Meeting Summary
Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group Meeting
Thursday March 20, 2014

San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority, 842 Sixth Street, Los Banos, Calif.
FINAL

Attendees

Chris Acree, Revive the San Joaquin
Matthew Danielezyk, Audobon California
Zooey Diggory, Stillwater Sciences
Alicia Forsythe, Reclamation
Seth Gentzler, URS Corp.
Chuck Hanson, Hanson Environmental
Steve Haugen, Kings River Water Association
Chris Hildebrandt, Ducks Unlimited
Dave Koehler, San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust
Craig Moyle, MWH
Don Peracchi, DJP Farms
Don Portz, Reclamation
Bill Luce, Friant Water Authority
Erin Rice, Reclamation
Rebecca Victorine, Reclamation

On the phone
Steve Blumenshine, CSU Fresno
Apurba Borah, Reclamation
Elif Fehm-Sullivan, NMFS
Tom Johnson, SJR Restoration Administrator
Carl Mesik, USFWS
Leslie Mirise, NMFS
John Netto, USFWS
Andrew Raabe, NMFS
Rhonda Reed, NMFS
Mike Roberts, DWR
Rose Stefani, Reclamation
Monique Weber, DWR

Welcome and Introductions

Craig Moyle, the meeting facilitator, welcomed the meeting participants, and led introductions for on-site and phone participants. A webinar was established for remote participants to view and follow along with the presentations. He then introduced the first speaker.

Standing Items

Reclamation Project Manager Erin Rice provided an overview of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program, a brief background of the Settlement, a review of the Restoration and Water Management Goals, and a description of the Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group's purpose. He then led a discussion on the status of Restoration Flows, which were suspended in February 2014 due to the chronic drought. He said that the Critical Low water year will continue to eliminate flows for Restoration purposes unless substantial rain and snow occurs in the system. In the meantime, Reclamation is meeting holding contract obligations for 5 cubic feet per second (cfs) at Gravelly Ford.

A participant asked when flows would be released from Millerton Lake to provide delivery of senior water rights at Mendota Pool. Program staff said there will likely be a delivery, but the timing and magnitude is under discussion with Reclamation and the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority.

Fishery Actions Update

Reclamation Fishery Biologist Don Portz provided an update on the adult and juvenile Chinook salmon trap and haul efforts. The presentation included a review of the results of the 2013 adult trap and haul activities in Reach 5, including fish gender and capture location statistical summaries. The 2013 activity led to the capture and tagging of 367 adult fish, of which 123 were female. The fish were tracked through a variety of tools including acoustic telemetry. Twelve Chinook were streamside spawned. Fish transported and released at Camp Pashayan produced 67 redds upstream of Highway 99 and 5 downstream of Highway 99.

In February, the Program began trap and haul of juvenile salmon at three locations: Ledger Island Bridge, Sycamore Island and Scout Island. Trapping at Donny Bridge is pending. The trapping has led to the capture of 823 fish ranging in size from 32 to 113mm. Of these, 723 were successfully released at the Merced River confluence. Some of the fish deaths were contributed to transport deaths, net pen deaths, captured dead, and for genetic/diet testing. Transport to this location will continue as long as water does not exceed the temperature tolerance threshold of salmon. Fish must be acclimated to the release site if the water is greater than one degree Celsius difference from the capture site. If temperatures change, the point of release may shift to the Tuolumne River confluence. Trapping is slated to continue through May 1, but may continue depending on results and water temperature. In response to participant questions to whether the trapped fish are from the 2012 or 2013 adult trap and haul efforts, Portz said he believes the trapped fish are from 2013. He based this, in part, on fall 2013 fish community surveys that showed juvenile salmon twice the size of the recently trapped fish. Participants speculated that perhaps the warmer water

temperatures have contributed to the larger than normal sizes. Portz said Reclamation intends to answer the question through genetic testing.

Portz said that while a rotary screw trap stationed at Ledger Island proved initially more successful in capturing fish as opposed to the weir traps located at Scout and Sycamore Islands, the results were somewhat skewed due as it appeared to capture emerging fry from nearby redds. He anticipates the weirs will be more successful over time. Such weirs are only effective, however, when river flow conditions are low. In response to a participant's question, Portz reported that the rotary fish trap and the weir traps have not led to a conflict with river watercraft users.

