

## **Update on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)**

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**Summary:** A representative from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) will brief the Council on proposed modifications of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan's (BDCP) water delivery facilities. By reducing impacts to Delta agriculture, communities, recreation, and aesthetics, the modifications are responsive to relevant comments of the Council and others about the project's draft environmental impact report (EIR/EIS).

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### **Background**

The Bay Delta Conservation Plan is being developed as a 50-year Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) with the goal of recovering the Delta's endangered or threatened species. This will be accomplished in part by improving the conveyance of water from the Sacramento River to the south Delta pumps of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, by establishing parameters for operating those projects, and by restoring wildlife and fish habitats in and around the Delta. In May 2014 the Council provided comments on the BDCP's draft EIR. Among those comments were recommendations urging better assessment and more effective mitigation of adverse effects on the unique values of the Delta, including effects on agriculture, recreation, community character, and aesthetics.

### **Relationship to the Delta Plan and BDCP**

If the BDCP meets the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act and the California Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA), as well as the requirements set forth in the Delta Reform Act, the BDCP will be incorporated into the Delta Plan and will play a key role in achieving the goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta's ecosystem. The Act also gave the Council a consultative role with regard to plan development, and a possible appellate role with regard to whether the BDCP satisfies specified criteria for purposes of incorporation into the Delta Plan.

### **Today's Briefing**

Gordon Enas, principal engineer for DWR's Delta Conveyance and Habitat Conservation Program, will provide a briefing on changes in the BDCP's water delivery facilities announced in December 2014. These facilities comprise the BDCP's Conservation Measure 1 (Water Facilities and Operation). The changes, described in Attachment 1, would eliminate the northern pumping plants, reduce the need for permanent power near the northern intakes, remove a siphon under Italian Slough adjoining Byron Tract in the south Delta, and add a consolidated pumping plant on

property currently owned by the Department of Water Resources at Clifton Court Forebay. In addition, changes to the water delivery facilities also include removal of proposed transmission lines near Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, relocation of tunnel launch facilities, and relocation of excavated tunnel material storage areas from Staten Island to Bouldin Island.

The changes proposed by DWR can reduce impacts to unique values of the Delta, including harmful effects on agriculture, recreation, community character, and aesthetics. The footprint of facilities on agricultural lands will be reduced and the duration and amount of construction traffic on farm-to-market roads in the north Delta will be reduced. The duration and intensity of construction activities will also decline, lessening effects on nearby communities. Reduction in the facilities' footprint and removal of permanent electric power transmission lines in the north Delta will reduce visual impacts. Disruption of wildlife-oriented recreation at Stone Lakes National Wildlife refuge and at the Nature Conservancy's property on Staten Island will be minimized. The Council's comments on the BDCP's EIR recommended more careful assessment and more effective measures to lessen or compensate for adverse effects on these values. The changes can also avoid or reduce impacts on wildlife use of the wildlife refuge and Staten Island, which responds to comments by the Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations. The Recirculated Draft BDCP and EIR/EIS to be published later this year will more fully evaluate these effects and provide the Council and others an opportunity to review and comment on the changes.

### **Questions for Council Consideration**

1. How well do the changes in the BDCP's water delivery facilities respond to the Council's comments about the need to better mitigate adverse effects on the unique values of the Delta, including effects on agriculture, recreation, community character, and aesthetics? What other actions could further reduce or compensate for these effects?
2. How may storing excavated tunnel material on Bouldin Island influence opportunities for its reuse in nearby levee improvements or habitat restoration?
3. Do the proposed changes cause new impacts that may be inconsistent with the Delta Plans' goals and objectives?

### **List of Attachments**

Attachment 1: BDCP Fact Sheet–Modified Pipeline Tunnel Option

### **Contact**

Dan Ray  
Chief Deputy Executive Officer

Phone: (916) 445-4194