



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – October 2016

The Sonoma County Water Agency is continually planning and implementing the Russian River Biological Opinion requirements. The following project updates provide a brief synopsis of current work. For more detailed information about these activities, please visit www.sonomacountywater.org.

Fish Flow Project

On August 19, the Water Agency released the Environmental Impact Report for the Fish Habitat Flows and Water Rights Project. Open House workshops were held on August 22 (Cloverdale) and on August 24 (Monte Rio) and public hearing was held on September 13, in Santa Rosa.

In response to public comments, Directors Carrillo and Gore proposed that the public comment period be extended and additional hearings be added. On October 4, the Board of Directors will consider an item to extend the Fish Flow hearing date to February 14, 2017 (a total of 180 days) and to add public hearings in Cloverdale (November 16) and Guerneville (November 17), both at 6 p.m.

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project

- Miles 2 and 3: Construction is underway on 0.6 miles of creek downstream of the Truett Hurst Winery and on a 0.3 mile reach downstream of the Westside Road Bridge. Water Agency Staff are working with property owners to finalize designs and right-of-way agreements for remaining Mile 2 and 3 sites planned for construction in 2017.
- Miles 4-6: Planning, preliminary field investigation and design are under way for Miles 4 - 6.
- The US Army Corps is using information from Mile 2-6 to complete two feasibility studies that should pave the way for federal funding. The first Army Corps study under the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) will help complete Miles 2 and 3. A draft CAP study was recently completed and recommends Army Corps construction of reach 4a (total length 0.4 miles) at a total federal cost of \$3.28 million. The second Army Corps effort for Mile 4-6 planning, called a General Investigation (GI) Ecosystem Restoration study, has less funding restrictions and should be completed by 2018.

Fish Monitoring

In September, Water Agency biologists sampled juvenile fish throughout Dry Creek. Video, sonar, and tag detection equipment has been installed near the mouth of Dry Creek, at the Healdsburg fish ladder, and in the new Mirabel fish ladder to count returning adult fish. To date, no upstream migrating salmon have been detected. The fall migration typical peaks between mid-October and mid-November. Monitoring also is underway in the estuary, including monthly seining.

Mirabel Screen and Fish Ladder Replacement

Major construction activities are complete. Testing is ongoing on the new screens; and interpretive signs are being designed for the viewing gallery. The project will be officially complete sometime in the fall, with an opening ceremony and tour slated for late October/early November.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

- The 2016 Lagoon Management Period began on May 15 and ends on October 15.

- So far this management season, the mouth of the Russian River has closed four times:
 - May 31: An outlet channel was implemented on June 7, but scoured open later that day.
 - June 15: An outlet channel was implemented on June 27, which scoured open that evening.
 - July 1: The estuary self-breached on July 12.
 - September 11: As of September 28, the estuary remained closed, with the jetty blocking access to possible management activities.
- During the past two years, studies were conducted to determine if and how the historic Goat Rock State Park jetty impacts the formation of the barrier beach and lagoon water surface elevation. Comments have been received on the draft report, and a final report will be released in the fall.

Interim Flow Changes

The Water Agency filed a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP) with the State Water Board in order to comply with the Biological Opinion flow requirements. The State Water Board issued a TUC order in May. The order is currently being implemented.

Public Outreach, Reporting & Legislation

- The Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Bulletin was distributed in August.
- Outreach continues to be focused on the Fish Flow DEIR, including publicizing the availability of the document, community workshops and hearings.
- Planning is underway for the opening of the fish ladder and viewing gallery (late October/early November).



Russian River estuary with closed mouth, September 26, 2016. Note that the jetty blocks access for equipment from the Goat Rock beach State Park parking lot.