



Monterey County

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Board Report

Legistar File Number: WRAG 18-267

December 17, 2018

Introduced: 12/10/2018

Current Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Matter Type: WR General Agenda

Consider receiving an update regarding National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) re-initiation of the Biological Opinion for the Salinas Valley Water Project.

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RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Monterey County Water Resources Agency Board of Directors:

Receive an update regarding National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) re-initiation of the Biological Opinion for the Salinas Valley Water Project.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

On August 5, 2016, the Army Corps of Engineers re-initiated consultation between the Monterey County Water Resources Agency and NMFS on the Biological Opinion (BO) for the Salinas Valley Water Project (SVWP). The BO provides “take” coverage for operations of the SVWP under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). Steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) are designated as threatened under the ESA and the Salinas, Nacimiento and San Antonio Rivers are identified as critical habitat for the species.

Discussions between the Agency and NMFS over the past two years have primarily focused on points of concern from potential litigation:

- Re-vegetation at the Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF);
- Minimum flow releases downstream of San Antonio dam;
- Increasing passage days during normal years (Dry Normal, Normal, Wet Normal); and
- Few or no passage opportunities during consecutive dry years.

Additionally, NMFS has stated concerns over the Agency’s lack of resources and funding necessary to complete the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The Agency will be holding a workshop on January 11, 2019 to discuss and evaluate NMFS concerns with respect to our operations under the current BO. The time and location of the workshop have not yet been determined.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

- The Reservoir Operations Advisory Committee received an update and provided guidance on September 27, 2018.
- The Basin Management Advisory Committee received an update and provided guidance on October 3, 2018.
- The Board of Directors received an update and provided guidance on October 15, 2018.
- The Reservoir Operations Advisory Committee received an update and provided guidance on

October 18, 2018.

- The Basin Management Advisory Committee received an update and provided guidance on November 7, 2018.
- The Board of Directors received an update and provided guidance on November 11, 2018.
- The Reservoir Operations Advisory Committee received an update and provided guidance on November 29, 2018.
- The Basin Management Advisory Committee received an update and provided guidance on December 5, 2018.

FINANCING:

There is no financial impact to receive this report. The financial impact of the possible actions discussed in this report have not been fully evaluated, but costs to complete the HCP and provide for necessary staffing have been estimated at approximately \$4.5 million over the next three years.

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