



State Water Resources Control Board



Executive Office

Tam M. Doduc, Board Chair

1001 I Street • Sacramento, California 95814 • (916) 341-5611
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100 • Sacramento, California • 95812-0100
Fax (916) 341-5621 • <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov>

Linda S. Adams

Secretary for
Environmental Protection

Arnold Schwarzenegger

Governor

NOTICE OF PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Discussion of the San Joaquin River Flow Objectives for the San Francisco/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary and an Update on Southern Delta Salinity

Wednesday, September 17, 2008 and continuing
on Wednesday, November 5, 2008

Both sessions will commence at 10:00 a.m.

at

Joe Serna, Jr./Cal-EPA Building
Coastal Hearing Room
1001 I Street
Sacramento, California

SUBJECT OF WORKSHOP

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) will hold a series of workshops to receive information regarding the San Joaquin River flow objectives for fish and wildlife beneficial uses in the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay-Delta). On September 17, 2008, the State Water Board will hold the first workshop, which will provide an overview of various critical issues and public processes concerning the San Joaquin River flow objectives and an update on southern Delta salinity. The State Water Board will use the information obtained in this first workshop to define and more narrowly focus the scope of subsequent workshops on particular issues relating to the San Joaquin River flow objectives. The State Water Board will provide further notice of the November 5, 2008 workshop at a later date.

BACKGROUND

The Bay-Delta includes the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Suisun Marsh, and the embayments upstream of the Golden Gate. The Delta and Suisun Marsh are located where California's two major river systems, the Sacramento and the San Joaquin Rivers, converge to flow westward to meet the incoming seawater tides flowing through the San Francisco Bay. The watershed of the Bay-Delta is a critical source of water supply for much of California and is a source of drinking water for approximately two-thirds of the State's population. The watershed also supplies some of the State's most productive agricultural areas, and it provides water for fish, wildlife, and other public trust uses within and upstream of the Bay-Delta.

The State Water Board regulates both the quality of water in the Bay-Delta and the diversion and use of water released into and taken from the Bay-Delta for water supply. The State Water Board first established water quality flow objectives for the San Joaquin River in the 1995 Water Quality Control Plan for the Bay-Delta (1995 Plan) to protect fish and wildlife beneficial uses.

California Environmental Protection Agency

The State Water Board subsequently reviewed and superseded the 1995 Plan when it adopted the 2006 Water Quality Control Plan for the Bay-Delta (2006 Plan). Due to lack of scientific information needed to make any changes, the San Joaquin River flow objectives were unchanged in the 2006 Plan.

During the State Water Board's review of the 1995 Plan, however, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) provided comments to the State Water Board stating that the San Joaquin River flow objectives were inadequate for the long term protection of fall-run Chinook salmon. Although DFG recommended changes to the objectives, those recommendations were based on modeling that had not yet been completed. Accordingly, recognizing the species recovery concerns within the San Joaquin River basin and the Delta, in the 2006 Plan the State Water Board committed to holding a workshop after revisions were completed to DFG's San Joaquin River salmon escapement model in response to peer review. DFG currently is refining the model to utilize as a tool for assessing the adequacy of San Joaquin River flows.

The current flow objectives include minimum San Joaquin River flows established for three distinct time periods: February through June (excluding April 15 through May 15; spring flows); April 15 through May 15 (pulse flows); and October (fall flows). The spring flows are intended to provide minimum net downstream freshwater flows in the San Joaquin River to address habitat concerns from reduced flows and water quality degradation. The pulse flows were principally developed to aid in cueing Chinook salmon smolt outmigration from the San Joaquin River. The fall flows were developed to provide attraction flows for adult salmon returning to the watershed to spawn.

In Water Right Decision 1641 (D1641), revised March 15, 2000, the State Water Board implemented the spring and fall flow objectives by requiring United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) to meet the objectives. In order to obtain additional scientific information regarding the objectives, in D1641 the State Water Board also approved conducting the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP) experiment proposed in the San Joaquin River Agreement (SJRA) in lieu of meeting the pulse flow objectives in the 1995 Plan, until 2012. The VAMP is a large-scale, long-term, experimental management program designed to protect juvenile Chinook salmon migrating from the San Joaquin River through the Bay-Delta. The SJRA allocates responsibility to certain water right holders for meeting the pulse flow objectives and for providing supplemental flows at certain times, and provides a mechanism for conducting the VAMP. In the 2006 Plan, the program of implementation for the flow objectives was changed to allow for the ongoing staged implementation of the pulse flow objectives using the VAMP until the end of 2011.

