

**An Overview of the
Conservation Strategy
For the
Bay Delta Conservation Plan**

December 12, 2008

This document is intended to provide an overview and synopsis of the proposed Conservation Strategy, including its core elements, for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). It reflects the substantial progress to date by the BDCP Steering Committee in developing the Conservation Strategy for the plan. It is intended to enable the Steering Committee to confirm a number of the core elements of the Conservation Strategy as they now stand and thereby help guide the remaining work that is necessary to complete a proposed conservation plan by June, 2009, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA), and/or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). The draft BDCP will then undergo further detailed environmental review and analysis. This document is, importantly, also intended to describe more fully those elements of the Conservation Strategy that will be evaluated using Delta Regional Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan (DRERIP) conceptual models in January, 2009, as scheduled.

Specifically, this overview contains the following:

- a. an introduction to the BDCP Conservation Strategy and a description of the fundamental problems it is intended to address
- b. a description of the overall approach to developing the conservation strategy that will be embodied in the BDCP;
- c. a concise statement of conservation principles that have shaped the approach;
- d. a description of a number of the core elements of the Conservation Strategy, including an overview of the overall and biological goals and objectives as currently formulated; key conservation measures designed to address water conveyance operations, habitat restoration, and other stressors; and a process for an adaptive management and monitoring program.
- e. a description of key outstanding issues and challenges facing the Steering Committee as it moves forward with the planning process; and
- f. a description of the anticipated next steps and schedule for the planning process.

The Steering Committee recognizes that considerable additional work remains to complete a draft of the proposed BDCP by June, 2009 and prepare a draft joint environmental impact statement/report (EIS/EIR) on the plan by the end of 2009 to allow for completion of the final BDCP by the end of 2010. This work will result in refinements, modifications, changes, and additions to the elements of the BDCP. Upon completion of a draft of the BDCP, the plan will be distributed for additional public review and comment along with draft environmental review documents prepared under both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The work of the Steering Committee will not stop at this juncture; rather, it will continue as the NEPA/CEQA process unfolds, and more information, analysis, and public input is available. It is expected that the BDCP will evolve throughout this process and that changes to the plan will be forthcoming before it is completed in final form at the end of 2010.

Introduction

The BDCP Challenge

The general problems and challenges of the Bay Delta are both extensive and well documented. The fundamental challenge that the BDCP seeks to address is the increasingly significant and intensifying conflict between the ecological needs of a range of Delta species and natural communities and the need for adequate and reliable water supplies for people, communities, agriculture, and industry.

Several native species that occur in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta are at risk (or high risk) of extinction due to significant perturbations to the Delta ecosystem over the last century including: large diversions of water from the Delta and its tributaries and the resulting changes to the hydrodynamic conditions within the Delta; entrainment of fish and food-web resources at large and small water diversion facilities; changes in the hydrologic and hydrodynamic patterns resulting from dams, levees, canals, and other water management infrastructure; elimination of a significant portion of the historically available tidal marshes, floodplains, and riparian habitats; the continued discharge of contaminants from urban and agricultural areas and sources; the invasions of exotic plant and animal species; and excessive and or illegal harvest of native species.

At the same time, water provided by the Delta has been the engine of enormous growth and prosperity. One of the world's largest agricultural and urban economies is dependent, on continued diversions of water from the Delta. The significance of these economies to Californians and to the nation cannot be overstated, and yet the continued vitality of these economies may be at risk if the issues of water are not adequately and thoroughly addressed. The Delta and the surrounding Central Valley are also now inhabited by more than _____ million people who have transformed the landscape to intensively developed agricultural and urban land uses. Continued population growth, migration, and world trade will exacerbate these pressures.

The conflicts between the imperatives of species conservation and reliable water supplies have intensified, as amply evidenced by the recent spate of controversy and litigation around the intersection of the federal and state endangered species acts and the operation of the state and federal water projects. Simply put, the system as it is currently designed and operated does not work from either an environmental or economic perspective, and calls out for fundamental, comprehensive change.

Securing that change in a lasting and durable manner requires a considerable investment of time, effort, money, and political discipline. Modifying or moving water diversion infrastructure to reduce the environmental impacts of water diversions will cost billions of dollars. Restoring large areas of floodplain and inter-tidal marsh will require large amounts of capital and concerted political investment to fairly compensate local landowners and address the concerns of local communities who could be adversely affected by these activities. Similar resources will also be required to enforce harvest regulations, reduce polluted discharges from urban and agricultural landscapes, and pay for new and less environmentally harmful water management infrastructure. In short, efforts to recover species requires the active support of stakeholders, and this support is dependent upon a continued level of diversions sufficient to meet important water needs.

