



Delta Mendota Canal Recirculation Project Public Scoping Meeting

Project Fact Sheet – April 2007

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 – formerly the Tracy 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 requirements as water rights conditions of operating the pumping stations. Reclamation is required to meet salinity and flow requirements on the Lower San Joaquin River. Historically, Reclamation has met the requirements in part by releasing water from New Melones Reservoir.

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 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 would reach the San Joaquin River and eventually the South Delta via the wasteways or other yet to be identified routes.

Authorization

A Federal project feasibility study for recirculating 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 Record of Decision.

Purpose, Needs, and Opportunities

DMC Recirculation has been recommended as one means of improving flows and meeting water quality objectives in the San Joaquin River and the South Delta area. 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 Lower San Joaquin River is classified as an impaired water body. SWRCB has made meeting water quality and minimum flows on the Lower San Joaquin River a water rights condition under D-1641.

Issues and Concerns

- Potential adverse impacts to fisheries, either related to direct entrainment of fish and larvae, decreased food sources, or imprinting issues associated with the source of the recirculation flows for San Joaquin River anadromous fisheries.
- Recirculation may be inconsistent with existing contracts for water delivery. The determination of the definition of "excess capacity" on the DMC is controversial.

- Increased amounts of electrical 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 program in August 2004 utilizing the Newman Wasteway to recirculate DMC water back to the San Joaquin River. The pilot study showed that under those specific circumstances, recirculated flow through the Newman Wasteway may be helpful in increasing flow at Vernalis and may have potential to reduce salinity concentrations at Vernalis. However, additional study and analysis is necessary to evaluate potential impacts and benefits of Recirculation under other circumstances.

Reclamation is the Lead Agency for National Environmental Policy Act compliance and DWR is the 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 for the DMC Recirculation Project

The project team is currently performing technical studies and preparing planning documentation.

Next Steps

Reclamation and DWR are preparing the Initial Alternatives Information Report (IAIR). The IAIR will describe study objectives, constraints, and identify criteria that will be used to narrow the list of alternatives to be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR). Information received during public scoping will assist in developing the IAIR.

Schedule

- Initial Alternatives Information Report – May 2007
- Plan Formulation Report – December 2007
- Draft EIS/EIR – August 2008
- Final Feasibility Study and EIS/EIR – Early 2009

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