

Meeting: BDCP Public Meeting
Location: West Sacramento Civic Center Galleria
Date: September 27, 2011
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Meeting Summary

Background

This is the third in a series of public meetings to provide updates on the BDCP and active working groups, facilitate public discussion about outstanding issues to be resolved to complete a draft plan, including a discussion on conveyance facilities, took place on September 27, 2011. Staff provided status of the updated milestone schedule for the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) and Conservation Plan; the conveyance alternatives under consideration; California State Parks' Delta Recreation Plan; economic benefits related to the construction of the proposed conveyance facilities; and the following working groups – Governance, Biological Goals and Objectives, Yolo Bypass Fishery Enhancement Planning Team, South Delta Habitat, Delta Agriculture and Adaptive Limits of Water Operations Criteria. A presentation was made on conveyance facilities and sizing.

Approximately 90 stakeholders and members of the general public attended.

Alternatives Analysis

Federico Barajas provided an update on the alternatives under consideration, noting that there are now 10 alternatives being analyzed.

The following summarizes questions and discussion on the topic:

- Discussion regarding the funding MOA that the state and federal government negotiated for planning services, specifically the language regarding the water contractors only agreeing to fund through the Draft EIR/EIS and that development of the ROD was not included. This is described as a checkpoint at the draft document before proceeding.
- Discussion of the Fish Facilities Technical Team memorandum, recently posted on the website, which addresses recommendations regarding staging construction capacity. For example, building one intake and testing it before building the entire project.
- Discussion of physical modeling for the system. The modeling of alternatives has begun and consultants will ensure there is a level of information for each alternative and will ensure any changes are applied to each alternative.
- Regarding the timing for identifying and including alternatives – these will continue to be refined through the release of the EIR/EIS. However, lead agencies want to make sure to fully analyze each alternative. There are target dates established to help ensure that the schedule does not slip.
- The Effects Analysis will include a detailed analysis of Alternatives 1 and 1A. Additionally, a range of alternatives will be evaluated under the NEPA/CEQA process.

- Discussion of Alternative 2B including less habitat restoration than other alternatives. Tidal marsh would be reduced from 65,000 acres to 25,000 acres, but other components of habitat restoration remain the same. The total would be reduced from approximately 113,000 acres of habitat restoration to 73,000 acres.

Other Updates

Delta Recreation Plan

Dan Ray, California State Parks, gave a presentation on the Recreation Proposal for the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

The following summarizes questions and discussion on the topic:

- Discussion of the strategy to exclude costs from the planning document.
- Concern that the state should preserve what we already have rather than plan for new facilities.
- Concern that the proposal is not fiscally responsible given the state's current budget challenges.
- Discussion that the BDCP has not allocated funds for recreation but some funds for habitat could benefit recreation.

Employment Impacts

David Sunding of The Brattle Group gave a presentation on the economic benefits related to the construction of a proposed conveyance facility. The study considered two options – a 15,000 cfs facility and a 3,000 cfs facility. The results estimate the direct, indirect, and induced jobs created.

The following summarizes questions and discussion on the topic:

- Concern that some assumptions used in the study may be outdated and, if so, are other BDCP studied being prepared using the same information? Dr. Sunding noted to keep in mind that updated data can easily be plugged in to the model as we move forward.
- Discussion on why a “no project” option was not considered, with the response that this was not the purpose of this effort.
- Concern was expressed over the suggestion that people would be well off and would spread wealth throughout the community if DWR purchased their property.
- Request for a more comprehensive economic analysis to be completed. Dr. Meral noted that this type of economic evaluation is in the initial stages.
- Concern that the options considered represent a preferred alternative. The scenarios selected were used only as examples. The model could easily be run under other scenarios.

Outstanding Issues Update

Updates were given on the following ongoing working groups.

Governance

Dr. Meral provided an update that not much has changed since the last public meeting. He reported that the next working group meeting is scheduled in three weeks. Dr. Meral opened the floor to working group participants for comment.

Several questions from the public were asked regarding the schedule for upcoming working group meetings, specifically the Finance group, which Dr. Meral reported is still pending.

Biological Goals and Objectives

Ellen Berryman, ICF, reported that objectives for 11 aquatic species are under development and are expected to be completed by October 31, 2011. The next meeting of the working group is October 13.

The following summarizes questions and discussion on the topic:

- Discussion of the definition of an objective as it relates to Biological Objectives.
- Need for clear and specific goals and objectives for all species.

