

Implementation of the Biological Opinion for Russian River Water Supply, Flood Control Operations & Channel Maintenance

National Marine Fisheries Service
October 29, 2009



Winter 2008/2009 adult salmon returns have been abysmal

- NMFS Science Center reports 2008/2009 adult coho returns are down approximately 90% since winter 2005/2006 for most California watersheds
- Chinook salmon returns very low last year with fishery closure.
- There is hope for this year

Project Elements Addressed:

- Operations at Warm Springs Dam (WSD) and Coyote Valley Dam (CVD)
 - Flood Control Operations
 - Water supply releases from dams
- Water level management of estuary at Jenner
- Modifications to D1610 Russian River flows
- Fish Hatchery Operations at WSD & CVD
- Water Diversion operations by SCWA
- Ongoing Channel Maintenance by SCWA and MCRRFCD

15 year process with many milestones:

- Mitigate impacts of high flows in Dry Creek
 - 5 trib restoration projects due in 3 yrs;
 - Grape Creek habitat restoration (phase 1)✓
 - Dry Creek mainstem enhancement starts Year 5
 - Dry Creek Tech Advisory Committee
 - 6 meetings with landowners
 - Landowners want expedited process
 - Interfluve designing mainstem enhancements
 - Effort on track, authorization for Corps funding sought

- Modify estuary water level mgmt practices at Jenner

- Objective: freshwater lagoon providing good summer salmonid rearing habitat. Deeper freshwater.
- SCWA developed good alternative water level mgmt plan for sandbar breaching
- Implementation delayed over concerns of closed estuary on harbor seals and sea lions.
 - SCWA applied for Marine Mammal Protection Act permit requiring NEPA analysis
 - Federal Register announcement allowing public comment imminent
 - Monitoring ongoing

- **Improve salmonid rearing habitat by reducing summer flows in Russian River via modification of D1610**

- Purpose: improve habitat in upper Russian (above Cloverdale), and reduce estuary inflow to promote closed lagoon mgmt.
 - SCWA petitioned SWRCB for change in D1610v 6-8 year process
 - Temporary Urgency Change Petition needed for summer 2010 and succeeding years
 - Opportunity for study of recreational and water quality effects and adaptive management of estuary breaching

Summer 2009 changes to D1610 were not due to the Russian River Biological Opinion.

Reduced summer flows in 2009 were due to low rainfall and very low storage in Lake Mendocino last winter.

- **Improve hatchery management**

- Important objectives: improved genetics management and field monitoring
 - Stimulus bill provided funding for 4 years of back logged studies of steelhead genetics and genetics mgmt of coho broodstock program, \$700k
 - Improved rearing facilities at WSD
 - Field monitoring of coho broodstock program and future coho genetics mgmtv

- **Implement Fisheries monitoring**

- SCWA implementing ongoing fisheries monitoring at Mirabel Wohler
- SCWA implementing fisheries, water quality, macroinvertebrate, and pinniped monitoring in estuary
- SCWA conducting early, proactive fisheries monitoring in Dry Creek to resolve sampling methodology

- **Additional Ongoing efforts**

- Turbidity monitoring and study of CVD
 - Study plans in progress
- Flow Ramping study at CVD
 - Study plan not yet completed by Corps
- Upgrade of Water diversion screen at Mirabel
 - SCWA implementation ongoing with good progress

- The Russian River Biological Opinion is NOT a Recovery Plan for endangered or threatened species

- ESA recovery plans address much more than the issues covered by this opinion
- Public draft of coho recovery plan due 1st week December
- DFG has a state recovery plan for coho salmon

Recovery plans address road impacts, timber harvest, agricultural practices, gravel mining, other watersheds, etc.