

South Delta Fish Facilities Forum

DRAFT Meeting Summary and Recommendations

December 10, 2004, 1:00 – 3:00

California Bay-Delta Authority

Delta Room

Sacramento, California 95814

Attendees (Sign-ins)

Perry Herrgesell	DFG (Forum Co-Chair)
John Davis	USBR (Forum Co-Chair)
Tim Quinn.....	MWDSC (Forum Co-Chair)
Mike Harty	CCP (Facilitator)
Tina Swanson	Bay Institute
John Beuttler	CSPA
Serge Birk	CVPWA
Patrick Wright, Tim Rameriz	CBDA
Ron Ott, Darryl Hayes, Randy Brown	CBDA
Dan Odenweller	Delta Keeper
Pat Coulston, Bob Fujimura	DFG
Kathy Kelly, Don Kurosaka, Roger Churchwell.....	DWR
Rick Sitts	MWDSC
Mike Aceituno, Bruce Oppenheim, Steve Thomas	NOAA Fisheries
Alex Hildebrand.....	SDWA
Tom Mongan.....	SLDMWA
Joe Cech, Z.Q. Chen	UC Davis
Ron Silva, Ken Lentz, Mike Chotkowski, Lloyd Hess.....	USBR
Bill O'Leary.....	USFWS
Jim Snow.....	WWD

Revised Agenda

- 1) Introductions..... All
- 2) Purpose of meeting..... Perry
Herrgesell
- 3) Process of developing a draft white paper
- 4) SDFF Forum background and summary review of draft white paper..... Ron Ott
- 5) Summary of immediate actions underway
- 6) Discussion of white paper
- 7) Schedule for Comments.....
- 8) Next meeting

Note: Handouts, presentation materials, and written comments from participants related to this and previous meetings are located on the CBDA website under the Conveyance Program:

<http://calwater.ca.gov/Programs/Conveyance/SDFF/SouthDeltaFishFacilitiesForum.shtml>

2) Purpose of meeting

To review a draft white paper prepared by the Co-Chairs describing some policy conclusions and actions related to South Delta Fish Facilities.

3) Process of developing a draft white paper

Over the past couple of years, the Forum chairs have heard a number of presentations and discussions on what we know and don't know about the Delta fish facilities and their impacts. As a result, the chairs developed some common ground on which a vision could be developed considering where we are and how we should proceed. Both immediate and long term strategies and actions are addressed. The resulting white paper does not have total agency endorsement or buy-in, but is considered a good place to start. Should this vision or strategy be adopted, funding for the proposed activities will be included in the 10-year finance plan.

4) SDDF Forum background and summary review of draft white paper

Ron Ott presented an overview of the white paper. See PowerPoint presentation for more detail.

The table below, provided by Patrick Wright, describes a summary of the progression of where we are with South Delta Fish Protections:

	Pre-ROD	ROD	Post-ROD
Take	Firm Fixed Limits	Firm Fixed Limits; no new listings to impact exports	Emphasis on real-time monitoring and operation rather than fixed limits
Export	Firm Fixed Limits	EWA Supplements Limits protections by providing protections that would be provided by more restrictive Delta standards on pumping	Expanded long-term EWA with emphasis on delta smelt
Facilities	Operate to State Board standards, mitigation agreements, and ESA Biological Opinions; Improve Tracy Fish Facility per CVPIA	Research feasibility of state of-the-art screens during Phase I with 500 cfs test facility; Phase in replacement screens at SWP and CVP for 10,300 SDIP operation – full cost could be around \$1.7 Billion	Improve, redesign, or reoperate facilities to meet original louver criteria function or an equivalent efficiency. Emphasis on salmon

5) Summary of immediate actions underway

Darryl Hayes presented a summary of the immediate actions being considered. These actions are those that are either already underway and need some further endorsement or are actions that should be initiated in the near term. Immediate actions do not necessarily result in immediate results.

