



Monterey County

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Board Report

Legistar File Number: WRAG 19-013

February 19, 2019

Introduced: 2/12/2019

Current Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Matter Type: WR General Agenda

Consider approving submission to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Marine Fisheries Service for the Re-Initiated Consultation on 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:

Approve submittal of the following information as an updated Project Description for the Re-Initiated Consultation on the "*Biological Opinion for the Salinas Valley Water Project*":

A. Strike out version of proposed changes of the current Flow Prescription located at:

[<http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=73228>](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=73228)

These documents will be included in the submission as reference material. They can be located on the Agency's website at:

[<http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/government-links/water-resources-agency/home/reinitiation-of-nmfs-biological-opinion>](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/government-links/water-resources-agency/home/reinitiation-of-nmfs-biological-opinion)

1. Biological Assessment for the Salinas Valley Water Project, Salinas River, California dated May 30, 2002.
2. Supplement to the Biological Assessment for the Salinas Valley Water Project, Salinas River, CA dated October 11, 2005.
3. Monitoring reports since 2010.

B. Commitment to develop an HCP for MCWRA operations on the Salinas River, estimated to cost \$4.5M over a three-year period.

The above items B-D are documents that will be included with the submission as reference material. These documents are located on the Agency's website at:

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

On August 5, 2016, the U.S. 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.

On January 11, 2019 the Agency Board of Directors (BOD) held a special board meeting to gather stakeholder feedback to help staff develop recommendations on revising the project description for the Salinas Valley Water Project Biological Opinion re-initiation. Based on that meeting and many other discussions, Agency staff recommends:

- a. The only change regarding flow in the current Flow Prescription should be increasing the minimum releases from San Antonio Reservoir from 3 cfs to 10 cfs. g Any other changes should be analyzed in much greater detail than can be done with existing tools. Analysis of this magnitude would be done as part of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and accompanying CEQA/NEPA document.
- b. The biological monitoring plan (water quality and fisheries) should be updated to reflect changes since 2005 and focus efforts on the Arroyo Seco River and the Salinas River below the confluence of the Arroyo Seco.
- c. Provide a commitment to NMFS to fund the HCP (\$4.5M estimated over 3 years).

OTHER AGENCY/COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT:

MCWRA Reservoir Operations Committee January 31, 2019
MCWRA Planning Committee February 6, 2019,

FINANCING:

A funding source for the HCP has not been secured.

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Approved by: _____
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