Water diverters require authorizations from state and federal fish and wildlife agencies to continue exporting water from the Delta legally. Before committing billions of dollars for new infrastructure and habitat restoration, public water agencies seek assurances that these investments will yield water supply benefits over time. They also seek assurances from the state and federal fish and wildlife agencies that operations of these new facilities will be permissible, and that the operations will continue under a predictable and reliable set of rules.

Finally, there are considerable and powerful uncertainties within which these changes will occur, driven in part by the ecological complexity of the Delta itself, in part by the substantial unknowns about how the ecology of the Delta functions, and in part by the fact of ongoing climate change. In order to manage these uncertainties while providing assurances that a conservation plan will achieve both water supply and conservation objectives, a conservation strategy for the Delta must be flexible enough to respond to new information and changing circumstances, but definitive enough to serve as the basis for the issuance of the necessary authorizations.

Introduction to the BDCP Conservation Strategy

The BDCP Conservation Strategy, which will be chapter 3 of the BDCP, and will consist of multiple components that have been described in outline form (see attachment X2, *Annotated Outline of Chapter 3, Conservation Strategy*) which must be understood as a whole. Several of these components are well developed and have already been the subject of extensive review and revision by the Steering Committee. They are included here by reference and to direct attention to those sections for those interested in delving into the details further. Other components remain under construction, and will be built into the draft of the BDCP that is then subject to further substantial analyses and review pursuant to the NEPA/CEPA processes.

The BDCP is designed to achieve a set of BDCP overall goals and objectives (which will be described in Section 1.2, *BDCP Overall Goals and Objectives*) and the biological goals and objectives, which are described as a working draft of section 3.2, *Biological Goals and Objectives*. The Conservation Strategy also include a comprehensive set of conservation measures – described as working draft section 3.4, *Conservation Measures* -- that are designed to provide for the conservation and management of covered species and natural communities upon which they depend and to avoid, minimize, and compensate for the potential impacts of covered activities, which will be enumerated in Chapter 4, *Covered Activities*) on covered species and their habitats. The conservation measures include actions to improve flow conditions, increase food production, restore habitat, reduce toxic contaminants, reduce entrainment, and reduce non-native predators.

The BDCP recognizes the considerable uncertainty regarding the understanding of the Delta ecosystem and the likely outcomes of implementing the conservation measures, both in terms of the nature and the magnitude of the response of covered species and of ecosystem processes that support the species. Consequently, the Conservation Strategy will be implemented adaptively over the term of the BDCP. The Conservation Strategy will contain comprehensive Adaptive Management and Monitoring Plans that have been partially developed and which will be fully described in section 3.5 *Monitoring Plan* and section 3.6 *Adaptive Management*.

The BDCP Monitoring Plan includes a combination of system-wide and conservation measure-specific monitoring and research to provide increased knowledge of the effectiveness of conservation actions through BDCP implementation. The Conservation Strategy will also embrace an Adaptive Management Program to ensure the continuous input of data, knowledge, and up-to-date scientific information to enhance the effectiveness of the BDCP conservation measures. The adaptive management process will guide the implementation of conservation measures and

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allow measures to be modified or new conservation measures adopted in response to results from BDCP monitoring and research programs and other new scientific information.

The purpose of monitoring and adaptive management components of the Conservation Strategy is to improve the effectiveness of the conservation measures in achieving the BDCP biological goals and objectives and to address changed environmental conditions that may develop in the Delta in future years (e.g., effects of climate change and sea level rise).

Overall Approach to the BDCP Conservation Strategy

This section provides a brief description of the overall approach of the BDCP Conservation Strategy and how conservation measures will meet the multiple goals and objectives of the BDCP. The working draft of section 3.3, titled Approach to Conservation, provides a more complete description of the overall approach and is in the process of continued revisions based upon numerous comments received upon it.

The basic elements of the Conservation Strategy will consist of the description of its biological goals and objectives, a description of the conservation measures themselves, and the monitoring and adaptive management programs which will guide implementation. The primary components of the measures themselves will consist of: (1) the construction of new north Delta diversion facilities and an isolated conveyance canal in conjunction with operation of existing facilities; (2) detailed parameters that will govern the operations of the system across a range of hydrological conditions; (3) restoration of tidal marsh, floodplain, and riparian, and upland transition habitat; and (4) actions to address certain non-conveyance and non-habitat-related stressors on covered species (collectively called “other stressors”).