Other current and pending fishery studies include a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) Tag array and acoustic studies. These will serve to track juvenile Chinook salmon raised at the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation Hatchery in Friant and slated for release in late March. Tagged fish captured in downstream will be noted and released back into the river.

Reach 2B Project Status

Restoration Program Manager Alicia Forsythe provided a status update of major Reach 2B Project accomplishments and next steps. She said the California State Lands Commission is replacing the California Department of Water Resources as the project's California Environmental Quality Act lead. She said this will likely delay the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report from the projected August 2014 to later in the year. Reclamation continues to plan to include a preferred alternative for the Reach 2B project due to the extensive interaction with landowners, landowner representatives, and other stakeholders. Including a preferred alternative would permit completion of the Final EIS/R and release of the Record of Decision in 2015. She said that the team looks to have the permits completed by the end of 2016 and begin construction in 2017. In advance of the target date for the ROD, Reclamation will conduct appraisals of properties common to all alternatives. These appraisals will be conducted by an independent contractor selected by the Department of Interior's Office of Evaluation Services.

Other progress reports for Reach 2B included details on recent geologic investigations to inform the development of project designs. Reclamation has completed with 40 standard penetration tests, 58 cone penetration tests, and the installation of three observation wells. Additional investigations will be held this summer including borings in Mendota Pool by barge and via a track mounted drill rig. This information will assist in development of 10 percent level of design for the project.

Attendees asked about the potential cost of the Reach 2B Project and the funding available to the Program office. Forsythe said the previous $500 million estimate included large contingency budgets to cover potential unknown costs. Those costs decline as additional data is gathered. She said the Restoration Program office will obligate all the remaining funds from Public Law 111-11 ($88 million) during the 2015 fiscal year. The Program will be subject to Congressional appropriations for all funding in the 2016 fiscal year.

Reach 2B Project Alternatives and Operation

Seth Gentzler, consultant team project manager, provided a presentation on the major features of the four Reach 2B alternatives and an overview of anticipated water operations during flood and non-flood scenarios. He presented these following a review of Paragraph 11(a) of the Settlement. His presentation was conducted in reference to a series of slides for narrow and wide flood plain alternatives for the compact bypass and the Fresno Slough Dam alternatives. Each includes various approaches to deliver water to satisfy Exchange Contractor water rights, in addition to flood deliveries. In response to questions from attendees, Gentzler said various features of each alternative can – in most instances – be exchanged across alternatives. Some attendees expressed support for the Fresno Slough Dam alternative due to this ability to improve delivery of water to upstream refuges and other water diverters. Reclamation staff noted that a limiting factor is a narrow operation window required for Mendota Pool water surface elevations, and the potential impacts to lands in Fresno Slough if higher water elevations were accomplished. Another participant expressed support for the Fresno Slough Dam option as a means to prevent straying of salmon into the Kings River system.

Gentzler reviewed the various flow scenarios based on the existing Operation and Maintenance Manual for the Lower San Joaquin Levee District. The flood operations manual shows a design level of 8,000 cfs for Reach 2B, 5,500 cfs for Chowchilla Bypass, 2,500 cfs for Reach 2B, 4,750 cfs for James Bypass, and 4,500 cfs for Reach 3. Among these possible scenarios it was discussed that a portion of Restoration Flows could be added to Reach 3 as long as there is available channel capacity. If no channel capacity, river flows would be diverted down the

Chowchilla Bypass. Steve Haugen, general manager of the Kings River Water Association, said his agency is concerned over whether the flood operations manual will be adhered to during periods of major floods, and in particular was concerned over the increased capacity in Reach 2B being used during flood scenarios, potentially limiting flood flow release from Kings River. Reclamation said they are aware of the concern and are working with the Levee District to address.

Meeting Wrap up

Moyle announced that the next meeting is scheduled for May 15. The location and agenda will be announced approximately three weeks before. He invited attendees to provide him with suggested topics for future meetings. The meeting was adjourned at about 3:15 p.m.