

**Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)
Steering Committee (SC) Meeting**
December 19, 2008, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Room 1131 Resources Building
Sacramento, CA

Draft Meeting Notes

Associated documents/handouts:

- Agenda
- Handout #1 An Overview of the Draft Conservation Strategy

Action Items and Key Decisions

- Agreement by the Steering Committee that the Overview of the Conservation Strategy document describes the direction of BDCP appropriately with changes as suggested at today's meeting

Updates

- USFWS released the OCAP Biological Opinion on December 15, 2008.
- Conservation Strategy—Updates and revisions to Chapter 3 will be released in January 2009
- Sue Fry (USBR) is transferring to Oregon as the Area Manager of the Klamath Basin Area Office located in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

Conservation Strategy Overview

A draft of the document titled “*An Overview of the Draft Conservation Strategy for the BDCP*” (see associated handout) was presented to the Steering Committee (SC) members for their review and discussion. The SC members’ discussion commenced with a review of the expectations about the purpose and function of the day’s deliberations on the document, given its draft status. In addition, members discussed several issues regarding the Overview document including the purpose of the document itself. The members agreed that the document was intended to reflect its current position on the range of topics addressed in the *Overview*. They also discussed the expectation that the substance of the document would be incorporated into the ongoing revisions to Chapter 3 of the Conservation Strategy, and they confirmed that it would not be subject to ongoing revision once completed. There were also some brief references to the recently released FWS biological opinion regarding the ongoing operation of the state and Federal water projects pursuant to the OCAP, and how the terms of the new opinion were going to modify the current operations of the two projects in a manner that might be relevant to the BDCP deliberations. SC members also discussed how the comments to the earlier drafts of the *Overview* from the previous week had been incorporated into the current draft.

Members of the Integration Team discussed their on-going processes that were reflected in the *Overview* and the next steps which they anticipated in the integration process. Several SC members followed with question about the concept of the “core elements” that had been developed by the Integration Team, and how that concept would relate to the larger package of conservation measures that are under development by the various workgroups and technical teams. Other issues which arose during the discussions included the prospects for interim tidal gates and outflow; the anticipated effects on covered species and habitats during flood events; consequences of flooding that might destroy newly restored

habitat; the implications for existing uses of flooding the Yolo Bypass on a regular basis; role of adaptive management in adjusting conservation measures as new information becomes available; the recommended consideration of Prospect Island as a potential restoration site; the absence within the existing list of “core elements” of conservation measures that were being developed by the Other Stressors Workgroup, and the methods used to identify various flow values and parameters that might be moved forward in the planning process.

After this wide ranging introductory discussion, the Chair steered the discussion to a specific review of the current draft of the Overview document. Will Stelle, Jerry Johns and Paul Cylinder described the key aspects of the Overview draft and the manner in which it had been modified and improved from the earlier draft which had been circulated to the SC members. The draft clarified the purpose and function of the document as a “snapshot” of the planning process at the years’ end, serving as an important milestone in the preparation of the draft conservation strategy for the BDCP in 2009. Other improvements to the draft included the addition of a description of the “core elements” that had been the focus of the Integration Workgroup as it was working to refine the overall approach to the conservation strategy, and the inclusion of sections outlining several of the outstanding issues and next steps that the SC was anticipating in the planning process.

Representatives of the Integration Team then described in further detail their ongoing deliberations to refine the conservation strategy and their focus initially on several of the “core elements” that were enumerated in the *Overview*. These included:

- The Fremont Weir operable gate – identified possible “optimal flows” to maximize floodplain habitat function with minimum flows.
- Cache Slough restoration – beneficial effects of restored habitat and beneficial effects on hydrodynamics.
- Suisun Marsh restoration – adopted restoration approaches and amount from existing Suisun Marsh Plan.
- Sacramento River “bypass flows” at Hood – see figure 3 in the *Overview* document. Intended to address the need for transport of larval smelt and sweeping velocities for improved fish-screen function.
- South Delta exports – uses Old and Middle River rule to set criteria for operations.
- Delta outflow targets – a challenging target to establish, given a wide range of views on the topic. The Team described how it had settled for practical purposes on a number to use for now to conduct further analyses, with an understanding that the parties might elect to modify the targets once further information became available.