Core Elements of the BDCP Conservation Strategy

The BDCP has to date made considerable progress in framing a number of the key elements of its overall conservation strategy that will be carried forward into the planning process. These include its system of goals and objectives, which will be enumerated in section 3.2 of the conservation strategy, an overall conceptual approach to conservation, a number of core elements of the conservation plan, and the initial framework for the monitoring and adaptive management programs to guide plan implementation. These core elements are described below. Further details may be found in the working drafts of the sections of the conservation plan that are under development and are referred to throughout.

The major challenge for the BDCP Conservation Strategy is the restoration of key ecosystem functions in the highly altered and largely unnatural environment of the Delta. The Delta was once a vast marsh and floodplain dissected by meandering channels and sloughs that provided habitat for a rich diversity of fish, wildlife, and plants. The Delta of today is a system of artificially channeled and dredged waterways constructed into unnaturally static geometries designed to support farming and urban development on Delta islands. Delta waterways provide transportation corridors for commercial and recreational ships and boats, and convey water for urban and agricultural uses inside and outside of the Delta. The physical disturbances within the Delta, combined with multiple other environmental challenges to the ecosystem (including highly altered hydrological conditions, toxic discharges, invasions by many harmful non-native species, and habitat degradation) have contributed to declines in covered fish, wildlife, and plant species and other organisms.

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To address these multiple environmental stressors on the Delta ecosystem, the BDCP Conservation Strategy is being developed as a comprehensive integrated package of conservation measures that incorporate physical improvements (e.g., habitat restoration, fish passage improvements), improved ecosystem processes (e.g., changes in flow patterns, improved food web, enhanced habitat quality and availability), and direct enhancement of production and survival of covered species (e.g., mark-select fisheries, conservation hatcheries, and reductions of toxicants and non-native predators). This comprehensive, ecosystem-based approach to addressing multiple stressors is essential to making significant contributions to the recovery of covered species and to the restoration of a naturally functioning ecosystem while securing a reliable freshwater source for human use.

An overall goal of the conservation strategy is to facilitate more flexible and ecologically beneficial management of the Delta. There are three primary components of the Conservation Strategy: major improvements to the existing water conveyance systems and water operations and flows across a wide range of hydrological conditions: physical habitat restoration; and a reduction in other stressors.

Water operations conservation measures address the improvement of aquatic habitat in the Delta, in conjunction with meeting the BDCP planning goals for water supply and supply reliability, through the construction and operation of new facilities and the operation of existing facilities. The primary component in water operations is the construction and operation of new north Delta diversion facilities and an isolated conveyance canal to carry water to the existing south Delta SWP and CVP facilities. Both the movement of diverted freshwater around the Delta and improvements to operations exporting freshwater through the Delta (described as dual facilities operations) would provide the flexibility to operate the water export system such that the Delta ecosystem and covered fish species habitat can be greatly improved over existing conditions. Dual operations of new and existing diversion facilities would significantly reduce present levels of entrainment of fish (particularly delta and longfin smelt) and invertebrates and the export of organic material and nutrients. Constructing state-of-the-art positive barrier fish screens on in-river and on-river intakes along the Sacramento River and employing flexible operational scenarios would minimize fish mortality at the new north Delta diversion sites. The north Delta diversion facilities are an integral part of the Conservation Strategy and will enable covered fish species to gain maximum benefits from other conservation measures while meeting the water supply reliability goals of the BDCP. The flexibility associated with the operation of dual facilities allows for habitat restoration to be implemented in the western, eastern, and south Delta and enhanced organic production generated from these restored habitats to pass through the interior Delta with a corresponding reduction of risk of fish entrainment at the south Delta facilities.

In addition to the ecological benefits, water supply reliability will substantially improve with the north Delta diversion and isolated facility because these facilities will be constructed to be more resilient to catastrophic events (e.g., levee breaching from earthquakes and floods) and sea level rise than the existing through-Delta conveyance system.

Physical habitat restoration would include extensive restoration of tidal marsh, floodplain, and transitional upland habitat throughout the Delta and Suisun Marsh that is expected to enhance habitat and food productivity for covered species. Core elements of the habitat restoration conservation measures are described below. Additional actions are further described in sections 3.3.2 through 3.3.5 of chapter 3.

