Delta-Mendota Canal Recirculation Feasibility Study

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

November 17, 2006, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Modesto Centre Plaza, Modesto, CA

Meeting Group Purpose

- Update and engage stakeholders to begin dialog regarding the feasibility study
- Receive stakeholder comments on alternative development
- Inform stakeholders of future technical team workshops
- Follow up to March workshop

Background and Prior Studies

Sammie Cervantes and Maury Kruth provided information regarding stakeholder involvement and the Feasibility Study background and process.

Discussion

Comment: Regarding the slide indicating "surplus" water was used in the 2004 pilot test. The speaker suggested that it was not "surplus water" per se, but rather surplus pumping capacity.
Response: Reclamation will review the study report and the terms applied to the water and power that were utilized.

Question: Will a 401 Certification [for a COE 404 permit] be needed? Will there be a need for a Section 10 permit?
Response: No conclusion has been reached, the Feasibility Study is designed to make those determinations.

Initial Alternatives Information Report

Steve Ottemoeller described what will be included in the IAIR and initiated discussions regarding project objectives, alternatives development, and issues/concerns.

Discussion - Refinement of Project Objectives and Alternatives Development

- Need objectives to meet Congressional and regulatory agency standards
- Include Reclamation's obligations (to protect environment, watersheds, water users) as an objective. Describe how recirculation can meet those obligations and standards.
    - South Delta Water Quality at Vernalis
    - Interplay with other agencies (depth and water quality)
    - Use evolving standards
    - Reduce the use of New Melones Reservoir water to meet objectives

- Impacts on water contractors
    - Alternative ways of circulation focus on articulating ranges of impact.
    - Consider the best way of creating suggested alternatives in relation to objectives.
    - Avoid impacts to water contractors in the Delta
    - Look at a "no water supply impact" alternative

  - Include "minimize impacts" as a concept since it may not be possible to avoid all water supply impacts while achieving other objectives related New Melones water supplies
  - Consider an alternative to optimize interior South Delta water levels

- Concern about Westside salinity and fisheries issues

- What is the impact on fish? Identify if recirculation can apply biologically. What restrictions exist at any given time during a year?

- Flow study periods to meet water quality standards all year long, not just 31 days
  - Need to look at Spring flows (February-June)
  - Look at flows outside of August

- New Melones Alternatives
  - Eliminate or reduce New Melones February-June release of water
  - Are reduced alternatives from New Melones possible?

Question: With regard to baseline (Common Assumptions), how will the restoration effort for the San Joaquin River be taken into account?
Response: How San Joaquin restoration is going to occur is unknown. The study team will use whatever information is available as the study proceeds.

Question: What is the role of the DMC/CA Intertie as part of recirculation?
Response: Recirculation is independent from the Intertie, but the Intertie may be included as a "without project" element; the Intertie is currently undergoing environmental review.

Question: What are the assumptions about tributaries and flows? Is the 31-day VAMP pulse flow cycle meeting the objective using circulation?
Response: Clarification needed, whether circulation can accomplish tributary reservoir release reductions or flows is unknown. The study will consider various alternatives of releases vs. recirculation pumping.

Question: Need "fatal flaw" analysis in the study. Where does it occur in the process? Status quo is unacceptable for fish.
Response: The types of analysis Reclamation could consider doing to identify potential "fatal flaws" need to be identified.

  - One of the initial tasks of the PFR is a fisheries technical memo that will look at what are the impacts on the fisheries in the San Joaquin River.
  - The findings from this analysis may eliminate some but not all recirculation alternatives.

Question: Is all recirculation water flowing to the Delta? What is the source of San Joaquin water?
Response: Recirculation water would be released to the San Joaquin River and then move downstream to the Delta.

Water Supply Issues & Concerns

General Comments

What is the EWA (Environmental Water Account)?
Response: The EWA is a mechanism for resource agencies to take actions in the Delta to protect fishery resources without impacting water supplies to export contractors.

Water Quality

- Consider *improvements* associated with recirculation. Refer to "impact" as singular, using either plus or minus,

- Need clarity on meaning of objectives.
    - Does the problem exceed some standard or threshold?
    - Need more defined measurable units

- What are the downstream impacts on Vernalis?
    - Dissolved oxygen TMDL
    - Impacts go beyond upstream of Vernalis

Fishery Issues and Concerns

- Define cold water tributaries
- What are the effects of increased exports?
- Is water truly being exported when it is actually recycling through the system?

General Concerns/Comments

- Consider greenhouse gas emissions and climate change
- Check SWRCB website for additional information
- Engage fish agencies in the study

Next Meeting – Alternatives Workshop

Tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, December 12 at 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon in Modesto.

Participants – 27