THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Report

Office of the General Manager

- **Bay-Delta Management Report**

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to the Bay-Delta for January and February 2022

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. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), as part of its permitting review under the Clean Water Act and Rivers and Harbors Act, continues its preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. DWR and USACE are planning to release draft environmental documents for public review in mid-2022.

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 temporarily paused for the winter but will continue in the spring. DWR and the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) are continuing work to obtain temporary entry for additional soil surveys on private lands and permits for soil survey sites that fall under the jurisdiction of the Rivers and Harbors Act. 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.

As part of DWR's efforts to work with the community to develop a Community Benefits Program, DWR conducted a case study workshop on November 17, 2021. The workshop provided an opportunity to learn about other programs that have been implemented in other parts of the country. Three panelists spoke about the insights and lessons learned from implementing other programs and answered questions from the public. The meeting materials and videos (in English and Spanish) are available on DWR's website (Community Benefits Program (ca.gov)).

In February, DWR posted new planning and outreach materials to its Delta Conveyance Project website. These materials include a Public Outreach and Community Engagement Plan for 2022 that outlines ongoing public outreach and engagement activities (DCP Public Outreach and Community Engagement Plan for 2022 (ca.gov)). Other new materials include digital articles highlighting information from informational webinars on operations, climate change, environmental justice and fisheries held in 2021, and a new Delta Conveyance Deep Dive video on fisheries. These materials can be found on the project website (Delta Conveyance (ca.gov)).

Joint Powers Authorities

During the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) Special Board of Director's Meetings on January 14 and February 17, the DCA extended a resolution authorizing virtual board and committee meetings pursuant to AB 361.

At its regularly scheduled January 20 DCA Board of Director's meeting, the Board of Directors approved a resolution to sunset the Stakeholder Engagement Committee (SEC). This direction recognized that the SEC was formed to solicit and incorporate stakeholder feedback for the DCA's conceptual design work, and this work has now been largely provided to the DWR environmental team. The DCA held a final SEC meeting in December to review its general work to date, its input in the conceptual design, and future outreach efforts by the DCA and

DWR. In addition to this action, DCA staff recognized the SEC's valuable participation in representing their communities as part of the DCA's commitment to community outreach.

The DCA Board also approved an increase to the adopted fiscal year 2021/22 budget from $23.5 million to $24.48 million. The revised budget incorporates amounts remaining from the final portion of the underspend from the fiscal year 2020/21 budget in the amount of $978,396.

During the Delta Conveyance Finance Authority (DCFA) regularly scheduled January and February meetings, the DCFA adopted similar resolutions in both meetings to continue remote teleconference meetings pursuant to the Brown Act Section 54953(e) for meetings of the DCFA.

Sites Reservoir

The public comment period for the Sites Reservoir Project Revised Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS was extended to January 28.

In their January meetings, the Sites Project Authority Board and the Sites Reservoir Committee approved several administrative amendments to the standard consulting contracts with the Executive Director and Authority Agents related to indemnification and limitation of liability.

Near-Term Delta Actions

Regulatory Activities

Staff continued to participate in the collaborative groups called for in the 2019 Biological Opinions 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, to address science needs and inform management and operation of the water projects. The Delta Coordination Group is developing science and monitoring plans for planned operations of the water projects and implementation of the summer-fall habitat actions in 2022. The technical workgroup charged with developing a Juvenile Production Estimate (JPE) for Spring-run Chinook salmon, a requirement of the ITP, is currently focused on developing performance metrics to evaluate objectives related to development of a JPE. Work also continued on the development of a monitoring program for steelhead populations in the San Joaquin River basin, a requirement of the Biological Opinion. The technical workgroup developed specific hypotheses to guide monitoring and submitted a draft outline of the monitoring plan to state and federal agencies for review.

Staff participated in the Interagency Ecological Program's Winter-Run Chinook Salmon Project Work Team (Winter-Run PWT). On January 14, the Winter-Run PWT submitted a letter to the National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife formally transmitting the forecast for the number of juvenile winter-run Chinook salmon that are expected to enter the Delta, which in turn sets the allowable take at the water project facilities.

