It is also aimed at assessing whether the public benefits of recreation and Delta habitat restoration are sufficient to justify public expenditures as part of BDCP. The study quantifies the present value of economic benefits that would be expected to accrue to the water agencies investing in BDCP through 2050. Values are quantified in the areas of urban and agricultural water supply benefits (associated with avoiding future water shortages), water quality impacts, reduction in seismic risk, regulatory certainty, and recreation/public good. Dr. Sunding emphasized that the study is not a complete statewide cost-benefit analysis with indirect effects and does not consider impacts on areas such as Delta agriculture. Though the analysis is not yet complete, Dr. Sunding indicated that there would be direct benefits to the direct beneficiaries that exceed the costs.

Delta Stewardship Council (Council)

The sixth staff draft of the Delta Plan was released on May 14. The draft contains 14 regulatory policies and 68 recommendations. This is the last staff draft that will be produced. The next draft will be deemed a "Council" draft and will be used as the proposed project in a supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that will be released this summer. Public comments on the sixth staff draft of the Delta Plan were due June 13. Staff worked with other water agencies to provide written comments and suggested changes. The Council met on June 14 and 15 to review the sixth staff draft chapter-by-chapter, receive public comment, and provide direction to Council staff about what they would like to change in the draft. The Council will meet again June 28 and 29, when they are expected to finalize a series of changes that will become the Council's draft Delta Plan. Staff continues to meet with Council staff and coordinate with Association of California Water Agencies' Ag Urban Coalition to find ways to modify the Delta Plan to be more workable and meet the coequal goals.

Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

Near-Term Delta Actions

Habitat Restoration

Progress continued in June on the Lower Yolo Bypass tidal marsh restoration project, which is located in the lower Yolo Bypass just to the north of Liberty Island. This project could create over 1,000 acres of both salmon and smelt habitat benefits to meet the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service requirements in their respective biological opinions. Staff is working with the State and Federal Contractors Water Agency (SFCWA) and consultants to address the preparation of regulatory permits for the project. The consultant developed an initial work plan that provides an overview of the tasks anticipated for regulatory approvals. The tasks include existing data collection and review, approval process facilitation, regulatory permitting applications and documentation.

With oversight by SFCWA and its Project Manager, staff has been directly involved in the preparation of the Lower Yolo Project's administrative draft EIR. The revised schedule is for the Draft EIR to be released for public review in fall of 2012, with certification of the final EIR scheduled for December 2012. The estimated construction start date of this restoration project remains in the spring of 2013.

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)

On June 22, the State Water Board released a notice of public workshops and request for information to support their comprehensive (Phase 2) review and update of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan (Bay-Delta Plan). Phase 2 includes the review and potential modification of water quality objectives to protect fish and wildlife beneficial uses. The purpose of the workshops is to receive information and conduct discussions regarding scientific and technical basis for considering potential changes to the 2006 Bay-Delta Plan. The workshop schedule and topics include:

- Workshop 1, September 5 and 6, 2012: Ecosystem Changes and the Low Salinity Zone – including the effects of the low salinity zone on various estuarine species, the interaction of salinity with non-flow related factors, and the identification of modeling or other tools that can be used to measure and reasonably protect estuarine habitat;
- Workshop 2, September 18 and 19, and October 1, 2012: Bay-Delta Fishery Resources – including flow, cold water pool, habitat, water project operational constraints needed to reasonably protect pelagic species (including Delta smelt and longfin smelt), Central Valley steelhead, Sacramento River winter-run, Central Valley spring-run, Central Valley fall-run, and Central Valley late fall-run Chinook salmon, and the interaction of these issues with non-flow related factors; and
- Workshop 3, October 2 and 3, 2012: Analytical Tools for Evaluating the Water Supply, Hydrodynamic, and Hydropower Effects of the Bay-Delta Plan – including the water systems operation model, the Delta tidal flow and water quality models, the hydropower model, and others as applicable, together with results from applying these models to various scenarios.

Staff is working closely with state and federal water contractors to prepare for the upcoming State Water Board workshops that are designed to inform the Bay-Delta Plan update.

Delta Emergency Preparedness

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

The Department of Water Resources is scheduled to release their draft EPRRP reports for review in September 2012 and complete the final document by June 2013. Partner agencies are conducting their review of the draft reports and are soliciting input to the report through a working group of counties and state and federal agencies, emphasizing a unified emergency response.

Staff is continuing to coordinate with other agencies and consultants to evaluate the levee improvements along the emergency freshwater pathway. URS consultants are conducting a seismic analysis of East Bay Municipal Utility District levee improvements along the eastern levee of the emergency freshwater pathway. This analysis includes

Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

consultation with reclamation district engineers at Jones Track and Woodward Island, and with UC Davis researchers that have local and seismic experience in the Delta. Similarly, URS analysis of levee improvements along the western levee of the pathway at Bacon Island includes consultation with reclamation district engineers and academic experts. Reclamation district representatives at Bacon Island indicate that construction of levee toe berm improvements along the western levee of the emergency freshwater pathway could begin this summer.