



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – October 2011

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.

Dry Creek Demonstration Project

- The Dry Creek Demonstration Project anticipates reaching the 90% design level in October. Discussions with landowners regarding access and construction are ongoing, and permitting requests to regulatory agencies will be made this fall.
- The public comment period for the Initial Study environmental document on the demonstration project was released in June. Only one comment was received (from CalTrans, regarding permits).

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Study & Bypass Pipeline Study

- The Dry Creek bypass pipeline and Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement draft feasibility studies were released in April. Outreach was conducted to Water Contractors and Dry Creek valley residents. There were no suggested changes to the draft documents. Official comments from NMFS are currently being 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 later this year.
- Construction on the Crane Creek fish passage is nearly complete. The Willow Creek Fish Passage Enhancement Project is under construction. The project replaces several plugged/collapsed side-by-side culverts with a bridge, which was installed on September 29.
- Coho were found in and upstream of the Grape Creek restoration projects that were constructed in 2009 and 2010.
- 2011 fish monitoring activities are ongoing. Rotary screw traps placed in Dry Creek and in the Russian River in the spring and electrofishing surveys took place during the summer.

Wohler Pond Modification Project

- The project – which decommissioned infiltration ponds near Wohler Bridge – was completed in September 2011. Historically, when flooding occurred in the area, the ponds would trap fish when the water receded. The purpose of the project was to remove any impediments so that future fish entrapment will not occur.

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) is working on the 30% design, which should be received in November.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

- The Estuary Management Project final Environmental Impact Report was certified on August 16. The Board of Directors also approved the project. On September 16, a lawsuit was filed by the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee challenging the EIR.
- 2011 fish monitoring activities took place throughout the summer, with the fyke net placed in the estuary, rotary screw traps installed at the mouths of three creeks that drain into the estuary and invertebrate monitoring and seining ongoing.
- Water quality monitoring is ongoing.
- To date, the estuary has remained open during the 2011 lagoon management period (May 15 – October 15).

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, including recreation, socioeconomics and possibly water quality.

Interim Flow Changes

- On June 1, the State Water Resources Control Board issued an order in response to the Water Agency's petition to modify minimum instream flow requirements for this summer. Similar to the 2010 order, the 2011 order requires 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 order ends on October 15, 2011.

Public Outreach

- The Dry Creek Advisory Group met in May to review the habitat enhancement and pipeline feasibility draft studies.
- The Dry Creek Valley Association is posting on its website a "Frequently Asked Questions" column regarding habitat enhancement .
- Monthly advertisements are being placed in community papers updating residents on the biological opinion.