



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – September 2016

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.

Fish Flow Project

On August 19, the Water Agency released the Environmental Impact Report for the Fish Habitat Flows and Water Rights Project. Open House workshops were held on August 22 (Cloverdale) and on August 24 (Monte Rio). A total of about 110 people attended the workshops and 29 comment cards were submitted. A public hearing is scheduled for September 13, Supervisors Chambers, 3 p.m.

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project

- Miles 2 and 3: Site preparation is complete and construction is underway on 0.6 miles of creek downstream of the Truett Hurst Winery and on a 0.3 mile reach downstream of the Westside Road Bridge. Water Agency Staff are working with property owners to finalize designs and right-of-way agreements for remaining Mile 2 and 3 sites planned for construction in 2017.
- Miles 4-6: Planning, preliminary field investigation and design are under way for Miles 4 - 6.
- The US Army Corps is using information from Mile 2-6 to complete two feasibility studies that should pave the way for federal funding. The first Army Corps study under the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) will help complete Miles 2 and 3. A draft CAP study was recently completed and recommends Army Corps construction of reach 4a (total length 0.4 miles) at a total federal cost of \$3.28 million. The second Army Corps effort for Mile 4-6 planning, called a General Investigation (GI) Ecosystem Restoration study, has less funding restrictions and should be completed by 2018.

Fish Monitoring

During the month of September, Water Agency biologists will be sampling juvenile fish throughout Dry Creek. Video, sonar, and tag detection equipment has been installed near the mouth of Dry Creek, at the Healdsburg fish ladder, and in the new Mirabel fish ladder to count returning adult fish. To date, no upstream migrating salmon have been detected. The fall migration typical peaks between mid-October and mid-November Monitoring also is underway in the estuary, including monthly seining.

Mirabel Screen and Fish Ladder Replacement

Major construction activities are nearing completion. The new screens and viewing windows are in place; the sheet piles have been removed; testing is underway on the new screens; and interpretive signs are being designed for the viewing gallery. In early July, the inflatable dam was raised for the first time in two years. No problems were detected, and the dam is operating normally. The project will be officially complete sometime in the fall, with an opening ceremony and tour.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

- The 2016 Lagoon Management Period began on May 15. The 2016 Lagoon Management Plan is similar to previous years, with the exception of monitoring of harbor seals and other pinnipeds. This year, the Water Agency, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods and volunteers will focus

monitoring at the Jenner overlook, and not monitor other haul-out locations when the estuary is closed unless an outlet channel is successfully in place for more than 3 weeks. Prior-year monitoring found that very few pinnipeds use the other haul-out locations.

- So far this management season, the mouth of the Russian River has closed three times:
 - May 31: An outlet channel was implemented on June 7, but scoured open later that day.
 - June 15: An outlet channel was implemented on June 27, which scoured open that evening.
 - July 1: The estuary self-breached on July 12.
- During the past two years, studies were conducted to determine if and how the historic Goat Rock State Park jetty impacts the formation of the barrier beach and lagoon water surface elevation. Comments have been received on the draft report, and a final report will be released in the fall.

Interim Flow Changes

The Water Agency filed a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP) with the State Water Board in order to comply with the Biological Opinion flow requirements. The State Water Board issued a TUC order in May. The order is currently being implemented.

Public Outreach, Reporting & Legislation

- The Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Bulletin was distributed in August.
- The focus in September is on outreach for the Fish Flow DEIR, including publicizing the availability of the document, community workshops and hearing.
- Planning is underway for the opening of the fish ladder and viewing gallery (late October/early November).



Construction on Mile 2 of the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project, near Truett Hurst Winery