

AQUATIC CONSERVATION MEASURES PROPOSED FOR EFFECTS ANALYSIS
UNDER BAY DELTA CONSERVATION PLAN

January 27, 2010

DRAFT

Introduction

The Steering Committee requests analysis of the set of aquatic conservation measures outlined in the table below, to determine the potential effects on species that are proposed for coverage under the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). This analysis will support the further development of the BDCP, its Environmental Impact Statement/Report (EIS/R), and related Biological Assessment.

In August 2009, the Steering Committee released a working draft of BDCP Chapter 3, describing a conservation strategy. Pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act (“ESA”), section 10, and the state Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (“NCCPA”), this strategy consists of biological goals and objectives, conservation measures to meet these goals and objectives, and an adaptive management and monitoring program to improve the effectiveness of the plan over the course of its implementation. The aquatic conservation measures consist of three elements: modification, construction, and operation of water supply conveyance facilities; habitat restoration; and measures to manage other stressors that affect covered species. The Steering Committee requested and considered public input on Chapter 3 last fall.

Table 3.5 in the August 2009 Chapter 3 describes a “DRAFT Proposed Long-Term BDCP Water Operations Range of Criteria for Effects Analysis.” It set out potential criteria for the operations of Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP). Over the fall, the SAIC consultant team conducted a preliminary analysis of the hydrodynamic effects and, with the assistance of technical teams, conducted an analysis of the biological effects of these criteria. The purpose of this preliminary review was to support a decision on the proposed operational criteria to be evaluated in the comprehensive effects analysis in 2010.

The Steering Committee, having considered comments from its members and other stakeholders, has now refined the August 2009 aquatic conservation measures over the fall. With respect to operations criteria, the attached document, “SAIC Consultant Team Recommendations for Long Term Operations” (Jan. 27, 2010), revised the earlier description on the basis of the preliminary analysis described above. [Describe other attached documents that relate to long-term ops.] [Document name] describes near-term operations until operation of new conveyance infrastructure. [Document name] refines the earlier description of habitat restoration measures and other stressor measures.

As required by the ESA, the NCCPA, and other applicable laws, the next step in the development of the BDCP will be a comprehensive analysis of positive and negative effects of these aquatic conservation measures on covered species as well as other resources. The SAIC consultant team, with assistance from technical work groups, will now undertake this analysis, which will draw on all available models and new information that has become available in recent months.

The aquatic conservation measures attached here reflect the current thinking of the Steering Committee on their appropriate shape and scale for the purpose of comprehensive effects analysis, after three years of work. They may become the final aquatic conservation measures for the BDCP. Modifications may be made to these measures as the Steering Committee considers (i) the results of the effects analysis, (ii) the related alternatives analysis under NEPA/CEQA, (iii) the development of other plan elements described below, and (iv) how to optimize achievement of the ecosystem and water supply goals of this plan. In turn, the effects analysis will be as iterative as necessary to evaluate alternatives or refined analytical parameters.

The Steering Committee will continue to refine the conservation strategy, including more specific descriptions of these aquatic conservation measures, as it prepares the draft BDCP. The current schedule calls for release of the draft plan for formal public review in Fall 2010. By agreeing to subject these measures to a comprehensive effects analysis, no member of the Steering Committee is committing that the draft or final BDCP will contain each or all of these measures.

Over the next several months, the Steering Committee will continue to develop other essential elements of the plan that have been only partly resolved in the working draft. All of these remaining elements will be included in the public review draft before its release. These include, but are not limited to:

- Goals and objectives, monitoring, and adaptive management program;
- Terrestrial conservation measures;
- Governance;;
- Funding plan;
- Siting and design of proposed conveyance facilities; and
- Assurances and obligations.