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Other stressors conservation measures are actions that address stressors on covered species and natural communities other than the loss of habitat and water operations and flow. Other stressors include toxic contaminants, non-native predators and competitors, entrainment by diversions, and harvest. Implementation of conservation measures addressing other stressors is expected to reduce adverse effects on covered species. Core elements of other stressors conservation measures are set out in this document. Further measures are described in sections 3.3.2 through 3.3.6.

A major facet of the BDCP conservation strategy is the delineation of those measures and actions which should occur in the near-term, pending the completion of the major new water infrastructure contemplated by the plan, as contrasted with those other measures which should be pursued over the long-term after completion of the new conveyance facilities. This break between near-term and long-term BDCP implementation periods is defined by the completion of the north Delta diversion and around-Delta conveyance facilities. A number of conservation measures cannot be implemented until the north Delta diversion is operable and therefore would be long-term actions only. Those measures that are not dependent on operations of the new facilities would be initiated in the near-term period.

Conservation Strategy Principles

The following conservation principles provide the basis for the approach to the development of the BDCP Conservation Strategy and will be embedded into section 3.3 of the BDCP. They are provided here as a working draft, and will be subject to further refinement as the planning process progresses.

1. **Provide a Comprehensive Set of Conservation Measures that Contribute to the Recovery of Covered Species:** Develop a comprehensive, integrated set of actions sufficient to contribute to the recovery of covered fish species, including restoration of habitat, reduction of other stressors, and changes in water supply infrastructure and operations.
2. **Divert More Water in the Wetter Periods and Less in Drier periods:** Adopt an approach that reduces diversions during sensitive ecological periods and at sensitive locations to minimize conflicts between water supply and species conservation goals.
3. **Focus on Biological and Physical Processes:** Restore key biological and physical processes, including through the alteration of water project operations and other activities related to flow and hydrodynamic functions, on seasonal and inter-annual time scales to better reflect natural patterns.
4. **Build in Flexibility:** Recognize that flexible water management infrastructure and operational criteria and an adaptive implementation regime will enhance opportunities to achieve both water supply and conservation objectives.
5. **Address Scientific Uncertainty Directly Through Adaptive Management:** Recognize that due to scientific and other uncertainties, a static set of conservation measures, including those related to water operation parameters, is unlikely to ensure successful or desired outcomes of the BDCP. Rather, to enhance the effectiveness of conservation measures, the BDCP will be designed to be responsive to new information and changing conditions that occur during the implementation of the plan. This approach will include the use of measurable performance objectives, performance monitoring and assessment, and mechanisms that provide for adjustments and modifications to the implementation of the BDCP Conservation Strategy.

6. **Provide for Reliable Water Supplies:** Provide for a reliable and sufficient water supply essential to California's economy and to the success of the BDCP in meeting its planning goals. Achieving both water supply and ecosystem conservation objectives will likely require redesign of the existing conveyance system, including new points of diversion. Such changes in Delta hydrodynamic conditions are likely to create new opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement and approaches to the reduction of other stressors.

BDCP Biological Goals and Objectives

The biological goals and objectives for the BDCP are currently described in a working draft of section 3.2, which has focused to date on biological goals and objectives for covered fish species. These biological goals and objectives will be expanded as appropriate to also address terrestrial covered species following development draft biological goals and objectives for the terrestrial covered species in early 2009. All draft biological goals and objectives are subject to additional refinement through the planning process as the adaptive management program is further refined and as new information becomes available.

The USFWS's Five-Point Policy for HCP's provides guidance for the development of biological goals and objectives (65FR 106:35250-35252) and states that "...the Services and HCP Applicants will clearly and consistently define the expected outcome, i.e., biological goal(s)." Biological goals are defined as broad guiding principals for development of the conservation strategy that can be parsed into more manageable subsets of biological objectives. The BDCP biological goals and objectives are consistent with guidance provided in the Five-Point Policy and with the BDCP NCCP Planning Agreement conservation goals and objectives.

These biological goals and objectives are purposefully framed to reflect and respond to the significant ecological complexity of the Delta and the substantial scientific uncertainties associated with it. They are designed to serve several important functions in the Conservation Strategy. The first is to describe the desired biological outcomes of the Conservation Strategy, and how those outcomes will contribute to the long-term conservation of covered species and their habitats. The second is to serve as important yardsticks by which to measure progress in achieving those outcomes across multiple temporal and spatial scales. A third, closely related function is to provide the context and framework for the monitoring programs and monitoring metrics by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the conservation measures themselves, and to inform the adaptive management program through which adjustments to the plan may occur over the course of its implementation.

