



Delta Mendota Canal Recirculation Project Fact Sheet—January 2009

Background

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) operate the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the State Water Project (SWP), respectively. Reclamation and DWR coordinate their water operations, including exports from the CVP's C.W. "Bill" Jones Pumping Station (Jones Pumping Plant) and SWP's Harvey O. Banks Pumping Station (Banks Pumping Plant). Reclamation and DWR are required to meet specific water quality and flow standards as water rights conditions of operating the pumping stations and Reclamation is required to meet salinity and flow standards on the lower San Joaquin River. Historically, Reclamation has met the standards in part by releasing water from New Melones Reservoir.

Reclamation is the Federal Lead Agency for National Environmental Policy Act compliance and DWR is the State Lead Agency for California Environmental Quality Act compliance. Reclamation and DWR have filed a Notice of Intent and Notice of Preparation to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement/Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the DMC Recirculation Project. The project team is currently performing technical studies and preparing planning documentation.

What is DMC Recirculation?

Delta Mendota Canal (DMC) recirculation is a concept being studied by Reclamation and DWR to augment San Joaquin River flows with Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Delta) water to reduce salinity and to maintain adequate flows required for beneficial uses. To accomplish this, the study is investigating options for recirculating water pumped from the Jones Pumping Plant, located in the south Delta near Tracy, through the DMC for release to the San Joaquin River. These releases will reach the San Joaquin River and eventually the south Delta via an existing wasteway or a yet to be identified route.

Study Authorization

A feasibility study for potential recirculation of water from the DMC was authorized under Title 1, Section 103 of the CALFED Bay-Delta Authorization Act, Public Law 108-361. DMC Recirculation is also being studied pursuant to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Decision-1641 (D-1641), and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program Record of Decision.

Purpose, Needs, and Opportunities

DMC recirculation has been recommended as a means of improving flows and assisting with meeting water quality objectives in the lower San Joaquin River. One objective of the project would be to utilize excess capacity in the DMC to provide flow, reduce salinity concentrations in the San Joaquin River, and reduce reliance on New Melones Reservoir water supplies to meet water quality and fishery flow requirements.

The San Joaquin River is classified as an impaired water body under the Federal Clean Water Act. SWRCB has made meeting water quality and minimum flows on the lower San Joaquin River a water rights condition under D-1641.

Concerns

- Potential adverse impacts to fisheries, either related to direct entrainment of fish and larvae, or imprinting issues associated with the source of the recirculation flows for San Joaquin River anadromous fisheries.
- Excess capacity in the Delta pumps and the DMC needs to be defined.
- Increased amounts of energy would be required for project operations.
- Recirculation could increase turbidity and total suspended solids in the San Joaquin River and transport contaminants from the wasteway(s) to the river.

Status

Reclamation completed a limited pilot study in August 2004 using the Newman Wasteway to recirculate DMC water back to the San Joaquin River. The pilot study found the flows released through the Newman Wasteway helped to increase flow and reduce the salinity at Vernalis without impacting water supplies. However, additional study and analysis is necessary to evaluate potential impacts and benefits of recirculation under other circumstances.

Reclamation completed another pilot study in August 2007. Results of the 2007 pilot study are being summarized. Reclamation and DWR prepared a Draft Fisheries Technical Memorandum in February 2008 that addresses the issues concerning fisheries and presents the approach for analysis that will be used in the study. Reclamation and DWR prepared an Initial Alternatives Information Report (IAIR) in March 2008 which describes the without-project conditions, problems and needs; defines the study objectives and constraints; and identifies criteria that will be used to narrow the alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS/EIR.

Next Steps

Reclamation and DWR are preparing a Plan Formulation Report (PFR) to describe the range of alternatives and their potential effectiveness in meeting the project objectives. The PFR will rank alternatives and select the alternatives to be evaluated in the feasibility report and EIS/EIR.

Anticipated Schedule

- Initial Alternatives Information Report – March 2008
- Plan Formulation Report – February 2009
- Draft EIS/EIR – August 2009
- Final Feasibility Report and EIS/EIR – Fall 2010

For Additional Information Please Contact:

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