South Delta Habitat Working Group Charter

DWR is interested in developing one or more conservation measures for improving habitat in the San Joaquin River corridor in the southern part of the Delta for integration into the BDCP. Many opportunities for improving habitat in the South Delta provide flood management benefits. Development of the conservation measure will examine ways to reduce flooding for communities along the San Joaquin River. The purpose of the South Delta Habitat Working Group is to provide input to DWR to be used in development of a conservation measure. The SDHWG will also assist DWR and others to gain a broader understanding of public and interest group perspectives.

While BDCP is not responsible for paying for flood management programs, the conservation measure should be developed in a way that integrates flood hazard reduction and other economic benefits where consistent with meeting BDCP objectives. In developing the conservation measure, the working group will assume a new dual conveyance strategy under which a substantial amount of water will be diverted from a new facility on the Sacramento River in combination with reduced, but continued diversions from state and federal pumping facilities in the S. Delta, particularly in the summer months. The conservation measure will focus on providing habitat benefits for salmonids and other native fish species, but should also identify opportunities for creating habitat for terrestrial species, including waterfowl, to the extent practicable.

The conservation measure should also be developed to protect access to water rights and water quality for South Delta agriculture and municipal and industrial uses. The conservation measure will recognize the need to minimize disruption to existing agricultural operations, especially perennial crops, and will minimize the need for relocation of residential structures to the maximum extent practicable. While not a primary purpose of the conservation measure, recreational benefits of the plan will also be considered and created where possible.

The South Delta Habitat Working Group will provide input to develop a conservation measure consistent with this charge and BDCP plan objectives and will examine several alternative approaches for achieving those objectives, including habitat and flood management corridors along the San Joaquin River upstream of Paradise Cut, the Paradise Cut / Old River corridor, the Middle River corridor, as well as the mainstem San Joaquin River corridor.

The South Delta Habitat Working Group will also consider:

- How the conservation measure will be phased-in over time, including how adaptive management will be incorporated as a key principle.
- How various conservation measure concepts perform under the San Joaquin River restoration flow regime and future flows that may be ordered by the SWRCB or result from climate change.

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- Specific guidance from regulatory agencies regarding development of levee side vegetation, large woody debris, quantifying the benefits of floodplain and tidal habitats, and best management practices for avoiding conditions that favor exotic species.
- How the conservation measure will perform under a scenario that assumes 55 inches of sea level rise by the end of the century.
- How the conservation measure will perform if several islands in the central and west Delta are permanently inundated in the future.
- How the conservation measure may be consistent with a barrier at the head of Old River, or how it can achieve the same or better benefits without the barrier or with a barrier open more of the time than currently planned.
- How the conservation measure might perform under a condition where Old or Middle Rivers are isolated from the influence of the South Delta pumping plants.

The working group will have access to a technical work group for scientific information regarding the development of the conservation measure. The technical work group will evaluate the extent to which various types and configurations of habitat advance the overall objectives of a South Delta conservation measure.

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