Science Activities

In February, a scientific paper published in the Environmental DNA journal titled "The artemis package for environmental DNA analysis in R" (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/edn3.277) reported on results from a study to develop a statistical programming package named artemis to evaluate environmental DNA (eDNA) data from environmental field samples. The eDNA surveys provide an indirect, noninvasive, affordable and rapid way to detect organisms in the environment. The study was funded through a collaboration of Metropolitan, the State Water Contractors, and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The artemis tool represents the first open source models developed specifically to design eDNA detection surveys and analyze data from eDNA surveys in a tidal system like the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. This publication will support wider acceptance for the use of eDNA monitoring by regulatory agencies. The artemis model is already being applied locally and nationwide for a variety of projects including restoration, invasive species monitoring, and listed species monitoring. Use of eDNA surveys could potentially prove beneficial to improve how water project operations are managed efficiently for both environmental protection and water supply reliability.

Staff continued participating in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program (CSAMP), including participation on the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT). In January and February, activity focused on the two projects addressing improvement of Delta smelt and salmon. The technical working group for the Delta Smelt Structured Decision Making project is currently refining portfolios of management actions to benefit Delta smelt and is planning the analysis of the portfolios. The CSAMP Policy Group and CAMT were briefed on the portfolios and provided input. The portfolios of management actions will be evaluated using a combination of quantitative life-cycle models and expert judgement to characterize predicted Delta smelt outcomes. The costs and benefits of management approaches will be evaluated as well once the management approaches are refined. CAMT discussions in February also focused on the CAMT monitoring assessment effort and scoping the next phase to assess and document the objectives of CSAMP members with respect to monitoring.

Staff continued collaboration with non-government environmental organizations and public water agencies on the CSAMP Salmon Recovery Initiative. CAMT and the CSAMP Policy Group received briefings in January from the science team leading the project. The briefings addressed the objectives and metrics developed in Phase 1 to help define salmon recovery in quantitative terms and the progress for scheduling outreach to stakeholders. In February, the project team started presentations to stakeholders throughout the Central Valley watershed, including tribes, to make them aware of this effort and ask for their participation in Phase 2 of the process. Phase 2 is focused on engaging with stakeholders to solicit actions planned for salmon recovery, and in phase 3 the actions will be analyzed to help determine which actions may best achieve salmonid recovery while meeting other objectives (e.g. cost, water supply, agricultural production, etc.).

In January, the State Water Contractors (SWC) released their Science Plan (State-Water-Contractors-Science-Plan_FINAL.pdf (swc.org)). The purpose of the SWC Science Plan is to communicate in a transparent manner SWC-funded science efforts that are part of an overall program. The SWC Science Plan lays out the goals and objectives, management questions, and research priorities and processes to ensure that funded science projects are reflective of best available science. Staff provided input to the SWC Science Plan and continue to work with the SWC staff to develop partnerships on science projects.

Staff continued work on the Delta smelt and Native Species Preservation Project, which will utilize Delta island properties currently owned by Metropolitan to support Delta smelt supplementation efforts. Monitoring studies initiated in October 2021 will characterize water quality and biological factors in the existing impoundments on the Delta islands properties. In December, additional funding was approved by the SWC to continue the monitoring studies in spring and summer of 2022. Staff is continuing to meet with state and federal agencies, non-government organizations, and university researchers to develop partnerships and scope out the next phases of the project.

Delta Emergency Preparedness

Delta Levee Stability and Monitoring Efforts

The Delta Levee Stability and Monitoring efforts provide support to the Delta Islands Instrumentation and Monitoring Assessment and Bouldin Island Pilot Project to ensure integrity of freshwater conveyance and Delta Island levees, and to support real time levees monitoring of Delta Islands and broader Delta regional levees. Metropolitan's consultant installed remote erosion sensors on Bouldin Island's westside levee. Additional reception antenna extenders were also installed on previously installed levee sensor probes that measure changes in soil moisture and pressures in zones above high-water tides. Real time monitoring is collecting data that will be analyzed as a part of the evaluation process. The overall progress for the draft levee stability assessment report will be available in the summer of 2022.