

Public Policy Facilitating Committee Annual Meeting



# Russian River Biological Assessment Update



May 24, 2023

## Background and Purpose

- 2008 NMFS Biological Opinion (BO) with Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (15-year BO; expiration in Sept. 2023)
  - CESA Consistency Determination with CDFW
- BA being prepared for reinitiation of consultation with NMFS under Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA)
  - Central California Coast Steelhead (threatened)
  - Central California Coast Coho Salmon (endangered)
  - California Coastal Chinook Salmon (threatened)
  - Bay-Delta Longfin Smelt DPS (USFWS, proposed endangered)
- BA will also evaluate effects on essential fish habitat (EFH) as required by Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
  - Pacific Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP), Coastal Pelagics FMP, and Pacific Groundfish FMP
- BA serves as basis for California ESA (CESA) and MPA coverage with CDFW
  - Central California Coast Coho Salmon (CESA, endangered)
  - Longfin Smelt (CESA, threatened)
  - Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

## Project Elements

- Reservoir Operations - Coyote Valley Dam (CVD) and Warm Springs Dam (WSD)
  - Deviations to the WCM with FIRO procedures
  - Interim Petition(s) followed by Fish Habitat Flows and Water Rights Project
- Dry Creek Habitat Enhancements
- Channel Maintenance Actions
  - Dry Creek (maintenance of facilities associated with WSD operations)
- Central Sonoma Watershed Project and associated flood control facilities operations
- Russian River Estuary Management
- Monitoring of Salmonids in the Russian River and Dry Creek
- Interrelated and Interdependent Actions
  - SW water supply operations, Mirabel and Wohler facilities
  
- Hatchery Operations (maintenance)
  - Coho Hatchery and Genetic Management Program
  - Steelhead Hatchery and Genetic Management Program

## Approach and Process

- Agency kick-off – April 28, 2021
  - Sonoma Water, Corps, NMFS, CDFW
- Monthly Management Team meetings
  - Sonoma Water, Corps
- Focused Sub-group meetings
  - 9 Environmental Baseline meetings
  - 7 Proposed Action meetings
- CESA-focused meetings with CDFW
- Draft BA submittal and review (NMFS and CDFW, December, 2022)
  - Focus area meetings and workshops (November 2022 through February 2023)
  - Written comments
- Submittal of BA by the Corps (February 2023)

## NMFS and CDFW comments on December 2022 Draft BA

- Comments were provided by NMFS on entire document and specific project elements
  - Discussed in focused project element meetings and workshops
- General comments included the following:
  - Add detail to Proposed Action including reporting requirements, timelines, and process for agency review/coordination
    - Incorporate descriptions of the current status of all RPAs and RPMs included in the 2008 Biological Opinion
  - Clarify environmental baseline to facilitate effects analysis
  - Expand analysis of effects on species and critical habitat:
    - Focus on both life-stage and population-level effects
    - Increase geographic specificity within watershed
    - Incorporate best available science where applicable

## Schedule

- Complete Agency Review Draft BA
  - Submittal – December 2022 (NMFS and CDFW)
  - Focus meetings and workshops (January – February 2023)
- Corps submittal of revised BA (February 2023)
  - NMFS comment letter; requesting additional information
- Revising draft BA (addressing NMFS and CDFW comments)
  - Ongoing, summer 2023
- Support Sonoma Water and Corps (in consultation with NMFS and CDFW) to complete BO and obtain CESA coverage

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