



## Russian River Biological Opinion Update – June 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 slated to start in mid June (depending on nesting birds). Hanford Applied Restoration & Conservation, out of Sonoma, will be constructing the project.
- Site identification and outreach to landowners is underway for the second and third miles of habitat enhancement.
- Design consultant selection is underway for the second and third miles of habitat enhancement. Two firms have been selected for the project, Interfluve and ESA PWA.
- 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 has begun, with fish traps located in Dry Creek, Austin Creek, Dutch Bill Creek, Mark West Creek and in the Russian River at Mirabel.

### **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. A draft adaptive management plan, largely the same as the 2012 plan, has been reviewed by the regulatory agencies and is currently being finalized.
- An Estuary Management Project Community Meeting was held on May 16 at the Monte Rio Community Center. Water Agency staff and consultants provided updates on results of biological, water quality, and physical processes monitoring efforts.
- 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 sand bar (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 2013.

### **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 are based on the rapid decline in Lake Mendocino levels (as discussed at the April WAC meeting) 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.
- 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. A monthly drawing will be held of people taking the 20-Gallon Challenge pledge.

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

- Sweetwater Springs Water District Board of Directors will be discussing the TUC order at its June 6 meeting, 5:30 p.m. at the Monte Rio Community Center. Water Agency staff will be giving presentations on the order.
- A community meeting will be held at 6 p.m., June 27 at the Lake Sonoma Visitors Center to discuss the Dry Creek Demonstration Project and this summer's construction.
- 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.