The ecological complexity of the Delta and the extent of scientific uncertainty associated with this complexity require a Conservation Strategy that is flexible, testable, and scientifically grounded. The BDCP Conservation Strategy is built on a set of core hypotheses about how to restore the ecological processes and functions necessary to achieve the biological goals and objectives over time. The core hypotheses are intended to provide an orderly, scientifically-disciplined approach to managing complexity and uncertainty. These core hypotheses will be tested and evaluated, verified or adjusted as implementation proceeds through an adaptive management process. The biological goals and objectives are part of this overall approach. They are designed as a conceptual hierarchy, the components of which are measurable, transparent and verifiable. They are intended to mesh closely with the goals and objectives of existing recovery plans and other regional species plan goals that have been established for the covered species so that the implementation of the BDCP

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contributes to the long-term conservation of covered species and their habitats. (please refer to Table 3.Xa in the working draft of the goals in section 3.2 of the conservation strategy).

Figure 3.Xa illustrates these hierarchical relationships among the broad conservation goals for the covered fish species, the BDCP-specific biological goals and objectives, the conservation measures that are designed to achieve the biological goals and objectives (see Section 3.4, Conservation Measures), and the monitoring and adaptive management components of the Conservation Strategy (see Section 3.5, Monitoring Plan and Section 3.6, Adaptive Management). The effectiveness of the BDCP conservation measures would be measured through their effects on the population viability attributes shown in the second tier of the Figure 3.Xa pyramid. The adaptive management and monitoring tier of the pyramid provide the BDCP Implementing Entities with the information necessary to adjust BDCP implementation based on new scientific information as it becomes available over the term to the BDCP to improve the effectiveness of the Conservation Strategy in achieving the BDCP biological goals and objectives.

The biological goals and objectives are organized hierarchically on the basis of the following ecological scale:

Ecosystem Goals and Objectives. Ecosystem goals and objectives are focused on improvements to the overall condition of hydrological, physical, chemical, and biological processes in the Delta in support of achieving goals and objectives for covered natural communities and covered species.

Natural Community Goals and Objectives. Natural community goals and objectives are focused on maintaining or enhancing ecological functions and values of covered natural communities. Achieving natural community goals and objectives also serve to conserve habitat of associated covered species and other native species.

Species-Specific Goals and Objectives. Species-specific goals and objectives address species-specific stressors and habitat needs that are not addressed under the higher order ecosystem and natural community goals and objectives and species-specific viability parameters as they relate to life stage occurrence of covered fish species in the Delta.

The hierarchical relationship among these ecological scales and larger species-specific goals are illustrated in Figure 3.Xb of section 3.2. The conservation measures that would serve to achieve each of the biological goals and objectives that are presented in Table 3.Xb and the population viability attributes that would be addressed by each of the biological objectives for each of the covered fish species is presented in Tables 3Xc-3Xi. BDCP system and effectiveness monitoring, monitoring metrics, and adaptive management targets that would be used to assess the population-level response of the covered fish species to implementation of the conservation measures are presented in Section 3.5 Monitoring Plan.

Major Measures of the Conservation Plan

The many specific measures that may be proposed in the conservation plan are enumerated in substantial detail in the working draft of section 3.4 of the plan. These sections are currently under review and revision in response to numerous comments received on them by Steering Committee members and other entities.

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The following is an enumeration of a number of the major measures which have been the focus of the Integration Team to date because of their importance for the plan as a whole and because defining their key parameters is an essential step in proceeding with the further evaluation of the plan itself through modeling and other evaluations anticipated in early 2009. These core elements will serve as the nucleus of the BDCP conservation measures that will broadly alter the hydrodynamics of the Delta. They will help to describe the basic architecture of a new hydrodynamic system upon which future conservation measures will be built upon; provide the context in which to develop and evaluate a broad range of conservation measures during the design stage; define the basic architecture and operations of the water supply and conservation infrastructure (including habitat restoration) in enough detail to for them to be efficiently analyzed by the EIS/EIR consultants and the DRERIP process; and identify important elements of the water supply and conservation strategy infrastructure and key decision points regarding the design and operation of this infrastructure so as to advance the planning process into 2009.

These measures include the following.

Habitat Restoration Measures:

Water Conveyance Measures

Parameters Governing Water Operations

Measures Addressing Other Stressors.

