

JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT
Q&As - FOR DISTRIBUTION
Combined Working Draft

What is the urgent need for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)?

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is both a vital ecosystem for hundreds of aquatic and terrestrial species and a critical source of California's water supply. It provides millions of Californians in the Delta, the San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Valley, and Southern California with water supplies that support businesses, homes, and much of the nation's domestically grown fresh produce. It is a responsibility of the state and federal governments to lead the effort to sustain this vital resource.

The Delta of today has experienced significant change over the past 150 years that is likely to accelerate over the next several decades. Subsidence is affecting land within levees and the levees themselves. Climate change is increasing water temperatures, affecting runoff patterns, contributing to more extreme weather events, and causing rising sea levels. These impacts will put increasing strain on the Delta and will contribute to the already significant declines in native fish species. Moreover, seismic risk and a storm similar to Superstorm Sandy may represent the most significant threat to the Delta as we know it. Either of these events could make it impossible to use the Delta as a water supply for years or even permanently. The economic damage of such an event would be in the tens of billions of dollars. Simply put, the status quo is unsustainable from either an environmental or an economic perspective. The BDCP and associated actions represent the best hope for the change needed to achieve the State's policy of co-equal goals and lead to a sustainable future for the Delta.

What has changed since the July 25 announcement?

Last July U.S. Interior Secretary Kenneth Salazar and Governor Brown together announced revisions to an earlier draft of the BDCP, including a 40 percent reduction in the capacity of proposed new water diversion intakes along the Sacramento River. These revised elements remain part of the BDCP outlined in the Chapters being released today. What these documents show are the recent work to determine proposed water project operations and tie those operations to ecological benchmarks.

The newly-released documents describe in detail the more than 200 specific biological goals and objectives that will guide implementation of the plan over coming decades so that it achieves the dual goals of water supply reliability and healthier, more resilient populations of native fish and wildlife. Those biological goals and objectives, to be assessed through sustained monitoring and research, range from the growth rates of individual fish to overall increases in a species' population.

The newly-released chapters also detail the proposed operation of a new system of diversion facilities and tunnels to carry water from the Delta. A new water project diversion point along the Sacramento River and 35 miles of underground tunnels would secure water deliveries against catastrophe; at any time, a flood or earthquake could

inundate the below-sea-level islands in the interior Delta and draw salt water toward the existing south Delta pumping plants, which would have to be shut down to avoid contamination.

Are these proposed chapters final?

No. The proposed project remains a work in progress and some details are still in development. Once the proposed project is fully defined it will be subject to comprehensive analysis, formal public comment, and review under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), California’s Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA), and NEPA/CEQA. This includes the ongoing review of a full range of alternatives that encompass a “no action” alternative and facility sizes from 3,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 15,000 cfs. Final decisions on the entire plan, including the North Delta diversion and conveyance facility, will be made only at the end of the environmental and regulatory review process. Ultimately, the BDCP will need to meet applicable statutory standards requirements in order to be permitted.

Why are you only releasing parts of the Plan at a time?

The current and upcoming postings of the BDCP are to increase transparency and to give the public an advance copy of the draft BDCP before it is formally available for public comment this summer. This will allow interested stakeholders to start digesting the large amount of information while we continue to evaluate and refine parts of the draft plan with the relevant state and federal agencies. While we will continue working together on improving the document, the overall structure and concept of the proposed project and conservation measures will remain consistent.

When can we see the rest of the Chapters?

- March 14 (Thursday) –chapters 1-4
- March 27 (Wednesday) –chapters 5-7
- Week of April 22–chapters 8-12

Do these chapters incorporate comments and edits from the federal agencies?

We are very encouraged by the progress on the BDCP that has resulted from the close collaboration of federal agencies and their/our state partners. While we have worked closely on the details of these Chapters, Federal agencies are still reviewing this version to ensure their comments have been appropriately included and addressed.

What about the “portfolio” alternative? Are you looking at that?

The federal and state agencies will evaluate the components of the “portfolio” alternative that are within the scope of the BDCP. This will be discussed further in both the BDCP and in the associated EIR/EIS. Other aspects of the “portfolio” alternative are critical to securing California’s water future and the Delta and are part of the broader California Water Plan and Central Valley Flood Protection Plan. The Delta Stewardship Council, through the Delta Plan, is charged with setting state policies that link these features to the long-term management of the Delta towards the co-equal goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration.

What are the biological goals and objectives and how were they determined?

