

Public Involvement in the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)

Introduction: *The challenges California faces in managing its water supply and making major steps toward the recovery of the Delta ecosystem are significant; however, resolution has never been as close at hand as it is today. To move the BDCP through the remaining issues will require an efficient and productive process that creates a forum for making the best and most widely supported decisions as quickly as possible. Doing so will guarantee that both co-equal goals—Delta ecosystem health and reliable water supplies—are reconciled and achieved, and all environmental requirements are met.*

As the BDCP is developed and reviewed over the coming months, members of the public will have numerous opportunities for input, review and comment. In addition to opportunity for the public input on the draft plan and environmental review documents provided under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the California Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA), the public will be provided further opportunities for input and information regarding BDCP, as described below.

Summary: Small working groups of stakeholders will be formed to help address specific issues that must be resolved before a Draft BDCP can be completed. Public meetings on the BDCP and related issues will be held bi-monthly or more frequently as circumstances may warrant for all interested parties and the general public. Input received at the public meetings and reports from the working groups will support the development of the Draft BDCP submitted for regulatory approval. Formal public comment on the BDCP will be solicited when the Draft BDCP and Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) are released in accordance with CEQA/NEPA (for the EIR/EIS) and NCCPA/ESA (for the Draft Plan). Working groups will be transparent, but will also enable frank and open discussions among participants.

Public Meetings: BDCP will host public meetings to provide all interested parties and the general public updates and information about the progress made on BDCP by the working groups, to provide an opportunity for input, and to report on next steps. The public meetings will be held in Sacramento and will allow sufficient time to cover all topics in a meaningful and substantive way. The meetings will also be Webcast to encourage the broadest participation.

Public Meetings – Anticipated Scope of Issues:

- Water Operations for Dual Conveyance
- Methodologies for Analysis of Species Benefits and Impacts
- Conservation Measures to Reduce Other Stressors
- Biological Goals and Objectives
- Habitat – Yolo Bypass Fisheries Enhancement Plan
- Governance Structure
- Adaptive Range of Water Operations Criteria
- Habitat – Cache Slough; South Delta
- BDCP Relationship to San Joaquin River Restoration Program
- BDCP Compatibility with Delta Agriculture
- Conveyance Facilities – Size and Configuration
- BDCP Implications for Levee Maintenance Mitigation Requirements
- Finance

Working Group Input: Working groups will be kept small – about 12 people – to ensure productivity. All those interested in positive contributions towards the completion of BDCP will be welcome to participate. If more than 12 people or stakeholder groups express an interest in participating in any one working group, interested parties will be asked to work together to identify a member who represents a reasonable range of interests. Members of the working group should have the maximum ability to speak for and obtain timely feedback from their organization or interest group.

Working Group Anticipated Scope and Schedule: The working groups will be focused on addressing the remaining substantive issues that must be resolved before a Draft Plan is to be completed. They will typically meet bi-weekly, but more or less as the group itself decides. Working groups will be staffed, address a specific charge, and conform to a time schedule. As circumstances warrant, they may request independent science review. Given the variety of issues working groups will address, some issues may be resolved relatively quickly (two or three meetings) while others may require a more extended schedule for resolution.

The preliminary list of first round working groups (starting and/or concluding between April and June) includes:

- Biological Goals and Objectives
- Habitat – Yolo Bypass Fishery Enhancement Plan; South Delta
- Governance Structure
- Water Quality Modeling (in Delta)

The preliminary list of second round working groups (starting and/or concluding between June and August) includes:

- Adaptive Range of Water Operations Criteria
- Habitat – Cache Slough; South Delta
- BDCP Relationship to San Joaquin River Restoration Program
- BDCP Compatibility with Delta Agriculture, Stone Lakes Wildlife Refuge
- Conveyance Facilities – Size and Configuration Issues
- Financing
- BDCP Implications for Levee Maintenance Mitigation Requirements

The preliminary list of third round working groups (starting and/or concluding between August and October) includes:

- Effects on Covered Species
- Regulatory Assurances

Decision Making: Final decision making will of course be reserved to the permit applicant(s). The permit applicant(s) will carefully consider the products of the working groups and advice provided by the permitting agencies.