



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – June 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

- Construction is complete on the Dry Creek Demonstration Project, and the habitat enhancement projects withstood flows above 6,000 cfs resulting from the December 8 atmospheric river. Water Agency crews are revegetating the project site with thousands of native trees, shrubs and grasses.
- 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.
- The Water Agency released an RFQ in late December for design of miles four through six of habitat enhancement. Interviews with the four most qualified firms were completed in early April. Three firms have been selected for project design: Interfluve, ESA-PWA and Cardno.

Fish Monitoring

The new monitoring season is underway, and downstream migrant traps have been installed at Austin Creek, Dutch Bill Creek, Mark West Creek, and at Dry Creek. 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 pile driving (to provide a foundation for fish ladder and viewing gallery) underway. Because construction will continue through the summer, the contractor will be installing a temporary (coffer) dam 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. Prior to the start of the Lagoon Management Period, the barrier beach closed on April 30. At least 15 neonate (less than 1 week old) harbor seals were observed during pre-breaching pinniped monitoring. Because of the presence of harbor seal neonate pups, the Water Agency did not artificially breach the beach. The barrier beach opened on its own on May 3rd.
- 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.

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 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 has gone back to the State Water Board to request additional reductions in releases from Lake Mendocino.

Public Outreach, Reporting & Legislation

- The annual Estuary Community Meeting is slated for Thursday, June 11, 6 p.m., at the Monte Rio Community Center. The meeting will cover this year's lagoon management plan, 2014 water quality observations and the jetty study. From 7 to 8 p.m, the Water Agency will discuss summer flows.
- The annual Dry Creek Community meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 9, 5:30 p.m., at the Lake Sonoma Visitor's Center.



Mirabel Fish Passage Improvement Project, May 2015