



## **Russian River Biological Opinion Update – August 2013**

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](http://www.sonomacountywater.org).

### **Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement and Demonstration Project**

- Construction of the remainder of the one-mile demonstration project is underway. Hanford Applied Restoration & Conservation, out of Sonoma, is constructing the project. This summer's work focuses on habitat downstream of Lambert Bridge. Features include bank stabilization, a backwater with constructed log jams and boulder clusters.
- Construction is underway on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers habitat enhancement project, on Corps property immediately below Warm Springs Dam. The Water Agency is partnering with the Corps on a grant application to provide signage and public access to the site, which is one of the few publicly owned stretches of Dry Creek.
- Site identification and outreach to landowners is underway for the second and third miles of habitat enhancement. Two firms, Interfluve and ESA PWA, have been selected to design the second and third miles of habitat enhancement.
- The Water Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Fish & Wildlife 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 2013.

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

- The 2013 monitoring season is ongoing, with fish traps located in Dry Creek and the mainstem Russian River at Mirabel. Trapping efforts at Austin Creek, Dutch Bill Creek, and Mark West Creek have concluded for the season.

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

- The 90% design is ongoing; the Water Agency Board has adopted the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration; and major construction is estimated to begin in June 2014.

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

- The 2013 Lagoon Management Period began May 15. Biological and water quality monitoring is underway. An adaptive management plan, largely the same as the 2012 plan, has been finalized.
- The mouth of the river has closed twice since May 15. The first closure, in mid-May, lasted for nearly two weeks until the estuary breached on its own. The second closure lasted for

nearly a month, with the river mouth closing on closure on June 7 and breaching on its own on July 3. Due to timing with the July 4 holiday weekend, the Water Agency was unable to implement an outlet channel prior to the mouth opening.

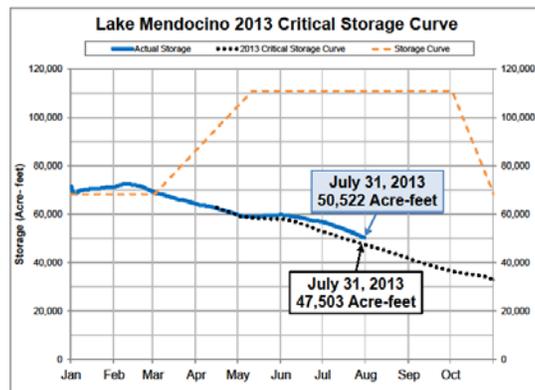
- A study of the jetty is underway. The purpose of the study is to determine if and how the jetty impacts the formation of the barrier beach and lagoon water surface elevation. While the historic assessment component of the study was completed at the end of 2012, field investigations have been postponed until all appropriate permits have been acquired.

### **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 in 2014.

### **Interim Flow Changes**

- The State Water Resources Control Board issued the 2013 Temporary Urgency Change order in late April and flows were reduced beginning on May 1. The minimum flows requirements in the upper river were based on the rapid decline in Lake Mendocino levels and differ from the minimum flows required in the Biological Opinion. Minimum flows requirements in the order are 75 cfs in the upper river and 85 cfs in the lower river. Beginning July 1, minimum flows requirements could go down if storage in Lake Mendocino dips below a critical storage curve for three days. As of July 31, actual storage in the lake was 3,019 acf above the storage curve.



- A joint marketing campaign on reducing flows, the 20 Gallon Challenge, kicked off on May 28. Paid advertisements in radio, print and on websites will feature the 20 Gallon Challenge, which is part of the Sonoma Marin Saving Water Partnership.

### **Public Outreach, Reporting & Legislation**

- A community meeting was held on June 27 at the Lake Sonoma Visitors Center to discuss the Dry Creek Demonstration Project, this summer's construction and miles 2 & 3.
- Senator Boxer's Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) legislation contains language that would authorize the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct work on Dry Creek.