



Presentation about Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes

Introduction

The Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (Agreements), a suite of voluntary commitments among local, state, and federal leaders to improve conditions for native fish while balancing other beneficial uses of water, are being proposed as an alternative way to update and implement the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan (Bay-Delta Plan). The Agreements, if approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) as an implementation pathway for an updated Bay-Delta Plan, could help state agencies meet requirements to protect beneficial uses in the Sacramento and San Joaquin watersheds. This approach would dedicate a large quantity of water to the environment, upwards of 800,000 acre-feet, and restore 45,000 acres of aquatic habitat for fish and other animals. This approach would also allow water managers to adapt operations based on real-time conditions and enable broad coordination across watersheds to manage flows for maximal environmental benefits. More flexible, adaptive management is critical as climate change increases uncertainty and drives extreme conditions.

Erik Loboschefskey, Executive Manager for the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program, with the Department of Water Resources (DWR), will provide a brief background and an update on the current status of the Agreements, and share information about the implementation details of the Agreements and projected next steps and milestones. Dr. Loboschefskey will discuss the parties involved in the negotiations and what the Agreements seek to achieve.

Background

The Agreements create a broad program to implement environmental improvements in many of California's largest rivers and the Bay-Delta estuary into which these rivers flow. Environmental improvements are needed for these rivers and the Bay-Delta to reverse long-term declines in native fish populations.

The Water Board is responsible for adopting and updating the [Bay-Delta Plan](#), which establishes water quality control measures and flow requirements needed to provide reasonable protection of beneficial uses in the watershed. The Water Board has recently released a draft [Staff Report](#) in support of the [Sacramento/Delta Updates](#) to the Bay-Delta Plan. The Water Board's regulatory authorities have been and will continue to be used to protect all beneficial uses of water, including benefits for fish and wildlife. However, its most robust tools for increasing benefits for fish and wildlife are process intensive, focused mainly on requiring additional water, and historically have resulted in protracted litigation and uncertainty. While the proposed regulatory pathway for updating water quality standards in the Bay-Delta relies

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mainly on directing water agencies to make additional environmental flows available, the Agreements offer a broader set of tools than the strictly regulatory path to improve ecological function. These tools can be deployed more quickly than under a purely regulatory approach.

This presentation implements Goal One of the Strategic Plan, which calls on the Commission to “serve as a primary public forum for the discussion of improving water management policy to assist regions in achieving climate resiliency,” which includes “gather[ing] information from individuals and organizations actively engaged in water policy and management issues, such as multi-benefit projects, healthy watersheds, green infrastructure, and improving water quality and availability in disadvantaged communities.”

Meeting Overview

The Commission will hear from Dr. Loboschefsky, take comments from the public, then have an opportunity to discuss this item. This is an informational item.

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