



## **Russian River Biological Opinion Update – February 2011**

The Sonoma County Water Agency is continually planning and implementing the requirements spelled out in the Russian River Biological Opinion. To better communicate the progress and timeline of this work, the Water Agency has provided the below outline of project updates. For more detailed information about these activities, please visit [www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org).

### **Dry Creek Demonstration Project**

- Property owners in the demonstration reach met with Inter-Fluve consultants and Water Agency staff to discuss specific enhancements on their property. The 60% design document is anticipated in March. Discussions with landowners regarding access and construction have begun, and permitting requests to regulatory agencies will be made this spring.
- An Initial Study environmental document on the demonstration project will be available for public review by March.

### **Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Study & Bypass Pipeline Study**

- The Dry Creek habitat enhancement study is proceeding in parallel with demonstration project work. The study is anticipated to be completed in Summer 2011.
- The Dry Creek bypass pipeline draft feasibility study is anticipated to be released in March.
- 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 by July 2011.
- Three creek restoration projects are slated for construction this summer and fall: Crane Creek, Grape Creek, and Wallace Creek – all in the Dry Creek watershed.

### **Wohler Pond Modification Project**

- The National Marine Fisheries Service has approved design plans and the Water Agency has received all construction permits. Project implementation will begin in early summer 2011.

### **Mirabel Screen and Fish Ladder Replacement**

- The Water Agency applied for California Department of Fish and Game Fishery Restoration Grant Funds to assist with design of the fish ladder component of the project. The Water Agency expects to hear about the status of the application this month and is waiting to proceed until then. Any work initiated prior to the receipt of grant funds cannot be used as match.

### **Russian River Estuary Management Project**

- The Water Agency has completed 2010 fisheries, water quality and invertebrate monitoring. Monitoring of seals and other pinnipeds (mammals with flippers) occurs year-round, before, during and after the Water Agency breaches the sand bar.
- In mid-January, the Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods and the Water Agency trained 30 new volunteers to assist with pinniped monitoring.
- The Project's Draft Environmental Impact Report was released for public review on December 15. The public comment period closes at 5 p.m., February 14. A public hearing on the draft EIR was held in Jenner in mid-January.

### **Fish Flow Project**

- 42 comments were received in response to the Notice of Preparation for the Fish Flows and Water Rights Project. Approximately 70 people attended the Open House scoping meetings. Later this year, staff will make a presentation to the Board of Directors summarizing the comments and project status.
- EIR Schedule
  - Release Draft EIR in summer 2012
  - Release Final EIR in summer 2013
  - BO requires Board to certify Final EIR by September 24, 2013
  - EIR will be prepared by Water Agency staff, with assistance from consultants on some areas of impact analysis, including recreation, socioeconomics and possibly water quality.

### **Public Outreach**

- The Public Policy Facilitating Committee met in December for an update on the implementation of the Biological Opinion. About 100 people attended the meeting.
- The first issue of the Biological Opinion News, a new electronic publication providing short updates on studies and projects, was released in January.