6) Discussion of white paper

Mike Harty led the discussion on the white paper. As a point of reference, Mike polled the meeting participants on whether or not they had serious issues with the white paper approach. About a third of the participants said they had serious issues with the white paper approach. The following are loosely categorized comments from the meeting participants and SDF Forum chairs:

General Comments:

- The ROD called for new screens with a 10300 SDIP. It appears that the Forum is abandoning this objective;
- How can we be assured of achieving an equivalent fish protection objective if facilities are not screened?
- What is the basis for equivalents – there have not been any evaluations completed to show this;
- The Forum is ignoring fish protection benefits that a screen will offer to non-listed fish;
- The original screening objective was to mitigate for Delta actions. The objective should not be to produce more fish upstream, then kill more fish in the Delta;
- We need actions that can determine feasibility;
- A test facility can help us understand what we can achieve with screens -- this was glossed over in the white paper;
- There needs to be a better discussion on what is considered an equivalent action in the paper;
- If there are equivalent actions being considered, Sacramento River actions should be a high priority;
- If there are viable fish protection strategies to achieving similar benefits for all fish, many stakeholders would be supportive of this;
- Screens could be funded with a user pay approach. See handout for more detailed comments;
- Financial assurances or contingencies should be addressed. If there is not enough funding, what gives?;
- Should the Forum build a vision on what they have or what they need. Needs should define the plan;
- How do actions fit in with SDIP?
- What is the definition of an immediate action and what are we trying to accomplish with it?
- If the premise of the paper is true, do we get to population objectives with this approach?
- What are the grounds for sayings how you compare \$1.7B for facilities against upstream actions? Must come prepared to show this at next meeting;
- It's a read flag to stakeholders to say we are going to do more studies to determine what we are going to fix. Need to spell out actions that are going on today for immediate results;
- We should take immediate actions now, but decide on studies needed to achieve return of species;
- The white paper seems to focus on a small part of the problem in the Delta;

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- We need to have public meeting to describe tradeoff of benefits and actions of alternatives;
 - There is a lack of clarity on how we “hold on” to the Delta;
 - Screening actions were part of the Delta fix;
 - How do we evaluate the effects of upstream actions vs. screens in south Delta?;
 - There is no way that if Science is involved that immediate actions will come to completion within the next several years.

Cost effectiveness and need for test facility

- The test facility was a phased approach intended to give us information on cost effectiveness. Why is this not an issue anymore?;
- There needs to be an open discussion on cost effectiveness tools/models that seem to be the basis for the white paper. This has not been reviewed;
- Cost effectiveness decisions should not be made on a single species basis;
- It is difficult to show equivalency if there is not a good basis for comparison of actions. The paper must do a better job so the stakeholders can make an apples to apples comparison;
- The Fish Facility Technical Teams designated by CALFED management supported a research facility evaluation approach because they did not know the answers to many implementation or effectiveness issues;

Problems at the Existing Facilities

- We know we have operational/hydraulic problems at the existing facilities. We should commit to actions that can will improve fish salvage efficiency now;
- The immediate actions should have a schedule that describes implementing those actions that have a potential to show immediate benefits;
- The USBR is constantly playing catch-up with maintenance on an outdated facility;
- The Skinner facility is in better condition than Tracy but debris issues and predation still big problem;
- Having a facility with too much human intervention and handling is always going to be an issue with a salvage facility in the South Delta;
- One way to ensure facility compliance is to shut down the pumps when conditions are not met. This should also be identified as an immediate action that can be taken;
- How do we get facilities up to their original standards?;
- Don't we need to make sure we complete the CHTR before we build new screens or processes?;
- The facilities salvage mostly non-endangered fish;

Recovery Objective

- The actions in the white paper should relate to the overall recovery objectives being developed by others;
- Tracy improvements should be included as part of these actions;
- We must frame the issues better. Is it facilities verses upstream actions or something in-between?
- Given that ERP is going to happen, what is best approach to use in south Delta? Regulation; Facilities; and/or Operations?
- Upstream actions are already happening. Given those actions, what combination of Delta actions including EWA, fish facility improvements, and other South Delta actions should we do to achieve restoration objectives?