Since implementation of the San Joaquin River flow objectives, salmon populations in the watershed have continued to decline. Salmon runs throughout the Central Valley have experienced a significant decline in the last six years. DFG's annual escapement data indicates a continuing downward trend in abundance estimates for the fall-run Chinook salmon since 2002.¹ The estimated San Joaquin River system salmon escapement in 2007 was 2,578 fish which is second to the historic low. The record low estimate of two-year-old returning adults ("jacks") in 2007 is of particular concern because it predicts a very small run of three-year-old fish (typically the dominant year class) returning in the fall of 2008. In addition, abundance

¹ Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Fisheries Branch, Status of Central Valley Chinook Salmon Populations: 2007 Annual Spawning Escapement Update, May 2008.

indices calculated by the Interagency Ecological Program through 2007 suggest recent marked declines in four pelagic fishes in the Delta.²

Conditions related to the pelagic organism decline, fish availability for study purposes, hydrology, and other issues have complicated conduct of the VAMP and required major modifications to the study design that may affect the utility of the study data. This has raised concerns regarding the ability of the VAMP to provide information on which to base pulse flow objectives for the San Joaquin River. The VAMP has yet to yield conclusive results regarding needed changes to the spring pulse flow objectives of the 2006 Plan.³ This workshop provides opportunity for parties to the San Joaquin River Group Authority (SJRGA) to update the State Water Board regarding the status of the VAMP peer review as requested in the 2006 Plan.

This workshop is primarily intended to provide the Board with background information and updates on San Joaquin River flow objectives (including DFG's San Joaquin River salmon escapement model and VAMP). Additionally, information will be presented as an update on the State Water Board's efforts to address southern Delta salinity in recognition of potential linkage between San Joaquin River flows and salinity. Additional workshops may be needed to address each of these issues in more detail and to inform future proceedings.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE WORKSHOP

The State Water Board is seeking to receive background and information regarding the various San Joaquin River flow objectives for fish and wildlife beneficial uses in the Bay-Delta and ongoing processes addressing those uses. State Water Board staff will provide at this workshop an update on the status of work being conducted on salinity in the southern Delta. The items for discussion at this workshop include but are not limited to:

- 1) Background and information regarding the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) San Joaquin River Salmon Escapement Model.
- 2) Background and information regarding the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP) study.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Participants are required to provide their written materials/comments to the State Water Board by 12:00 noon on Wednesday, September 3, 2008. During the workshop, participants will be given an opportunity to summarize and supplement their written materials with oral presentations. To ensure a productive and efficient workshop in which participants have an opportunity to participate, time limits may be imposed on oral presentations. Participants with similar comments are requested to make joint presentations.

The workshop will be for informational purposes. There will be no sworn testimony or cross-examination of participants, but the State Water Board and its staff may ask clarifying questions.

² Randall Baxter (DFG), Rich Breuer (DWR), Larry Brown (USGS), Mike Chotkowski (USBR), Fred Feyrer (DWR), Marty Gingras (DFG), Bruce Herbold (USEPA), Anke Mueller-Solger (DWR), Matt Nobriga (CALFED), Ted Sommer (DWR), and Kelly Souza (DFG), Pelagic Organism Decline Progress Report: 2007 Synthesis of Results, January 15 2008.

³ San Joaquin River Group Authority (SJRGA). 2007 Annual Technical Report: On Implementation and Monitoring of the San Joaquin River Agreement and the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan, January 2008.

The State Water Board requests that 15 copies of written materials/comments be sent to:

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812

Hand and special deliveries can be delivered to:

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
Cal/EPA Headquarters
1001 "I" Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Participants are encouraged to also submit their materials/comments electronically. Documents submitted electronically must be in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). Electronic submittals to the State Water Board of documents less than 15 megabytes in total size (incoming mail server attachment limitation) may be sent via electronic mail to: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov and Ccarr@waterboards.ca.gov, with a subject of "San Joaquin River Flows Workshop." Electronic submittals to the State Water Board of documents greater than 15 megabytes in total size should be sent by regular mail in PDF format on compact disk (CD) media. The State Water Board will post on its website copies of all comments submitted for the workshop for the information of and use by other participants.

Each participant is requested to bring additional copies of any written submittals to the workshop for the use of the other participants.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE WORKSHOP


Questions concerning this notice may be directed to Chris Carr, Environmental Scientist, Bay-Delta Unit, at (916) 341-5305, or Erin Mahaney, Senior Staff Counsel, at (916) 341-5187.

PARKING AND ACCESSIBILITY

The enclosed map shows the location of the Joe Serna, Jr. (Cal EPA) Building; all visitors are required to sign in prior to attending any meeting. Visitors can sign in and obtain badges in the Visitor and Environmental Services Center, which is just inside and to the left of the building's public entrance. Visitors may be asked to show valid picture identification. Valid identification can take the form of a current driver's license, military identification card, or state and federal identification cards. Depending on the size and number of meetings scheduled on any given day, the security check-in could take from three to fifteen minutes. Please allow adequate time to sign in before being directed to your meeting.

