



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – December 2012

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.

Dry Creek Demonstration Project

- Construction is completed at the Quivira Vineyards and Winery segment of the demonstration project. This component includes (1) a 300-foot long backwater channel, (2) placement of approximately 15 large wood structures composed of nearly 130 large logs, root wads and 560 tons of boulders, and (3) removal of invasive plant species and replanting with native species. These changes will provide much needed winter refuge habitat for young endangered coho and steelhead salmon. **See photo on following page!**
- Construction plans, right-of-way negotiations and preparation of a construction bid package are underway for the remainder of the one-mile demonstration project.
- The US Army Corps of Engineers demonstration project on property it owns below Warm Springs Dam is scheduled for construction in 2013.

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement

- Site identification, outreach to landowners and design consultant selection is underway for the second and third miles of habitat enhancement.
- The Water Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Fish & Game and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are working with consultants, ESSA, to develop clear success measures for habitat enhancement. The plan should be completed in early 2013.

Tributary Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Projects

- The Grape Creek passage project (creating fish passage through a box culvert) construction is complete. Sotoyome Resource Conservation District is managing the project for the Water Agency. **See photo!**
- Construction on the Wallace Creek project (the final tributary project) has been stalled due to lack of easement with one landowner. Other options are being pursued.
- During the summer season, thousands of juvenile steelhead and coho were counted and released in migrant traps in the Russian River, at Mirabel, in Dry Creek, Mark West Creek and Dutch Bill Creek. Final counts will be available later this year.

Mirabel Screen and Fish Ladder Replacement

- The Water Agency received a \$255,000 California Department of Fish and Game Fishery Restoration Grant for design of the project. The 90% design is anticipated in early 2013. An Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration are anticipated to be released on December 10.
- The Department of Fish and Game's Peer Review Committee met on September 26th to discuss and score the project for its applicability for grant funds. The grant announcement is expected in early 2013.
- The inflatable dam was lowered November 21-23. While final numbers are being verified, the Chinook salmon count is in excess of 6,300, breaking previous records.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

- The 2012 Lagoon Management Period ended on October 15. The estuary closed briefly during the 2012 management period, but there were no opportunities to implement the outlet channel. Biological and water quality monitoring took place throughout the Lagoon Management Period.
- A study of the jetty is underway. The purpose of the study is to determine if and how it impacts the formation of the sand bar (barrier beach) and lagoon water surface elevation. Field investigations have been stalled, due to a lack of permit from the California Coastal Commission.

Fish Flow Project

Work is occurring internally on the preparation of the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Fish Habitat Flows and Water Rights Project. The EIR is being prepared by Water Agency staff, with assistance from consultants on some areas of impact analysis. A draft EIR is anticipated to be released in 2013.

Interim Flow Changes

- The 2012 Temporary Urgency Change order period ended on October 15. Work is underway to prepare the fisheries, water quality and water use efficiency reports required under the order.

Public Outreach & Reporting

- The Public Policy Facilitating Committee meets at 9 a.m. on Thursday, December 20 for its annual progress update on implementation of the Biological Opinion.
- ABC Channel 7 did story on Dry Creek and Chinook salmon on November 23.
- The annual Biological Opinion Report (required by NMFS) is anticipated to be released by year end.



Backwater channel, with willow "wall."



New weir at Grape Creek, at bridge at West Dry Creek Road