Yolo Bypass Fishery Enhancement

Karla Nemeth reported that the Yolo Bypass working group is currently developing a suite of draft operations for the Fremont Weir and that they are in the process of refining criteria for those operations. The suite of operations will then be tested in the Effects Analysis. The group is waiting for several key pieces of information, and the next meeting is scheduled for October 14. Ms. Nemeth opened the floor to working group participants for comment.

Jason Peltier, Westlands Water District, commented that a lot of good data and good discussion has come out of this group and he hopes that it is used as a model for dealing with other Conservation Measures. Another topic the group is addressing is stranding and finding ways to make sure these fish are not lost.

Doug Brown, Yolo County, commented that Yolo County feels the results of the last meeting moved a number of initiatives forward, and that there is still a lot of work to be done. Yolo County is developing an Agricultural Impact Analysis and will have some data to discuss at the October meeting.

Melinda Terry notified the audience that an Association of California Water Agencies tour on the Yolo Bypass Flood Management System is scheduled for October 13 and is open to the public.

South Delta Habitat

Scott Woodland, DWR, reported that the working group has met twice. He noted that they are focusing on corridor habitat and actions within four major corridors to provide habitat compatible with flood management opportunities. The working group meets again next week.

The following summarizes questions and discussion on the topic:

- Discussion of how Other Stressor measures are being considered and updated, as the Steering Committee no longer exists.
- Discussion of the types of measures proposed in the South Delta. Large tidal marsh areas are still being considered but there may not be as many opportunities in the South Delta for this type of restoration as originally thought.

Delta Agriculture

Karla Nemeth reported that the first meeting was held on September 13. The meeting was meant to get feedback from the agricultural community on a broad set of issues, including localized impacts to water quality, local flows, and increased risk of levee failure as a result of habitat restoration. The Natural Resources Agency is now considering how best to move forward and may do so by focusing on geographical areas rather than addressing agriculture Delta-wide. Ms. Nemeth opened the floor to working group participants for comment.

A participant commented on frustration with the short notice given for the meeting and that it places the burden on the public to monitor the website for meetings. He also commented that to him, it is very clear that BDCP is a water export plan rather than a habitat restoration plan.

Jason Peltier, Westlands Water District, commented that the water contractor's expectations are not to export more water but to restore to the degree possible historic export levels.

Osha Meserve commented that there are many issues still being raised that she and others have been trying to introduce for years and it felt like the working group was starting over. They have put a lot of effort into bringing these issues forward and would like a place where they can be addressed.

Adaptive Limits of Water Operations Criteria

Dr. Meral reported that the first meeting was held last week. The group was given a draft charge. It was determined that the group needs additional technical information to consider and respond to. The October 13 meeting is being canceled to allow time to prepare this proposal.

Conveyance

Dr. Meral commented that based on the broad interest in participating in a Conveyance working group, the decision has been made to address it in this public meeting format.

Dale Hoffman-Floerke, DWR, gave a brief overview presentation on dual conveyance, north Delta diversions and the proposed conveyance alternatives. She noted that there is no preferred project at this time, but there are a number of alternatives that will be analyzed in the EIR/EIS for consideration any of which could ultimately become the preferred alternative.

The following summarizes questions and discussion on the topic:

- Discussion of the programmatic vs. project level EIR/EIS and what analysis will be done for specific measures. The intent is that the programmatic EIR/EIS will meet the test to complete construction of the conveyance facility.
- Discussion of the criteria – hydrology, avoiding sensitive areas, land use, biological and cultural impacts, etc. – being used to determine the best locations for the pumps.
- Discussion of water quality and ground water aquifers as it relates to the BDCP.
- Need to discuss engineering related to safety concerns of the rate of water, velocity, and movement through the proposed tunnel.
- Concern regarding Sutter and Steamboat Sloughs and the source of their water when the Sacramento River flows are down to only 5,000 cfs.
- Need to discuss modeling data in regards to increasing salinity levels.
- Discussion of the size and number of intakes.
- Addressing water quality standards, the need to consider beneficial impacts of BDCP not just ensuring that the standards are not violated.
- Need to be mindful of Northern California interests, such as spawning and breeding grounds, water supply, contracts for rafting, etc.
- Discussion of the economic investment coming from the ratepayers of the involved water agencies, not from taxpayers.

Next Meeting (Time and Place):

The next is scheduled for November 16, 2011, at 1:30 p.m.

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