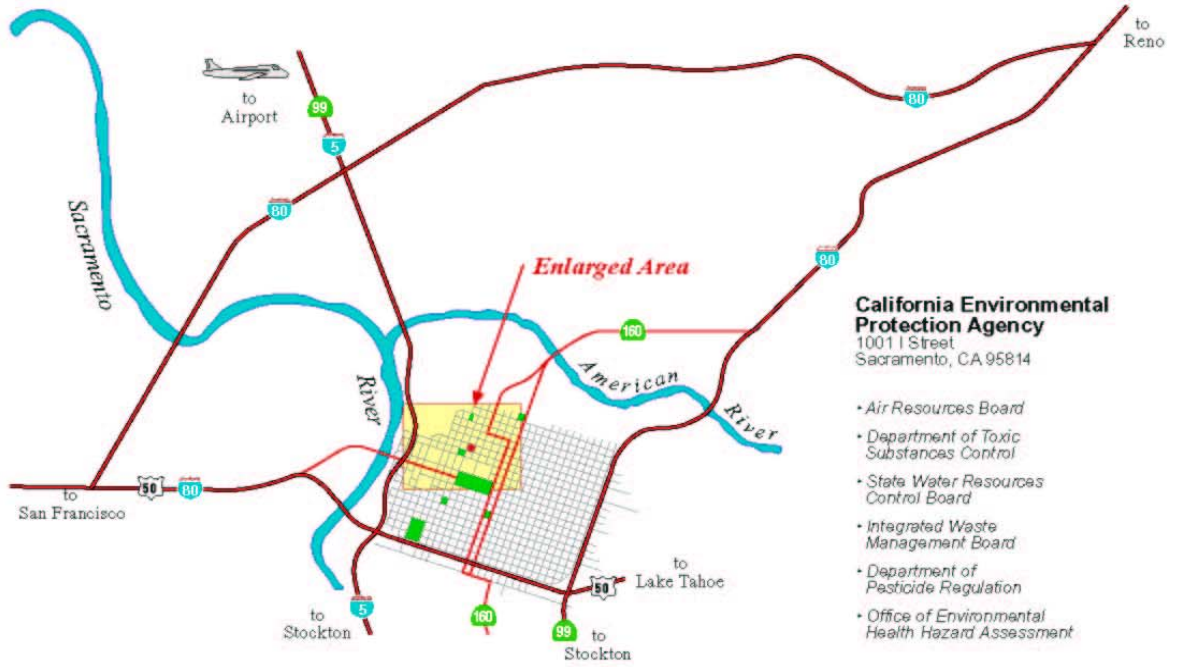
August 11, 2008

Date

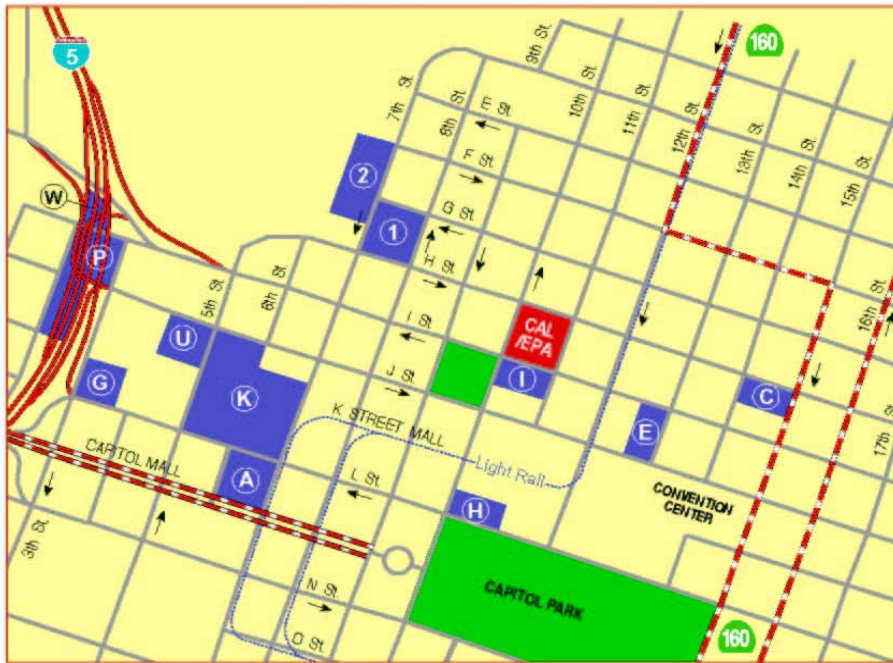


Jeanine Townsend
Clerk to the Board

Enclosure



Parking Lot Locations



Parking Lot Locations

- Lot 1 (7th & G St.)
- Lot 2 (7th & G St.)
- Lot A (7th & Capitol)
- Lot C (14th & H St.)
- Lot G (3rd & L)
- Lot H (10th & L)
- Lot I (10th & I, 11th & I)
- Lot K (6th & J/L, 7th & K)
- Lot P (2nd & I)
- Lot U (5th & J)
- Lot W (2nd & I St.)