The BDCP includes 214 biological goals and objectives (BGOs) for 57 fish and terrestrial species, their habitats, and the Delta ecosystem. All of the BGOs were developed using the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound) principles. This strategy includes specific targets such as large fish populations, healthier individual fish, and bigger habitat areas. The BGOs are the basis of the conservation strategy and are designed to serve four important functions:

1. 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.
2. When possible, provide quantitative targets and timeframes for achieving desired outcomes.
3. Serve as yardsticks to measure progress in achieving outcomes.
4. Provide metrics for the monitoring program to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation measures.

The BGOs were developed over several years, through a process informed by input from a group of independent science advisors, DWR and Bureau of Reclamation staff, representatives of each of the fish agencies, and stakeholders from interested nongovernmental organizations, public water agencies and others. The process included two independent science review panels and a public working group.

Will the BDCP really achieve all of these biological goals and objectives?

The newly-released documents describe in detail the more than 200 specific biological goals and objectives that will guide implementation of the plan over coming decades so that it achieves the dual goals of water supply reliability and healthier, more resilient populations of native fish and wildlife. Those biological goals and objectives, to be assessed through sustained monitoring and research, range from the growth rates of individual fish to overall increases in a species' population.

Biological goals – sustainable natural populations, communities, and other overarching targets – are the ultimate biological outcomes articulated in the Plan. The Plan is expected to contribute to achieving these, though because some factors are not within its control, it may not be able to fully achieve them. Biological objectives are lower-level outcomes, such as higher growth rates, better survival, or higher food production, that are within the power of the BDCP to achieve.

These biological goals and objectives are the key focus of the BDCP and the core of its conservation strategy. They will be used to measure its success and continuously evaluated to ensure the project remains permissible. The BDCP contains 22 conservation measures that are designed to achieve the biological objectives of the BDCP and make progress toward biological goals, thereby satisfying state and federal regulatory requirements.

What will happen if the biological objectives are not being met under BDCP implementation?

Due to the uncertainty inherent in the Delta ecosystem it is impossible to know precisely whether the current conservation strategy will fully achieve all of the desired outcomes, but a robust adaptive management program will allow us to continually adjust and improve the strategy to better achieve the goals and objectives.

What does an “accelerated habitat restoration program” really mean?

Habitat restoration is a priority for BDCP agencies and the BDCP includes an accelerated habitat restoration program that will target 30,000 acres of aquatic habitat in the next 15 years. The BDCP is intended to reverse the trend of habitat loss, habitat degradation, and declining populations of native species, and restore more natural flow patterns to the Delta. It would also reconnect floodplains, develop new marshes, return riverbanks to a more natural state and is intended to boost food supplies for covered fish. Given changes to the natural communities and physics of the estuary that have occurred over time, the outcome of restoration is uncertain. There may also be important emergent effects that make restoration more or less effective than expected. The accelerated habitat restoration program is designed to address critical questions about the effectiveness of restoration as quickly as possible, so that adjustments to the BDCP conservation strategy that might be needed can be made as early as possible.

How does the BDCP reduce overall reliance on the Delta?

The BDCP is intended to reverse the trend of habitat loss, habitat degradation, and declining populations of native species, and will restore more natural flow patterns to the Delta. The BDCP would also help California cope with changing weather patterns by enabling the capture of large amounts of winter flood flow at times of minimal ecological risk. In addition, reliance on the Delta will be reduced through key integrated water management elements that would help support the BDCP. These include:

- Increases in water use efficiency, both in homes and on farms
- Increases in other sources of water supply, such as through the recycling of wastewater; and
- Improved operational efficiency and transfers or exchanges that move water to meet demand.

California is using water smarter than ever before, but great potential savings remain. A 2009 law requires urban water suppliers to reduce per capita water use 20 percent by 2020, a change that could reduce demand by 2 million acre-feet a year. Irrigation districts that supply farmers are now required to charge farmers based at least in part on the volume of water they use, a change that could accelerate the trend in California agriculture to reduce water consumption. Using municipal wastewater to irrigate landscaping, desalination, capture of stormwater, and the elimination of bureaucratic barriers to water transfers will help to stretch local supplies and reduce dependence on exports of water from the Delta.

Why is it better for the Delta ecosystem to take water out of the Sacramento River, before it flows through the Delta, than to take it out of the south Delta, after it has flowed through?

The existing SWP and CVP pumps cause a reversal in natural river flows, alter salmon migratory patterns, and have led to the decline of sensitive fish species such as the Delta smelt. By relocating the main point of water diversion to the north and establishing new operating criteria to reduce reliance on south Delta diversions, the BDCP is intended to improve migratory patterns and habitat conditions for fish and allow for greater operational flexibility.

