

NDWA Manager Report – February 2022

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Drought Barriers

In late January, DWR informed the Agency that a decision was made to NOT install drought barriers in the North Delta in 2022, but to continue planning for install on June 1, 2023 in the event that drought conditions persist. DWR also disclosed that the barrier locations they are planning are the sites on Miner and Steamboat Sloughs that were previously identified by local landowners and Reclamation Districts.

ACTION: The Manager and legal/engineering consultants participated in a meeting with DWR staff regarding an update on the barriers and the details related to an agreement to reimburse NDWA for managerial, engineering, and legal costs associated with the planning, permitting, and potential installation of drought barriers in the North Delta.

DROUGHT EMERGENCY

Drought Rollercoaster Continues

After one of the wettest Decembers on record, Northern California [pivoted](#) to two of the [driest](#) months. On New Year's day the [snowpack](#) level was at 168% of normal, but after a [dry January](#), it is [down to 93%](#) of the historical average. The [NRDC fears](#) forecasts of a dry February mean the [drought](#) conditions will continue through 2023, and expresses concern about the SWP and CVP nonetheless increasing water allocations in 2022 from zero to 15%. After a [sobering drought update](#) warning of [escalating](#) dry conditions that may become [unprecedented](#), the chair of the State Water Resources Control Board said the state needs to [prepare](#) for the ["worst case scenario."](#)

DELTA DOWNLOAD

LAO Weighs in On Bay-Delta Plan and Drought Response

The independent Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) released a [report](#) supporting the Governor's budget proposal to fund five new permanent staff at the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB/Board) to work on completing the update of the Delta Water Quality Control Plan (DWQCP). Because this update started in 2009 and there has been dramatic fish declines since 1985, the LAO also recommend the Legislature engage with the Administration to identify actions to help expedite the process to finalize new flow objectives for the Delta. So far, flow objectives for the San Joaquin River and salinity standards for the South Delta were adopted in 2018. The Board staff are currently on track to adopt new flow objectives for the Sacramento River and Delta estuary in the fall of 2023. Another [report by the LAO](#) is more skeptical of the Governor's budget proposal for an additional \$750 million in General Fund for drought response activities. The LAO recommends the Legislature wait until the May revise to make a decision on this proposal and also consider providing more oversight and prioritization of activities to be funded if it decides to approve the appropriation.

Public Outreach Plan for Delta Tunnel Project

In preparation for the release of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Delta Conveyance Project in mid-2022, DWR [released a plan](#) for improving [public outreach and engagement](#) to provide information about the environmental analysis.

National Preservation Act v. Delta Conveyance Project

The Delta Protection Commission (DPC) released the first volume of a [newsletter](#) intended to regularly update Delta residents on how the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) can help protect the region's culturally significant landscape from Delta Conveyance Project construction impacts.

Second Appeal Hearing Scheduled on Lookout Slough Habitat Project

After revising the Lookout Slough project to be consistent with the Delta Plan, DWR resubmitted a Certification of Consistency on December 30, 2021. Soon after appeals were filed by Solano County Water Agency and Liberty Island Access. As a result, the Delta Stewardship Council has scheduled a second [appeal hearing](#) at 10:00 a.m. on March 24, 2022.

New Sacramento River Diversion Intake Proposed

A resolution was recently approved by the Solano County Water Agency (SCWA) that supports [moving forward](#) with a plan to [move the North Bay Aqueduct](#) (NBA) water diversion intake from Cache Slough to the Sacramento River. This action allows SCWA to lobby for state and federal funding to help pay for feasibility studies as part of the total estimated \$600 million project cost. The NBA is part of the State Water Project.

NEWSWORTHY

The deadline for submitting surface water diversion reports to the State Water Resources Control Board was modified last year in budget trailer bill (SB 155). The new reporting period is now aligned with the standard water year that starts on October 1. All surface water rights holders, whether riparian, pre-1914, permitted, licensed or small domestic use, small irrigation use and stock pond registrations, now have the same reporting deadline. In 2022, the deadline is April 1. In every subsequent year the deadline is February 1.

CALENDAR ALERTS

March 24 – DSC Appeal Hearing on Lookout Slough Habitat Restoration Project, 10:00 am

April 1 – Deadline for public officials to file FPPC Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700)