



## ● Bay-Delta Management Report

### Summary

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

### Purpose

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Informational

### Detailed Report

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#### 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 conducted the second of four technical webinars to inform the public and interested stakeholders about the current progress related to preparation of the Draft EIR. The second webinar was presented on August 3 and focused on fishery resources. The presentation included an overview and environmental setting, the fish species evaluated, migration patterns, fish life cycles, and methods being used for evaluating potential impacts. Upcoming webinars on climate change and environmental justice will continue to feature presentations from technical staff about the approaches, methodologies and assumptions to be used in conducting impact analyses in the Draft EIR. All webinars are recorded and will be made available on DWR's website ([Informational Webinars \(ca.gov\)](https://www.water.ca.gov/informational-webinars)). Information about impact findings and specific mitigation measures is not available at this time but will be included in future outreach efforts following publication of the public Draft EIR. More information regarding the webinars is available on DWR's website.

##### Joint Powers Authorities

There was no Delta Conveyance Design and Construction Authority (DCA) meeting or affiliated DCA Stakeholder Engagement Committee meeting conducted in August.

The Delta Conveyance Finance Authority met on August 19 and approved the investment policy for fiscal year 2021/22.

##### Sites Reservoir

In their August meetings, the Sites Project Authority Board (Authority Board) and the Sites Reservoir Committee (Reservoir Committee) accepted the Financial Auditor's Report, which found no significant or reportable findings. The anticipated August release of the Amended Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be behind schedule due to additional review of the Aquatic Biological Resources chapter by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW). These efforts are expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

#### Near-Term Delta Actions

##### Regulatory Activities

Staff continued to participate in the collaborative groups called for in the 2019 Biological Opinions (BiOp) for the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP), 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. In August, staff continued work with state and federal agencies to develop a Juvenile Production Estimate (JPE) for Spring-run Chinook salmon as a condition as required by the ITP. The group finalized the problem statement, which is: "What is the best way to estimate juvenile production of spring-run chinook that

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supports different management needs (primarily measuring and managing take of spring-run) and permit requirements?” Current efforts are focused on developing objectives and performance metrics by having focused discussions on priorities for the group (e.g. costs, minimizing impacts to water project operation, minimizing loss of fish when operating monitoring equipment) and specific metrics that can be used consistently to estimate and report the anticipated consequences of different monitoring alternatives to develop a JPE.

Staff also worked with state and federal agencies on development of a monitoring program for steelhead as a condition of the 2019 BiOp on Long-Term Operation of the CVP and SWP. The monitoring plan would encompass 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. The group is drafting an outline for the monitoring plan, discussing the spatial and temporal scope the plan will cover, and identifying required management actions that need to be monitored.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is currently conducting a Species Status Assessment (SSA) for the San Francisco Bay-Delta Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the longfin smelt, which will help inform their decision-making process under the Endangered Species Act. To support the SSA, USFWS held a workshop on August 27 to focus on new emerging longfin smelt science, address areas of scientific uncertainty, and foster expert elicitation that will help the USFWS and the CDFW complete the SSA with the most current scientific data and information. Staff participated in the workshop and provided input on Metropolitan’s longfin smelt research that can be integrated into the SSA.

### Science Activities

A recent publication in the *San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science* journal, titled “Use of the SmeltCam as an Efficient Fish-Sampling Alternative within the San Francisco Estuary” reported on a study funded by Metropolitan and other partners to evaluate the efficiency of a new fish sampling device. The SmeltCam is an imaging apparatus developed as a potential sampling alternative to long-term trawling gear surveys within the San Francisco Estuary, to reduce handling stress on sensitive species like the Delta smelt. Researchers with the U.S. Geological Survey tested the efficiency of the SmeltCam by conducting trawls for Northern Anchovy as a surrogate for Delta smelt. They found that the SmeltCam had greater retention than traditional trawls and that turbidity did not affect the SmeltCam’s retention efficiency.

Staff co-authored a paper with UC Davis researchers titled “Toxic Meals for Seabirds and Seals: Monitoring Mercury in the San Francisco Bay” in the *Frontiers for Young Minds* journal <https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2021.611288>. The article targets elementary to high school level readers and explores the risks of mercury to aquatic life in the San Francisco Estuary as well as to humans. Staff from External Affairs also contributed graphics for the article.

Staff continued efforts to develop studies to assist in preserving Delta smelt and evaluating existing ponds on Metropolitan’s Delta Island properties to assess the suitability of the ponds for Delta smelt research. Development of studies on Metropolitan’s Delta Islands have received positive technical feedback from state and federal agencies involved in the Supplementation of Delta smelt. Board approval was directed to implement surveys to determine the suitability of conducting those studies on the Metropolitan Delta Islands. Staff also participated in a tour of Bouldin Island with Reclamation staff to discuss potential collaboration regarding Delta smelt supplementation, waterfowl, and salmon habitat.

Staff also continued participating in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program (CSAMP), including participation on the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT). At the August 17 meeting, CAMT discussions included a progress update on the Delta smelt Structured Decision-Making project, which included discussion of the pre-feasibility analysis of potential Delta smelt management actions and identification of actions to carry forward to the next step to evaluate estimated effects of the actions. CAMT also received a progress report on the CDFW Fish Monitoring Survey Re-Design project. This project includes the evaluation of five long-term CDFW pelagic fish monitoring studies conducted in the Bay-Delta. The objective of the project is to improve utility and efficiency and reduce redundancy of the monitoring surveys. The Design Team conducting the evaluation integrated the datasets for the five monitoring studies and is in the process of analyzing catch

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efficiency, survey designs, and regional abundance calculations. The Design Team also developed three pilot study options to evaluate and modify sampling approaches for the 2021/22 Fall Midwater Trawl Survey. Staff is reviewing the Design Team progress report and coordinating with other water agencies to develop comments.