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State Water Board continues moving forward with implementing San Joaquin River flow objectives

This week, the State Water Resources Control Board announced two meetings of the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced (STM) Working Group to discuss the revised draft initial biological goals for fall-run Chinook salmon in the lower San Joaquin River and its three salmon-bearing tributaries, the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers. The STM Working Group is being established to assist with the implementation, monitoring and effectiveness assessment of Lower San Joaquin River flow requirements and is a requirement of the 2018 phase one update to the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan.

Two meetings will be held to seek recommendations from the STM Working Group on the biological goals. The first meeting on November 21, 2022 will be focused on the proposed abundance and diversity biological goals. The second meeting on December 7, 2022 will be focused on productivity and spatial structure. STM Working Group members and other interested persons that would like to attend the STM Working Group meetings are required to register for each meeting. [You can register here.](#) Additional information on the STM and Bay-Delta planning processes can be found at: www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/

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Anthea Hansen

From: Jennifer Pierre <JPierre@swc.org>
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2022 2:21 PM
Subject: FW: [EXT] Four More Local Water Agencies Join Agreement to Improve the Health of Rivers and Landscapes

FYI. I have just received this and have not reviewed anything yet. I will be prepared with a summary for next week.

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Media Contacts:
Lisa Lien-Mager, California
Natural Resources Agency
(916) 407-6279

Four More Local Water Agencies Join Agreement to Improve the Health of Rivers and Landscapes

New Signatories Add Momentum to Years-Long Effort to Help Recover Salmon While Protecting Water Reliability

SACRAMENTO – Three water agencies that rely on the Tuolumne River watershed are the most recent signatories to an agreement to provide water flows and new habitat to help improve conditions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta watershed, adding momentum to the state’s plan to adapt to a new climate reality.

In March, leaders of state, federal and local agencies announced a memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining terms for a transformational eight-year program to provide substantial new flows for the environment to help recover salmon and other

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native fish, create new and restored habitat for fish and wildlife, and provide significant funding for environmental improvements and water purchases.

The three Tuolumne River signatories – San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), Turlock Irrigation District (TID) and Modesto Irrigation District (MID) – signed onto the agreement this week and join dozens of local agencies that have signed the MOU committing to work with the state to develop enforceable agreements with actions and funding to integrate additional water flows with the physical landscape to help improve habitat for native fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta watershed. Contra Costa Water District signed onto the agreement in September.

"Adding parties from the Tuolumne River watershed along with Contra Costa Water District is a huge point of progress in our effort to help adapt to a hotter and drier future," California Secretary for Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot said. "We need every tool to improve environmental conditions. This collaborative approach holds the promise to do that more quickly and holistically, while improving water reliability to communities, farms and businesses."

"As weather extremes brought on by climate change continue to impact California, it's critical that we work together to find durable solutions to our most pressing and complex challenges – like effectively managing and protecting the Sacramento - San Joaquin Delta," California Secretary for Environmental Protection Yana Garcia said. "We welcome these new partners who will help contribute to the success of this comprehensive, innovative, and collaborative effort to carefully steward our water resources while we adapt to hotter, drier conditions, together."

"We've always been willing to do our part to further protect natural habitats, including in times of drought. Now we have a framework agreement that strikes the right balance. It safeguards the water supply for 2.7 million Bay Area residents and businesses while continuing the SFPUC's track record of strong environmental stewardship," SFPUC General Manager Dennis Herrera said. "This agreement provides a framework for improving environmental conditions on the lower Tuolumne River and beyond to benefit native fish species. It includes more water for the river and \$64 million in habitat improvement projects over eight years. It also provides a path forward to address outstanding legal issues with the State. We're looking forward to implementing it with our partners."

"We are pleased that our multi-year effort to find a path forward based on sound-science is taking a significant step forward today," TID General Manager Michelle Reimers said. "Although not the final step in VA process, signing the MOU acknowledges that parties have come to an agreement on the major items including flow and non-flow measures, with some technical details to be finalized. We are looking forward to collaborating with the state and other water agencies to finalize an agreement that will provide water supply reliability to our community while enhancing the ecosystem."

"We have invested heavily in studying and truly understanding the Tuolumne River, the species and industries that depend on it and developing a realistic and

sustainable voluntary agreement," MID General Manager Ed Franciosa said. "By signing the MOU, we seek to balance water supplies for the benefit and continued success of our urban and ag communities and our environment, while striving to break the paradigm of management through regulation and litigation."

"Contra Costa Water District supplies Delta water to residents and businesses in Contra Costa County and we closely manage our operations to ensure reliability and protect water quality," CCWD Board President Ernesto A. Avila said. "The status quo in the Delta is unsustainable and we are committed to working with the state to expedite the current efforts to improve the health of the Bay-Delta and protect the communities we serve."

The state has been actively working since 2016 with local water agencies that came together to develop voluntary agreements to provide additional river flows and new habitat to help change the trajectory of declining native fish species. Following the release of a framework document in February 2020 that has been known as the "Voluntary Agreements," state and local agencies have continued to refine elements of agreements that would enable adaptive, holistic management and deliver environmental improvements more quickly than a regulatory proceeding.

As part of that work, state, federal and local agencies already are coordinating across watersheds to secure funding sources and permits for priority habitat projects and create new pathways to enable project implementation. For example, work expanded in 2022 on a roughly 18,000-acre program in the Sacramento Valley to determine optimal conditions to use flooded farmlands to create food for fish and transport it to migrating juvenile salmon in the river.

Three other projects are currently underway on the American and Yuba rivers to expand suitable salmon spawning habitats, increase floodplain and riparian habitats, and improve the natural river morphology. Many more such projects are planned for ground-breaking in 2023 and 2024.

In addition to that collaborative work, state agencies recently broke ground on three large tidal wetlands projects in the northern Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh. When completed, the projects – Lookout Slough, Bradford Island, and Arnold Slough – will restore more than 3,600 acres of wetlands and support recovery of native fish species.

The State Water Resources Control Board is in the process of updating its legally required Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan to protect native fish, wildlife and other "beneficial uses" of water, including municipal, domestic and agricultural water supplies.

The MOU seeks to meet those objectives through an integrated program that restores habitat, secures new flows for the environment above existing regulatory requirements, expands funding for environmental improvements and water purchases, and establishes a new, collaborative science program to monitor environmental conditions and adapt management over time.

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