



● Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to the Bay-Delta for December 2022.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Long-Term Delta Actions

Delta Conveyance

The public comment period for the Delta Conveyance Project (DCP) Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) closed on Friday, December 16. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) released the Draft EIR for public review and comment on July 27, 2022. No decisions will be made until the conclusion of the environmental review process, after consideration of and responses to public comments submitted on the Draft EIR and issuing a Final EIR. At that time, DWR will determine whether to approve the proposed project, an alternative, or no project.

On December 16, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) released the public Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the DCP ([SPK-2019-00899, Public Notice of Public Review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement \(DEIS\) for the Delta Conveyance Project, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Contra Costa, and Alameda Counties, CA > Sacramento District > Sacramento District Regulatory Public Notices \(army.mil\)](#)). The public comment period runs from December 16, 2022, to February 14, 2023. The USACE will hold three public meetings to receive comments from the public on the project and the draft document. The public meetings will be held virtually on Tuesday, January 10, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., Thursday, January 12, 2023, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and Wednesday, January 18, 2023, from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Affected federal, state, regional, and local agencies, Native American tribes, other interested private organizations, and the public are invited to participate.

Joint Powers Authorities

During the regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting on December 15, the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority Board of Directors approved to extend a resolution authorizing virtual Board and Committee meetings pursuant to AB 361.

The December 15 regularly scheduled Delta Conveyance Finance Authority meeting was cancelled.

Sites Reservoir

In their December Joint meetings, the Sites Project Authority Board and the Sites Reservoir Committee approved the actions for the 2023-2024 Proposed Sites Reservoir Test Pits, Fault Studies and Quarry Studies (Project), adopted the CEQA Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, adopted the associated Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program document, and approved the Project.

Near-Term Delta Actions

Regulatory Activities

On October 7, 2022, the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a proposed rule to list the San Francisco Bay-Delta distinct population segment of longfin smelt as an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act. Staff reviewed the proposed rule and worked with the State Water Contractors to develop and submit comments

Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

on December 6. Joint comments were submitted by the State Water Contractors and San Luis & Delta Mendota Water Authority.

Staff continued to participate in the collaborative science groups called for in the 2019 Biological Opinions (BiOp) for the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project, and in the 2020 Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for long-term operation of the SWP. In December, staff worked with DWR, the Delta Science Program, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to conduct an expert elicitation with researchers and state and local agency technical experts on contaminants in the San Francisco Estuary. The first round of the expert elicitation is evaluating potential negative effects such as increased or mobilized contaminants from management actions in the BiOp and ITP that may be implemented in the 2023 water year.

Ecosystem Restoration

The Yolo Bypass Salmonid Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Project, or Big Notch Project, is a joint state and federal project between DWR and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The project is a 30,000-acre floodplain habitat restoration and fish passage project in the Yolo Bypass that will provide essential benefits to native fish species, including threatened and endangered Chinook salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon. The Big Notch Project provides a critical point of entry back into the Sacramento River, allowing fish migrating upstream through the Yolo Bypass to continue their migration, and provides access to the Yolo Basin floodplain rearing habitat through the operable Big Notch gates for juvenile salmon and steelhead moving downstream to the Pacific Ocean. The Big Notch project construction is proceeding ahead of schedule. The intake channel is excavated and rocked, and the transport channel is excavated. Weather permitting, concrete is being poured this month. Focus will shift to construction of the head works structure and pedestrian bridge during the winter. Construction completion is scheduled for November 30, 2023, and may be completed sooner if the weather allows.

Quarterly Bay-Delta Science Update

Metropolitan's Bay-Delta Science Program is directed at supporting strong science for protecting the Bay-Delta environment, driving better management decisions, and supporting effective regulations. The following summary of Bay-Delta Science activities provides key highlights for the period October 1 to December 31, 2022.

Staff will continue to provide this report on a quarterly basis in the Bay Delta Management Report.

Bay-Delta Science Update, October - December 2022

Science Objective	Accomplishments
Collaborative Science	<p>Staff continued participating in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program with state and federal agencies, water agencies and the non-governmental organization environmental community. Key progress this quarter focused on efforts to facilitate recovery planning for Delta smelt and salmon.</p> <p>Reorienting to Salmonid Recovery Project – Staff efforts focused on completing Phase 2 of the project which included organizing and conducting three half-day workshops with different interest groups to identify how social, cultural, economic, and ecological interests related to salmonid recovery will be quantified and measured. The values identified in the workshops will feed into Phase 3 of the project, which begins at the end of December, and includes a structured decision-making process to identify, develop, model, and prioritize different actions to recover salmonids.</p> <p>Staff gave a presentation on the Reorienting to Salmonid Recovery Project to the Imported Water Committee in November that included a review of the project goals and progress to date.</p> <p>Delta Smelt Structured Decision Making Project – Staff continued to participate on the technical work group to conduct review and discussion of initial modeling results evaluating</p>

Board Report (Bay-Delta Management Report)

Science Objective	Accomplishments
	the effects of potential Delta smelt management actions, and develop portfolios of actions for analysis.
Science Investigations	<p>Staff continued to collaborate with university researchers, science experts and state and federal agencies to carry out science studies. Staff co-authored two scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals reporting on recent studies.</p> <p>Staff co-authored a scientific paper in the <i>Environmental Pollution</i> journal reporting a study evaluating the bioavailability of pesticides in juvenile Chinook salmon habitat in the Sacramento River watershed. The study was funded by a Prop 1 grant with cost-share from Metropolitan. The published study found that Chinook salmon exposed to contaminants found in floodplain habitats exhibited dysregulated metabolic processes and reduced swimming behavior with elevated temperature. Results suggest that floodplain habitats being developed to support salmon may need to account for contaminant effects, especially at higher temperatures.</p> <p>Staff also co-authored a scientific paper in the <i>San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science</i> journal, reporting on fish surveys conducted in 2019 and 2020 in ocean tributaries north of the San Francisco Estuary to look for longfin smelt larvae. The survey results confirm historic surveys detecting the presence of longfin smelt and confirming that the smaller estuaries are used actively but intermittently by longfin smelt.</p>
Innovation	Staff worked with researchers from UC Davis to conduct the Delta Smelt Pilot Propagation study. The study is using impoundments on Bouldin Island to conduct a proof-of-concept study by placing hatchery Delta smelt in enclosures in the impoundments and monitoring their condition. The results for the first deployment of hatchery Delta smelt are promising, and the Delta smelt are still doing well after three weeks, suggesting that culture in larger impoundments is feasible with limited management during the winter. Future work will include repeating the experiment in January to verify the results and inform further studies in the next few years.
Delta Science Community	Staff participated in Delta Science Program sponsored workshops to inform the development of a Delta region specific harmful algal bloom monitoring strategy, and to build relationships between collaborative science groups, Delta communities, and social science communities of practice to improve research, access to environmental data, community value, and decision making.