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Media Contacts:

Richard Stapler, 916-653-9402

richard.stapler@resources.ca.gov

Adam Fetcher, 202-208-6416

adam_fetcher@ios.doi.gov

Schedule for Bay Delta Conservation Plan Environmental Review, Effects Analysis Announced

*Agencies Lay Out Range of Alternatives; Water Contractor Boards to Consider \$100 Million in
Funding for BDCP*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the California Natural Resources Agency today announced that they have reached two significant milestones toward assuring a sustainable water supply for California and a healthy Delta ecosystem. The agencies have agreed to a schedule for completing an effects analysis and a combined environmental impact statement/environmental impact report (EIR/EIS) as part of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) by June 2012; and to a suite of alternatives for evaluation in identifying a proposed project.

“This is an aggressive schedule that will allow us to move clearly forward with BDCP and take the guess work out of next steps,” said California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird. “Meeting the dual goals of ecosystem restoration and water supply reliability demand a deep commitment from all parties involved.”

“California’s complex water problems require science-based solutions developed as part of a close partnership between the federal and state government, as well as all key stakeholders,” said Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes. “We share the state’s urgency in moving forward with the BDCP as quickly as possible to address the all-important goals of a healthy Bay Delta ecosystem and a reliable water supply for California.”

An exchange of letters between the [state of California](#) and [DOI](#) describing today’s agreement regarding the schedule are available.

Additionally, state and federal water officials today laid out a broad range of alternatives that are being evaluated in order to enable the California Department of Water Resources to identify a proposed project that will serve as the basis for federal and state permit applications and environmental review. Those alternatives include a variety of conveyance facilities with capacities ranging from 3,000 to 15,000 cubic feet per second. A range of proposals for habitat restoration is also under consideration.

It was noted that the alternatives under consideration by the state for purposes of the BDCP effects analysis will not necessarily be the same as the alternatives considered in the EIR/EIS prepared in compliance with state and federal environmental laws.

In addition, water contractors will be considering financial commitments of varying amounts for BDCP in the coming months.

“With an agreed upon schedule and impending potential financial commitments of roughly \$100 million, the state along with our federal partners can bring us much closer to making our planning efforts a reality,” continued Laird.

The BDCP is a conservation plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, and falls under the federal Endangered Species Act and California Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act. The BDCP is intended to help meet California's co-equal goals for Delta management: water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration. The public draft BDCP, while still under development, includes a set of actions to redesign and re-operate state and federal water projects in the Delta and to restore native fish, wildlife and plant habitat; and address other ecological stressors in the Delta such as invasive plant species, barriers to fish migration, and predation of native fish.

The BDCP environmental review process is being conducted by five state and federal agencies. The California Department of Water Resources is the state lead agency under CEQA, while the Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service are serving as the federal co-leads under NEPA.

The EIR/EIS is also being developed in close coordination with the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These agencies will analyze BDCP proposed actions and alternatives to those actions, including alternative water conveyance options, in fulfillment of multiple state and federal permitting processes.

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