Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)
Conservation Strategy (CS) Workgroup Meeting
May 21, 2007, 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Resources Agency Bldg., Room 1131

Draft Meeting Notes

Associated documents/handouts:
- Agenda (hard copy only)
- Maps of short-list options (hard copy only)

Action Items and Key Recommendations
- Maps, detailed descriptions, and guidance to SAIC for CS short-list evaluation will be completed by 5/25 and reviewed at the next CS Workgroup meeting on 5/30.
- Recommended conservation strategy options will be ready to present to Steering Committee (SC) at 6/1 meeting.
- Following approval by SC, descriptions of the conservation strategy options will be provided to DRMS for inclusion in the risk analysis (deadline to get to DRMS is June 5).

Meeting goals (Walt Wadlow, co-chair)
The goals of the meeting are: 1) to refine and expand descriptions of CS short-list options to carry forward, and 2) to provide direction to SAIC on further refinement of CS Options to be recommended to SC on 6/1.

CS Short-list progress and discussion
On Thursday 5/17/07 a small group composed of CS Workgroup members and their support staff met at length to continue developing CS options, following-up on discussions at the 5/14 CS Workgroup meeting. The small group discussed the four conservation CS short-list options and habitat restoration actions and that would logically be associated with each one. Chuck Hanson presented base maps developed by SWP PRE's showing the conveyance and operations associated with each option, as well as potential associated habitat restoration actions.

Several members of the CS Workgroup and SAIC met with DRMS representatives last week to discuss how BDCP CS options will be integrated in the upcoming DRMS risk analysis. Pending approval by the Steering Committee, the refined short-list will be provided to DRMS before 6/5. See also Action Items and Key Recommendations.

At today's meeting, C. Hanson summarized the 5/17 working session outcomes and presented the maps, updated based on the small group discussion. Titles will likely change, but the four CS short-list operations/conveyance trunks include:

Option 1- Existing Conveyance
Option 2 - Through-Delta Conveyance
Option 3 - Dual Conveyance
Option 4 - Isolated Facility.

Habitat restoration and enhancement actions associated with Option 1 could also be common elements with the other three options. They could be expanded to other parts of the Delta depending on the intake location and conveyance facilities. Under Option 1, restoration actions would be focused in the northern parts of the Delta in order to avoid the intake pumps in the south Delta. Option 2, which would isolate Old and Middle River flows to the Delta, would include that area plus additional restoration actions in the central Delta. Options 3 and 4 would provide opportunity for restoration throughout the Delta region and flexibility for varying habitat conditions, including salinity. The common restoration actions include:

Upstream actions

1. Floodplain restoration along the main stem of Sacramento. This action would provide additional, seasonally-flooded habitat for splittail and migrating salmonids. Salmonid habitat actions that have been implemented (gravel augmentation) located upstream, with goal of producing more juvenile salmon and steelhead.
2. Yolo Bypass enhancement and restoration of other seasonally-flooded bypass areas.

In-Delta actions

3. Elk Slough, Sutter and Steamboat slough restoration. They would provide bypass a route for juvenile salmonid out-migration before they reach the Delta Cross Channel and Georgiana Slough which carry fish to the central Delta.
4. Cache Slough restoration. This area had the highest concentration of pre-spawning adult smelt this year, and there are opportunities to improve habitat conditions throughout that complex of channels. This restoration action would preferentially add habitat in north Delta. Cache Slough produces large amounts of organic carbon; the current North Bay aqueduct intake is a barrier. A hydrologic connection could be established between high quality habitat in Suisun Marsh and Cache Slough providing built-in resilience to the ecosystem and species.
5. Restoration of western portion of Sherman Island.
6. Wetlands restoration around Rio Vista and Collinsville area.
7. Snodgrass Slough restoration.
8. Mokelumne and Cosumnes Rivers corridors restoration. The effectiveness of this action could be affected by reverse flows in Old and Middle River
9. Stone Lakes corridor restoration. Routing a new Sacramento River bypass through this area would create floodplain habitat.

Downstream actions

10. Expanded Suisun Marsh restoration: Currently large portions are maintained as freshwater marshes, managed for ducks. Increasing tidal-inundated floodplain and wetland vegetation (e.g., by setting back levees) would expand and improve fish habitat.

Additional restoration actions could include:

- Option 2: Barriers separating Old and Middle River, creating a bypass/connection corridor for fish.

- Option 3: Positive barrier fish screen.
- Option 4: Fish guidance device to promote use improved Elk and Steamboat Sloughs.

Discussion
Workgroup members discussed cost allocation, the distinction between operational and restoration actions, and the need for feasibility analysis and consistent scaling in the CS short-list evaluation.

The group noted that in the near future riparian and upland wildlife and plant species that may be adversely affected by habitat restoration and conveyance improvement actions will have to be included as covered species in the BDCP in order to comply with ESA and CESA. These additional species would also need to be addressed to NCCP standards. Covered Activities and mitigation measures will continue to be developed iteratively.

Parameters that members suggested be used in the evaluation include ensuring westward flow, water quality, reduced entrainment, potential upstream habitat effects, harvest, poaching, passage, non-natives, predation, land use, human impacts, and flexible operations.

The Workgroup members will assist SAIC in writing up and mapping restoration actions for the refined short-list options this week and will draft a guidance document for the short-list evaluation. Specifically, before 5/25 Ara Azhderian will provide the text for the refined descriptions of operations under each option; C. Hanson will provide text descriptions of habitat restoration opportunities under each option; Russ Ryan will prepare map graphics illustrating hydrologic operations and the distribution of habitat restoration for each option. SAIC will compile these materials into a single document describing the four CS Options and present it to the Workgroup at the next meeting. See also Action Items and Key Recommendations. Laura King Moon will draft a guidance document for SAIC.

Public Comments
None this week.

Next Meeting
NOTE CHANGE. Wednesday, 5/30/07. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

In attendance

Walt Wadlow (co-chair)
Paul Cylinder
Cindy Darling
Tim Quinn
Barbara McDonnell
Rosalie del Rosario
Richard Roos-Collins
Karla Nemeth
Campbell Ingram (sitting in for co-chair Anthony Saracino)
Steve Rothert
Frank Michny
Ara Azhderian
Leo Winternitz
Laura King Moon
Russ Ryan
Kim Delfino
Tracy Ligon
Frances Brewster
Jamie Roberts
Dave Zezulak
Stephani Sparr
Judi Bendix
Sasha Gennet
Rick Wilder
Justin Frederson

Call-in attendees

Chris Sheering
Michael Bean
John Cain
Marc Ebbin
Dan Jenson