



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – June 2019

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) is continually planning and implementing the Russian River Biological Opinion requirements. Below is a brief synopsis of current work. For more detailed information about these activities, please visit www.sonomacountywater.org.

Fish Flow Project

The Fish Flow Habitat and Water Rights Project (Fish Flow) Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) was released in 2016 for public comments. Submitted comments fall into a number of categories, but many comments fall into the following general issues:

- Water Quality (e.g. algae and biostimulatory conditions);
- Water Rights (e.g. illegal/unauthorized diversions along Russian River, minimum bypass flow terms in State Water Resources Control Board-issued water right permits);
- Recreation (e.g. lower Russian River recreation and tourism, quantity and quality of river flow for recreation);
- Independent Science Review Panel (ISRP) Report (e.g. consideration of results/recommendations of ISRP report in Draft EIR);
- Proposed Project description and alternatives (e.g. consideration of “adaptive management” in implementation of proposed project).

Sonoma Water staff are working on revisions in anticipation of recirculating the Draft EIR. Staff are also working on outreach materials to improve communication and understanding of key topics related to the Fish Flow Project.

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project

On April 22, 2019 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) and Sonoma Water hosted a ribbon-cutting celebration and a Design Agreement signing ceremony at the site of the completed Reach 4 on Dry Creek. The event was attended by more than 100 guests, including Brigadier General Kimberly Colloton from the Army Corps, and Congressman Jared Huffman. The event was co-hosted by the property owner, Ferrari-Carano Winery & Vineyards, who are supporters and partners in the project. The event marked the completion of Reach 4 under the Army Corps CAP program, which brings the habitat enhancement total to more than three miles of the six miles required under the Biological Opinion. The signed Design Agreement allows the two agencies to continue to work together to complete the remaining three miles of the project.

Construction of habitat enhancements for 2018 has been completed on Reaches 4 and 14 of Dry Creek. The contractor, McCullough Construction, will begin work on the third of the three sites in Reach 14 around the middle of June 2019. Sonoma Water staff are also working to complete the final designs and permitting for the last remaining Phase III project work in Reach 5, which is expected to be constructed in 2020. Concurrently, Sonoma Water and Army Corps are moving ahead with Phases IV, V, and VI of the habitat enhancement project, which make up the last three of the six miles required by the Russian River Biological Opinion. The sites included in these phases are located in Reaches 1, 2, 4, 10,

and 13 of the 14 reaches of Dry Creek downstream of Warm Springs Dam. Phase IV includes Reaches 10 and 13, Phase V includes part of Reach 2 and Reach 4, and Phase VI includes Reach 1 and lower Reach 2. The designs for these reaches are at the 30% completion level and a 30% design workshop was held on January 29 with staff from Sonoma Water, the Army Corps, NMFS, Cal Fish & Wildlife, and the engineering consulting firms for each Phase (three total). Sonoma Water is now meeting with participating property owners to obtain comments, answer questions, address concerns, and explain the process. Concurrently, Sonoma Water and the Army Corps are working closely with the engineering design consultants as they refine the designs to address property owner comments and concerns, and adhere to Army Corps' design requirements. These refinements will be included in the 60% design submittal, which is expected in August, 2019. Construction of these sites will be funded and implemented by the Army Corps. Sonoma Water is the non-federal sponsor for the project and will contribute a 35% cost match. The Army Corps plans to Construct Phase IV in 2021, Phase V in 2022, and Phase VI in 2023.



Lake Sonoma storage was at 249,000 acre feet as of May 29, 2019, approximately the same amount of storage as there was on Feb. 11, 2019 when this photo was taken. Lake levels have fluctuated widely this year with the record rainfall. Water storage peaked on March 1 with 308,371 acre feet of water.

Fish Monitoring

During the spring each year, Sonoma Water operates fish traps at five locations in the Russian River Watershed: Dry Creek, the Mirabel Dam, Mark West Creek, Dutch Bill Creek and Austin Creek. These traps are designed to capture fish as they move downstream giving biologists information on salmon and steelhead smolts produced from key locations. Late spring rains, including record rainfall in May, has hampered our ability to safely install and operate these traps on a consistent basis this spring. Annual snorkel and electrofishing surveys aimed at assessing juvenile populations residing in streams throughout the watershed are set to begin in June and last into October and will include assessments of use of newly-created habitat in Dry Creek by juvenile coho salmon and steelhead.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

The 2019 management season began on May 15 and ends on October 15. Staff are working on data analysis and preparation of reports for the prior year management season. The 2019 Adaptive Management Plan was completed by May 22, 2019. Biological and water quality monitoring began in May, including fisheries monitoring, deployment of datasondes, and invertebrate monitoring. Baseline pinniped monitoring is ongoing.

Interim Flow Changes

Water supply conditions are currently *Normal*. Sonoma Water filed a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (Petition) with the State Water Resources Control Board to modify the minimum instream flow requirements for the Russian River as established by Decision 1610 for Permits 12947 A, 12949, 12950 and 16596 on April 23, 2019. The Petition was filed as required by the Russian River Biological Opinion issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service in September 2008.