



Fact Sheet

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD | 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 | Mailing Address: P. O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 | www.waterboards.ca.gov

May 16, 2012

Water Quality Planning Efforts in the Bay-Delta

The plan that protects the beneficial uses of the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay-Delta) is currently under review by the State Water Board to determine if updates to the water quality objectives, including flow objectives and the program of implementation are needed. State and federal law requires the periodic review of water quality control plans to ensure that they reflect current conditions. The current update, which began in 2009 and is scheduled for completion in 2013, will mark the fourth review of the plan since its original adoption in 1978.

Who Are We?

The State Water Board administers programs to ensure the highest reasonable quality for waters of the State, while allocating those waters to achieve a balance of beneficial uses. State water quality law requires the adoption of Water Quality Control Plans that identify existing and potential beneficial uses of waters of the state and establish water quality objectives to protect these uses. They also contain an implementation, surveillance and monitoring plan.

While most water quality control planning is done by the Regional Water Boards, the State Water Board adopts statewide Water Quality Control Plans such as the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan, or Bay-Delta Plan. The Bay Delta Plan includes objectives for inflows to the Delta from the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River, as well as objectives for Delta outflow. The State Water Board considers a number of factors when developing and implementing flow objectives, such as competing uses for water. The State Water Board's water quality control planning and management of water rights can determine the amount and timing of water entering and moving through the Delta.

The State Water Board along with the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Board and the Central Valley Regional Water Board, participate in the Bay-Delta efforts. Regulation and enforcement of water quality objectives helps to control contaminants that degrade the waters of the Delta, including pesticides and other toxic substances, metals such as mercury, ammonia and other nutrients, and salinity.

What Are We Doing?

Numerous scientific documents have identified flow as a major factor affecting fisheries and other public trust uses of waters in the Delta. The State Water Board is the State agency responsible for establishing water quality and flow objectives for the Bay-Delta to protect these uses. The State Water Board, along with the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Board and the Central Valley Regional Water Board, developed, and continues to implement, the 2008 Bay-Delta Strategic Work Plan. The Work Plan describes a suite of high-priority actions that the Water Boards have completed or are implementing to address the water supply and environmental crisis in the Bay-Delta, and a timetable for implementing these actions.

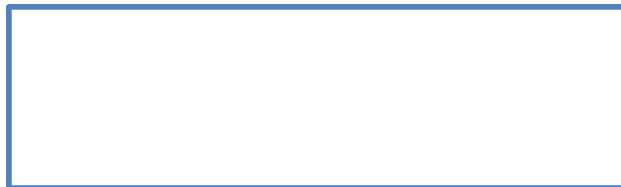
In 2009, the State Water Board initiated work specifically related to the Southern Delta Salinity and San Joaquin River Flow Objectives included in the Bay-Delta Plan. Since that time, a comprehensive technical report for this first phase of effort was prepared and subjected to scientific peer review. This report, along with a Substitute Environmental Document that will be released in early 2012, will serve as the basis for any needed changes to protect water quality relating to flows from the San Joaquin River and salinity in the southern delta.

The issuance of a Supplemental Notice of Preparation (NOP) on January 24, 2012 starts the process of soliciting information to inform the next phase of the State Water Board's comprehensive Bay-Delta Plan update. This second phase will examine whether changes are needed related to: (1) Delta outflow objectives, (2) export/inflow objectives, (3) Delta Cross Channel Gate closure objectives, (4) Suisun Marsh objectives; (5) potential new reverse flow objectives for Old and Middle Rivers; (6) potential new floodplain habitat flow objectives; (7) potential changes to the monitoring and special studies program, and (8) other potential changes to the program of implementation. To ensure timely completion of this update, the State Water Board recently notified all those interested in Bay-Delta water quality planning efforts that it intends to conduct a comprehensive review of these issues and has invited anyone wishing to comment on or provide information related to the scope of this next phase of effort to do so either in writing or through workshops and meetings over the coming months.

The purpose of the Supplemental NOP is to seek input on the significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be addressed for the issues outlined above.

Important Near-Term Dates

*Activities related to San Joaquin River Flow and South Delta salinity are referred to as Phase I.
Activities related to all other plan elements are referred to as Phase II.*



Phase II

Jan 25 '12: Notice of Preparation released
April 25 '12: Written comments due
May 16 '12: Scoping meeting

Note: On February 21, 2012, the State Water Board will hear an informational item describing the overall proposed schedule of activities remaining to complete the Bay-Delta Plan update.

There will be additional public meetings and workshops in 2012 and 2013 before the State Water Board considers adoption of any Bay-Delta Plan amendments.

Where Can I Get More Information?

Visit the State Water Board's Bay-Delta Program website at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/delta.shtml

Visit a Facts and Questions resource at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/bd_prss_faq.shtml

Read the Supplemental Notice of Preparation at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/docs/pubnot042512.pdf