



DEC 17 2010

Dr. Clifford Dahm, Delta Science Program  
Delta Stewardship Council  
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1450  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Dr. Dahm:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation, collectively the Federal Agencies) have received your December 14, 2010, letter, transmitting the independent review panel's report titled, "Report of the 2010 Independent Review Panel (IRP) on the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) Actions Affecting the Operations Criteria And Plan (OCAP) for State/Federal Water Operations." The Federal Agencies appreciate the Delta Stewardship Council's (DSC) and IRP's assistance in fulfilling a critical component of adaptive management within NMFS' RPA, and also the Secretaries of the Interior's and Commerce's commitment to undertake an integrated annual review of the Services' respective biological opinions and RPAs.

It is clear from our initial read of the report that the Panelists were diligent and thoughtful in addressing their charge of helping us learn appropriate lessons from evaluating real-time operations during the prior water year. The Panel's expertise, including anadromous fish, estuarine ecology, native fish biology and ecology, and hydrodynamics and transport modeling, is critical to their independent review of the complex and challenging real-time operations and scientific studies that the agencies engage in throughout the year. We appreciate the recommendations that affirm our current approach, including the finding that "the effectiveness of RPA actions in meeting operational targets was usually adequate in 2010." We are in the process of carefully evaluating the critiques contained within the report, and the recommendations for adjustments to the implementation of some RPA components. We intend to complete our analysis, and finalize any proposed adjustments to implementation in mid-January.

The DSP can be assured that the recommendations and responses from the IRP will be considered carefully by the Federal Agencies as we continue to develop lessons learned, incorporate new science, and make appropriate scientifically-justified adjustments to our respective RPAs or their implementation to support water year 2011 real-time decision making. This report is the latest in a series of independent science reviews that have ensured that the Federal Agencies are constantly learning from and incorporating the best scientific information into implementation actions necessary to avoid jeopardizing ESA-listed fish in the Delta while providing irrigation and drinking water to California's farmers and municipalities.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Garwin Yip (NMFS) at (916) 930-3611, or via e-mail at [garwin.yip@noaa.gov](mailto:garwin.yip@noaa.gov); Jennifer Norris (FWS) at (916)930-5633, or via e-mail at [jennifer\\_norris@fws.gov](mailto:jennifer_norris@fws.gov); or Mike Chotkowski (USBR) at (916) 978-5025.

Sincerely,

  
Maria C. Rea  
Central Valley Office Supervisor  
National Marine Fisheries Service

Sincerely,

  
Mary Grim  
Acting Field Supervisor  
Bay-Delta Fish and Wildlife Office

Sincerely,

  
Mike Chotkowski  
Regional Environmental Officer  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation