



● Bay-Delta Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to the Bay-Delta for February 2023.

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) closed on December 16, 2022. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) received more than 700 unique comment letters with over 6,000 individual comments. DWR is currently working to organize the comments and develop responses. The Final EIR is expected at the end of 2023. It will include responses to all substantive comments on the Draft EIR and edits to the Draft EIR, as appropriate, to respond to the comments.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released the public Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for DCP in December 2022, and comments are due on March 16, 2023. The Draft EIS has some similarities to DWR's Draft EIR but also some key differences. DWR prepared a summary of the similarities and differences that is available on the DWR website (https://water.ca.gov/-/media/DWR-Website/Web-Pages/Programs/Delta-Conveyance/Environmental-Planning/DWR_DCP_DRAFT-EIS_FS_Final_Dec-2022.pdf).

Joint Powers Authorities

During the regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting on February 16, the Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) Board of Directors adopted a resolution commending and thanking Director Richard Atwater for his service on the DCA Board. Director Atwater was instrumental to the creation of the DCA, its success to date, and its expected continued development. Director Miguel Luna is the new Metropolitan representative on the DCA Board. The DCA Board also approved a resolution extending the authorization for virtual board and committee meetings and received the monthly board report information item.

The February 16 regularly scheduled Delta Conveyance Finance Authority meeting was cancelled.

Sites Reservoir

In their February joint meetings, the Sites Project Authority Board (Authority Board) and the Sites Reservoir Committee (Reservoir Committee) conducted the 2023 election of officers. The current committee and workgroup designations and participation was confirmed. The Reservoir Committee and Authority Board also approved the 2023 federal and state legislative priorities for the project.

Near-Term Delta Actions

Regulatory Activities

On February 13, in response to Governor Newsom's [Executive Order \(EO\) N-3-23](#) to build water resilience amid climate-driven weather extremes, both DWR and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) submitted a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP) to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board). This TUCP requested approval to temporarily modify the most-westerly X2 (2 parts per thousand isohaline at Port Chicago) compliance location specified in their water right permits for February and March to the next upstream compliance location at Chipps Island. Without the TUCP, DWR and USBR would be required to cut Delta exports and/or release stored water from upstream reservoirs to provide an estimated 700,000 acre-feet of Delta

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outflow required to maintain the X2 at Port Chicago. On February 14, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) submitted a letter to the State Board identifying no unreasonable impacts to fish and wildlife resulting from the TUCP. On February 22, the State Board conditionally approved the changes within the TUCP through March 31, 2023.

Staff coordinated with the State Water Contractors to develop and implement a special environmental DNA monitoring program, from January 20 to February 3, to determine if Delta smelt were present in the South Delta turbidity field, and to evaluate the effects of the 2019/20 Biological Opinion (BiOp) and Incidental Take Permit (ITP) Early Winter Pulse Protection Action. The monitoring did not detect Delta smelt in the south Delta, suggesting that the action may not always be needed during high turbid conditions. The monitoring results may inform management of turbidity to reduce the entrainment of Delta smelt.

Staff continued to participate in the collaborative science groups to inform implementation of the 2019/20 BiOp and ITP. In February, staff conducted the second Contaminant Expert Elicitation with DWR to inform the North Delta Foodweb Subsidy Action. The action includes diverting either agricultural return water or Sacramento River water into the Yolo Bypass floodplain to produce food for Delta smelt. The expert elicitation concluded that implementing the action using Sacramento River water is likely more beneficial than agricultural return water.

Science Activities

Staff worked with researchers from UC Davis to initiate the second deployment of the Delta Smelt Pilot Propagation Study on Bouldin Island. The purpose of the study is to evaluate whether the impoundments on Metropolitan islands can be leveraged to conduct Delta Smelt Supplementation Research. The first deployment from November 21, 2022, to January 5, 2023, successfully demonstrated that it is possible. The second deployment is to repeat and verify the results and test conditions during the warmer period of March 2023.

Staff continued participating in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program, including participation on the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT). The CAMT Salmon Technical Working Group is conducting a review of recent science concerning the application of life cycle and decision support models for salmon management in the Delta. Staff is coordinating with the working group to draft a report summarizing the findings of this effort.

Phase 3 of the Reorienting to Salmonid Recovery project started this month and includes developing an agreed-upon suite of priorities for salmonid recovery. This phase will use an iterative approach with participants and modelers to review and refine recovery scenarios. Staff is organizing intensive workshops for participants to work in groups using web applications developed to evaluate model output sensitivity to different salmonid management scenarios and understand the trade-offs associated with different suites of recovery actions. Workshops will be held March to December 2023.

Staff participated in a decision analysis tools training through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center to develop analytical skills by gaining a greater practical understanding of the most common quantitative methods. These skills help support evaluation of the consequences and tradeoffs among alternatives of any decision problem.

Delta Island Activities

Staff submitted a \$20 million concept proposal to the Delta Conservancy's Nature Based Solutions: Wetland Restoration Grant Program. The concept proposal is for a three-year project that will convert approximately 4,500 acres on Webb Tract to a mosaic of managed flooded wetlands and rice fields to stop and/or reverse ongoing organic soil subsidence, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, provide environmental benefits by contributing to augmentation of the Delta pelagic food web, and generate an income from carbon credits generated from the proposed flooded wetlands and lease income from the proposed rice fields. The proposed project has been selected to move forward in the grant process. Staff will introduce the project at Metropolitan's March One Water and Stewardship Committee meeting. The Delta Conservancy Board will consider the Webb Tract grant application at an upcoming Board meeting anticipated in summer or fall 2023.