Utilizing north Delta diversion facilities also allow for state-of-the-art fish screens, which are not possible under the current system. These screened intakes would operate under specific criteria that would allow bypass flows necessary to maintain ecological function throughout the Delta. Furthermore, decreased reverse flows in the south Delta will create a more natural flow pattern through the Delta. Restrictions on operations of the existing SWP and CVP pumps this year to protect Delta smelt and listed salmonids provide a good example of this benefit. Controls put in place to limit reverse flows resulted in reduced exports of about 700,000 acre-feet between December 1, 2012 and February 1, 2013. If the proposed Sacramento River intakes had been in place, much of this water could have been delivered while still maintaining existing protections for Delta smelt and salmon. Operations proposed by BDCP will include much greater limitations on reverse flows than the existing biological opinions.

Is this project about getting more water from the Delta? How much water will be exported? No. BDCP is about water reliability and habitat restoration. During the last 20 years, we have exported an average of 5.3 million acre feet (MAF). The modeling for this project shows a potential average export ranging between 4.8 MAF to 5.6 MAF, but this could be refined as more modeling is completed. Scientific disagreement exists on the amount of fresh water outflows that are necessary at different times of the year for the health of the Delta, and the Bay Delta Conservation Plan proposes a collaborative process to use applied science in the years ahead to answer questions about spring and fall outflow, which may affect water deliveries. Correspondingly, careful study of the effects of the accelerated habitat restoration program will help determine what benefits are obtained from restored and created estuarine habitat, which may also affect water deliveries.

How much will this new water facility cost, and who will pay for it?

The capital cost for the water facility is \$14 billion and will be funded by public water agency rate payers who would benefit from improved water supply reliability. Chapters of the plan to be released in coming weeks will describe costs and funding sources and analyze alternative ways that the dual goals of ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability might be achieved. These will be available in April and will be discussed at a public meeting.

What is a decision tree, and how will it work?

The Decision Tree is designed to address two key areas of uncertainty for the BDCP: the importance of the degree of salinity in the western delta during the Fall (Fall X2) in achieving abundance and habitat for delta smelt; and the importance of spring outflow for achieving longfin smelt abundance. Other adaptive management elements will address the effectiveness of habitat restoration, which is also intended to achieve higher abundances of longfin and delta smelt.

Because of the importance of these two factors in the Plan's ability to meet the biological goals and objectives for these species, their effect on water operations, and the level of disagreement surrounding them, these two factors are addressed in a collaborative "decision tree" adaptive management process that will be used to evaluate and refine spring and fall outflow criteria prior to initiating dual conveyance operations. Initial operating criteria will be specified by the permitting agencies based on best science available at the time of permitting. Prior to commencement of conveyance operations, these operating criteria will be subject to a new determination by the permitting agencies, based on all best available science developed during the decision tree process, specifying what the spring and fall outflow criteria will be at the time the new facility begins to operate.

The decision tree process will involve the following steps.

1. Clearly articulate scientific questions designed to address the effect of each operating criterion on the ability of the Plan to meet relevant biological objectives.
2. Develop and implement a science plan and data collection program to answer these questions and reduce uncertainties.
3. At the time dual conveyance operations begin, the permitting agencies identify spring and fall outflow criteria sufficient to meet the biological goals and objectives.

The decision tree process functions as an early part of the adaptive management and monitoring program. Once the initial fall and spring outflow criteria are determined based on the results of the decision tree process, the decision tree component of the adaptive management process will end. At that point the adaptive management and monitoring program will continue to study and may adjust all aspects of the conservation strategy, including spring and fall outflow operating criteria for dual conveyance operations, the restoration measures, and other elements of the conservation measures and strategy.

If elected representatives of the Delta would support a 3,000 cfs facility, why not build that facility, and then consider modifications/additional capacity if that facility proves insufficient to meet water supply needs while improving the ecology of the Delta?

As a threshold matter, the draft EIR/EIS will analyze a 3,000 cfs facility so we will continue to look at its ability to meet the co-equal goals. The proposed facility outlined today is larger because the science is indicating that a larger facility is needed to significantly improve conditions for fish in the South Delta and to guarantee water supply reliability. This improvement is being balanced with the need to minimize disruption in the North Delta which is why the proposed facility was downsized from 15,000 cfs to

9,000 cfs. We also need to consider seismic risk and the potential loss of pumping capability in the South Delta over time. As we've indicated, however, there is more work and analyses to do before any final decisions are made on the ultimate size of the new facility.

How will the BDCP affect up-stream water users and other senior water rights holders?

State and U.S. governments will make sure implementation of BDCP will not result in adverse effects on the water rights of those in the watershed of the Delta, nor will it impose any obligations on water users upstream of the Delta to supplement flows in and through the Delta.