Following the synopses of the draft and the ongoing work of the Integration Team, the SC members continued with their discussion of the *Overview* draft. Comments touched on expectations about the manner in which the *Overview* would be incorporated into revisions to chapter 3, a desire on the part of some to expand the list of “core elements” to include certain conservation measures developed by the Other Stressors Workgroup, and the desire on the part of some for greater specificity on the NCCPA elements of the conservation strategy for terrestrial species and communities. Several comments also spoke to the desirability to expand the participation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the deliberations of the SC given its significant role in plan implementation.

Concluding Remarks on the *Overview* document.

Towards the end of the discussion of the *Overview*, members of the SC agreed that it should contain a brief synopsis of its intended purpose, as follows:

The Steering Committee agrees the approach and direction contained in the Overview provides a guide for moving forward, identifying issues for further analyses, without foreclosing additional refinements of the characterizations presented herein.

The representative of American Rivers expressed his view that the *Overview* draft reflected a good description of the current status of the BDCP and his support for it. The Department of Fish and Game noted that the BDCP appeared headed in the right direction, as presented in the *Overview* document, and could result in favorable regulatory outcomes from a fisheries perspective. Representatives of the U.S. FWS concurred with the DFG statement and applauded the SC for meeting the December deadline. Representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation agreed with the general direction BDCP is headed as presented in the *Overview* document. The Chair then asked the Steering Committee for its affirmation of the *Overview* document, as both described and discussed, and the SC members provided that affirmation. The Chair then requested the ability for BDCP staff to make the necessary technical and conforming revisions to the *Overview* draft to reflect the discussions of the SC, and there was no objection to her request. She then noted that the revised document will be distributed before the January 16, 2009 SC meeting.

Public comment:

Following the completion of the discussion of the draft *Overview* document, the Chair opened the meeting for public comment and a number of comments and questions were forthcoming, most of which were focused on the *Overview* document and specific elements of the draft. BDCP technical staff and selected Steering Committee members responded to the queries. Topics included issues associated with the overall schedule, the purpose of the *Overview* document, projections of water quality effects of different planning scenarios, and the outcome of some of the hydrologic modeling which had been underway.

Attendees

Management and Representatives

Karen Scarborough (Chair, The Resources Agency)

Will Stelle (The Resources Agency)

Laura King Moon (State Water Contractors)

Marc Ebbin (The Resources Agency/DWR)

Karla Nemeth (The Resources Agency)

Leo Winternitz (California Bay-Delta Authority)

Barbara McDonnell (DWR)

Sue Fry (USBR)

Brent Walthall (Kern County Water District)

Roger Patterson (Metropolitan)

Greg Zlotnick (Santa Clara Valley)

Jason Peltier (Westlands)
Kurt Arends (Zone 7)
Steve Ottemoeller (Friant Water Authority)
Melinda Terry (North Delta Water Authority)
Richard Roos-Collins (American Rivers/Natural Heritage Institute)
Kim Delfino (Defenders of Wildlife)
Ann Hayden (Environmental Defense)
Anthony Saracino (The Nature Conservancy)
Kenny Watkins (California Farm Bureau Federation)
Greg Gartrell (Contra Costa Water District)
John McCamman (DFG)
Carl Wilcox (DFG)
John Engbring (USFWS)
Ted Meyers (NMFS)
Paul Cylinder (SAIC)
Pete Rawlings (SAIC)

On phone

Tom Howard (SWRCB)
John Cillemi (Mirant)
Gary Bobker (The Bay Institute)
John Chillemi (Mirant)
Ara Azhderian (SLDMWA)
Wayne Spencer (CBI)
Steve Rothert (American Rivers)

Other attendees

See sign-in sheets