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- Single species recovery approach is not appropriate. We need to balance and consider protection for all Delta species as was in ROD;

Assurances and future 10,300 SDIP

- The ROD gave an assurance on future fish facilities for protection. There is no assurance of an equivalent in this paper;
- Need to determine equivalency of upstream actions. The white paper did not list the actions and equivalency to the ROD screen alternatives;
- We need to have a timeframe or timetable for all actions specified in this paper;
- We need to have linkages in the vision that are linked to other Delta actions or operations;
- This vision does not get us to 10,300 SDIP and it is not addressed. Is there an assumption that this vision will take us to that objective (functional equivalent)?;
- Linkages between immediate actions and other Delta Improvements Package actions;
- We have assurances in ROD actions, are there going to be new assurances?;

Delta Mitigation vs. Upstream Actions

- Delta fish facilities in the ROD were originally intended to mitigate for Delta fish losses – this was the objective in the past too. For example, alternatives such as the Peripheral Canal looked at mitigating Delta diversion effects;
- The white paper must describe how this effort fits into the larger scale of implementation. Does it supersede ROD actions?;
- Need to add what we are trying accomplish with these actions (pumping reliability, fish protection, assurances?)
- The vision should be clear that actions in the Delta should mitigate for other Delta actions. This is why screens were part of the ROD package;
- Are there we enhancing populations for other actions by our actions?
- Biggest problem is that commitments in the ROD are not being kept. Not a credible approach on relying more on upstream actions;
- Number of fish killed at the pumps has grown. Need to consider protection for all species in the Delta;
- The ERP objective is to increase habitat in the Delta;

Quantification of Benefits

- Before the Forum abandons screens, the benefit of other actions should be understood first;
- How does \$100M at Battle Creek compare to \$100M Tracy Fish Test Facility?

CVPIA and Biological Opinion Mandates

- The USBR still has a CVPIA mandate. Improvements there should happen regardless of Forum decisions;
- The definition of the CVPIA improvement at Tracy needs clarification;

Hydraulic Impacts of Actions

- The actions identified may have significant hydraulic impacts on south Delta facilities due to the altered operations. Modeling must be coordinated, integrated, and most of all compatible. Hydraulic analysis integration should include actions on the San Joaquin River, Stockton DO, SDIP, and Fish Facility planning and operations;

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- Common objectives and assumptions for all studies need to be agreed to;
 - There is no agency or timeline identified to conduct the hydraulic studies identified in the white paper;

Other immediate actions need to be included

- DCC closure to help salmon;
- Increase actions to move fish away from pumps (operational);
- Head of Old River Barrier

Chair Comments and Responses:

- The proposed vision is an attempt to determine the best way to get to a population objective – we do not need to protect every fish;
- The key point of the paper is that we should be hesitant to spend significant funding on fish facilities;
- Cost effectiveness models being developed show a minimal improvement to salmon with new facilities compared to other actions;
- The white paper ensures that the existing facilities are improved, redesigned, or reoperated to achieve performance standards that they were originally designed for;
- The OCAP Biological Opinions and the CVPIA specify needed improvements at the fish facilities. Many items not specifically mentioned in this white paper will also be implemented;
- The reality is that we can not commit to multi-billion dollar objectives. If we commit to an expensive facility improvement process, there will be nothing left for other actions and we need to consider all CALFED objectives;
- The Forum chairs are not advocating abandoning fish facility actions without a backup plan that is convincing to all stakeholders and agencies. The Vision hopes to look at these options in order to move forward. The wingwalker using the plane struts was used as example of process;
- The Forum Chairs are skeptical of major fish facility investments when there may be better options of restoration for the money;
- No Chair is suggesting removing the screens that are there. There is a recognition that these screens need to be improved;
- The chairs agree that all species should be addressed when determining impacts;
- The Vision is intended to be an adaptive plan. There is no reason that other actions can not be added in future as more information is obtained;
- The USBR is committed to improving facilities as required by CVPIA and Biological Opinions. They are already moving on many of these actions.

Action Items:

All comments noted above will be considered. Please send written comments if points have not been captured in the notes.

7) Schedule for Comments

Comments made at the this meeting as outlined in these notes are being considered for white paper revision.

Written comments are encouraged and due January 14, 2005

Action Items:

Written comments are due to Ron Ott (ronott@calwater.ca.gov, (916) 445-2168) or Darryl Hayes (dhayes@calwater.ca.gov, (916) 445-5336) on January 14, 2005. They will ensure that all comments are distributed to the SFFF Forum Chairs for consideration.

A revised White Paper will be distributed back to the SFFF Forum participants on or about January 26, 2005

8) Next Meeting

Date: January 31, 2004, 1:00 to 4:00 PM

Location: CBDA office on 650 Capitol Mall

Topics:

- *Revised white paper*
- *Comments received*