



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – August 2015

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 Habitat Enhancement and Demonstration Project

- The draft Environmental Impact Report for miles two through six of habitat enhancement was released on July 11. Comments are due by 5 p.m. August 24. A public hearing will be held at 10 a.m., August 11, at the Board of Supervisors chambers.
- Site identification, environmental studies and topographic surveys are underway for the second and third miles of habitat enhancement. Two firms, Interfluve and ESA PWA, are designing the second and third miles of habitat enhancement. Water Agency staff are in the process of meeting with landowners to receive input on the 30% designs.
- Three firms were selected for design of miles four through six of habitat enhancement: Interfluve, ESA-PWA and Cardno.

Fish Monitoring

In March, downstream migrant traps were installed at Austin Creek, Dutch Bill Creek, Mark West Creek, and at Dry Creek. Due to low flows in the creeks, all the traps but Dry Creek have been removed. Monthly beach seining is occurring at multiple locations throughout the Russian River estuary.

Mirabel Screen and Fish Ladder Replacement

Construction of the Mirabel Fish Passage Improvement Project is proceeding, with concrete being poured to create the viewing gallery. Because construction will continue through the summer, the contractor installed a temporary (coffer) dam at Wohler Bridge to create a backwater pool in order to meet projected summer water demands.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

- The 2015 Lagoon Management Period began on May 15. The lagoon management plan has been approved and all permits received. The barrier beach closed on May 29 and opened on its own on June 14. Due to the beach formation, there was no access for equipment, so the Water Agency was unable to implement an outlet channel.
- Field investigations of the jetty are complete. In 2014, monitoring wells were installed and other tests were conducted. The purpose of the studies is to determine if and how the jetty impacts the formation of the barrier beach and lagoon water surface elevation. Consultants are currently writing the report which is expected to be released in August. Biological and water quality monitoring is ongoing.

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 early Fall 2015.

Interim Flow Changes

On May 1, the State Water Resources Quality Control Board issued a Temporary Urgency Change Order for Russian River flows. The change was requested by the Water Agency to preserve water in Lake Mendocino. Within a few days of the order being issued, the Water Agency was informed by PG&E of its pending request to reduce diversions from the Eel River through its Potter Valley Project, as a result of the drought. The reduction represents a loss of about 30-100 acre-feet of water per day. To preserve water in the lake, the Water Agency went back to the State Water Board to request additional reductions in releases from Lake Mendocino; on June 17, the State Water Board issued an amendment to the TUC. As a result, the minimum flow requirement in the upper river is 25 cfs and 50 cfs in the lower river.

Public Outreach, Reporting & Legislation

- The annual Estuary Community Meeting was held on June 11 in Monte Rio, with about 50 people attending. The meeting covered this year's lagoon management plan, 2014 water quality observations and the jetty study. Immediately following the estuary meeting, the Water Agency held a meeting to discuss summer flows.
- The annual Dry Creek Community meeting will be held in late fall. In August, an informational flyer will be sent to Dry Creek residents updating them on the project.
- WAC and TAC members are invited to view construction of the fishway improvement project on Wednesday, August 26 at 4:00 p.m., prior to the Grand Opening of the new water education facility (5:30 p.m.).



Construction at the Mirabel Fishway Improvement Project, July 20