



## **Russian River Biological Opinion Update – April 2012**

The Sonoma County Water Agency is continually planning and implementing the Russian River Biological Opinion requirements. 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**

- The Dry Creek Demonstration Project reached the 90% design level at the end of October. Discussions with landowners regarding right-of-way and construction are ongoing.
- On the permitting front, a 1600 Agreement from Fish and Game is expected in early April. The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board posted their 21-day notice for the project on March 7<sup>th</sup> and the Corps of Engineers 30-day notice is anticipated to be posted shortly.
- An RFP has been issued for large woody debris (redwood/douglas fir trees and trees with root wads). Bid proposals are due on April 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Consultants Interfluve are preparing construction contract documents for summer 2012 for those enhancements on properties where signed right-of-way agreements are nearly complete.

### **Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Study**

- In December, InterFluve submitted the Draft Conceptual Design Report for the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement draft feasibility study. This report presents conceptual designs for potential habitat improvements areas beyond the 1-mile demonstration project. The report will be finalized when official comments from NMFS are addressed.
- 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 2012.

### **Tributary Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Projects**

- Fishery staff is gearing up for the 2012 monitoring season, which begins mid-April (or when flows allow for the installation of rotary screw traps and other monitoring equipment).

### **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. Consultant (HDR Engineering) has completed the 30% design, which was received in November. The 65% design was received in mid-March, and it is being reviewed by staff.
- Water Agency staff is preparing a grant application to assist in funding of construction of the fish ladder. The grant application was submitted in late March.

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

- On January 26, a three-year general lease was received from the State Lands Commission for the estuary management project.

- The Estuary Management Project final Environmental Impact Report was certified in August and the Board of Directors approved the project. On September 16, a lawsuit was filed by the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee challenging the EIR.
- Staff is gearing up for the 2012 monitoring season, and anticipates installing the fyke net and water quality monitoring stations in May.
- Seal (and other pinniped) monitoring is ongoing. The annual pinniped monitoring volunteer training hosted by Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods was held on February 14.

### **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.

- 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.

### **Interim Flow Changes**

- The 2011 Temporary Urgency Change order from the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) ended on October 15. The order required weekly fisheries reports, water quality monitoring and for the contractors to require their irrigation customers to “achieve a maximum applied water allowance of 60 percent ETo.”
- The term for the Agency’s fisheries monitoring requirements under the TUC expired on November 15, but video monitoring of adult salmon and steelhead returns continued until January 16 when the Mirabel Dam was deflated. In total, 3,174 Chinook and 646 steelhead (75 percent identified as hatchery) were counted. Because of the additional review process, coho tallies are not as up to date as Chinook and steelhead. To date, 147 coho have been counted.
- Reports for the 2011 TUC were submitted to the State Water Board on March 31, 2012.
- Pursuant to the Biological Opinion requirements, the Water Agency is preparing to submit in April a temporary urgency change request for 2012.

### **Public Outreach**

- The annual Public Policy Facilitating Committee meeting was held on February 9. Presentations from the meeting can be found at <http://www.scwa.ca.gov/rrifr/> under “What’s New.”
- Plans are underway for extensive outreach on the Dry Creek habitat enhancement demonstration project, which is slated to begin construction this summer.