[A description of these measures and their underlying rationales and key parameters will be inserted here]

Adaptive Management and Monitoring Program

The BDCP will include adaptive management and monitoring programs to address scientific uncertainties and knowledge gaps. These programs are currently under development, and are described in sections 3.5 and 3.6 of Chapter 3. This section provides a synopsis of the progress to date in developing the details of these program; further work remains.

While the BDCP conservation measures were developed on the basis of the best scientific and commercially available information and identify detailed actions to achieve the biological goals and objectives, over the term of BDCP implementation new data and information will be developed that will increase knowledge and help reduce uncertainties regarding best approaches to conservation measures. In addition, the conservation strategy anticipates the potential for substantial changes in Delta conditions that may result from climate change (e.g., sea level rise and hydrology in the Delta watershed), seismic events, potential large scale changes in land use, and other factors. The BDCP recognizes that monitoring and adaptive management are necessary to incorporate into plan implementation any new information and insight regarding actual changes and new projections of changing futures. As more is understood about the Delta ecosystem, adjustments to BDCP conservation measures will be necessary and will be undertaken to improve effectiveness. The BDCP adaptive management process is designed to afford flexibility to make these

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adjustments, including modifications to, removal of, and additions of conservation measures and changes to the monitoring program as indicated by new scientific information.

The BDCP monitoring program will include activities to:

determine the effects of the covered activities on covered natural communities and species;

collect data necessary to effectively implement conservation measures;

document the implementation and effectiveness of conservation measures;

determine the appropriateness of the scientific relationships on which the assessment of effects and effectiveness are based; and

assess the overall status of species, natural communities, ecosystem processes that support species and natural communities in the Delta.

Information gathered through the BDCP monitoring program, research conducted by the BDCP, and other research efforts will guide decision making during implementation. The BDCP monitoring and research programs are designed to establish cause and effect relationships between implementation of specific conservation measures and the type and magnitude of species and ecosystem responses to those measures, as well as species and ecosystem responses to the implementation of combinations of conservation measures. Should strong cause and effect relationships be established, adaptive management provides the mechanism to concentrate efforts on the implementation of conservation measures that have been demonstrated to be more effective and to deemphasize or discontinue implementation of conservation measures that prove to be less effective at achieving desired ecosystem, natural community, and species outcomes as articulated in the BDCP biological goals and objectives.

The BDCP monitoring program will coordinate with other existing monitoring and research programs in the Delta (e.g., Integrated Ecological Program, CALFED Science Program) currently undertaken by a number of entities, including DFG, DWR, USFWS, Reclamation, and UC Davis. Data collected through these other programs will be used by BDCP to help evaluate the effectiveness of BDCP implementation and assess the long-term status and trends of covered species populations and ecosystem conditions.

[Insert Further Synopsis from section 3.6, as presented to the Steering Committee on December 5, 2008, enumerating adaptive management decision-making, adaptive management triggers, changed circumstances and responses to them and unforeseen circumstances]

Comments and Pending Challenges

The changes in Delta land use and hydrology, water conveyance facilities, ways to reduce other stressors on fish species contemplated by the draft conservation measures have raised numerous issues among Delta communities about a variety of local and Delta-wide impacts. The BDCP Steering Committee acknowledges these issues and the need for the planning process, as it moves forward, to include an ongoing and timely dialogue with Delta communities and other members of the public to better understand the substantive nature of these concerns and address them in the design and execution of the conservation measures that are ultimately carried forward in the final plan.

Currently, the issues and concerns identified to date include impacts to: existing land uses including agricultural land uses (and related agriculturally based elements of local economies) and public access areas; recreational activities and the economies which depend upon them; property tax and user fee revenues of local jurisdictions; the potential to shift certain regulatory burdens to adjacent property owners; mosquito and vector controls; the production of methyl-mercury; the effects of the plan on other protected terrestrial species; the

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compatibility of the plan with flood control plans; the effects on existing irrigation and drainage infrastructure; adverse effects on local water quality such as salinity, dissolved oxygen, and organic carbon; existing water rights; effects on existing wastewater treatment operations of local jurisdictions; and local control over local land use

The BDCP Steering Committee will strive to resolve these issues, and additional challenges that may arise, through further detailed analysis in the BDCP as draft conservation measures are refined as well as during the environmental review process of the proposed plan, and through the design of avoidance and mitigation strategies for potentially unavoidable effects as the planning process progresses.

Next Steps for Completing the Proposed Conservation Plan

[Insert Text of Next Steps]

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