
State Water Resources Control Board

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY AND BOARD CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT FINAL INITIAL BIOLOGICAL GOALS FOR LOWER SAN JOAQUIN RIVER FLOW OBJECTIVES

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) staff is releasing the Draft Final Initial Biological Goals for fall-run Chinook salmon in the lower San Joaquin River and its three salmon-bearing tributaries, the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers (collectively “LSJR”) for Board consideration of approval. These draft final initial biological goals were developed pursuant to the requirements in the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay-Delta Plan or Plan), as amended on December 12, 2018.

The Draft Final Initial Biological Goals are currently planned to be considered for approval by the Board at the Board’s regular meeting on **Wednesday, September 6, 2023**. Additional information will be provided with release of a Board Agenda at least 10 days in advance of the Board meeting date. Additional information about the Board meeting is provided below.

BACKGROUND

The 2018 Bay-Delta Plan establishes water quality objectives for the reasonable protection of beneficial uses in the Bay-Delta watershed, a program of implementation to achieve those objectives, and monitoring, evaluation, and study provisions. In December of 2018, the State Water Board approved updates to the LSJR flow components of the Bay-Delta Plan for the reasonable protection of fish and wildlife. As part of the 2018 LSJR update, the State Water Board committed to develop and consider approval of biological goals for the LSJR. The State Water Board also committed to establishing a Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Working Group (STM Working Group) to be a watershed group and forum for facilitating coordination among the State Water Board and interested water agencies and other stakeholders who have expertise in LSJR issues. The 2018 LSJR update requires that the State Water Board to seek recommendations from the STM Working Group on the biological goals.

Biological goals for the Bay-Delta Plan are quantitative metrics that the State Water Board will use to assess if the actions it is taking under the Bay-Delta Plan, and in coordination with State agencies and other entities to implement the Plan, are making

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sufficient progress towards the Plan's objectives of achieving and maintaining the natural production of viable native fish and aquatic species populations. The 2018 LSJR update specifies that biological goals will be developed for salmonids including goals for abundance, productivity, diversity, and population spatial extent, distribution, and structure. Fall-run Chinook salmon were selected for the development of initial biological goals due to their more abundant status and ability to serve as an indicator species for conditions protective of native fish species. Biological goals will be used to inform adaptive implementation of the LSJR flow requirements and, along with other available scientific information, evaluate the effectiveness of its program of implementation, guide development and assessment of the monitoring and evaluation program, and inform future changes to the Bay-Delta Plan.

PUBLIC PROCESS TO DATE

A draft initial biological goals report was released on September 20, 2019, with a comment period extending through October 25, 2019. A revised draft initial biological goals report (2022 revised draft) was released on June 24, 2022, with a comment period extending through August 11, 2022. A workshop on the 2022 revised draft was also held on August 4, 2022, to receive input and recommendations on possible revisions and improvements from members of the STM Working Group, an independent science panel, and other interested persons. Two STM Working Group meetings were held on November 21, 2022, and December 7, 2022, to seek additional recommendations and facilitate technical dialogues with STM Working Group members and other interested persons. A third STM Working Group meeting was held on March 9, 2023, to facilitate discussion with STM Working Group members and receive additional public comment on the 2022 revised draft. A second revised draft initial biological goals report (2023 second revised draft) was released on April 10, 2023, with a comment period extending through May 12, 2023. A fourth STM Working Group meeting was held on April 21, 2023, to facilitate dialogue on the 2023 second revised draft, and a Board workshop was held on May 3, 2023, to receive additional public comments.

DRAFT FINAL REPORT

The Draft Final Report is the fourth public draft of proposed biological goals. Changes in the Draft Final Report were made in response to comments on the 2023 second revised draft report. The Draft Final Report cumulatively incorporates review and response to public comments and STM Working Group recommendations on prior versions of the proposed biological goals. The Draft Final Report includes a new summary response to public comments and relocates information from Section 1.5 (changes to the first revised report) of the second revised report. A numeric change is made to one biological goal in direct response to comments with subsequent numeric adjustments to other goals. The freshwater juvenile survival goal was increased to better match survival rates typical of Pacific Chinook salmon, reduce the lengthy timeline for attaining goals, and reconcile the time disparity between the tributaries to attain the goals. Due to the quantitative linkages between the biological goals, four other goals were adjusted consistent with the quantitative connections between goals. The "Purposes and Uses" section was modified to provide more clarification how the biological goals are intended

to be used. Finally, additional information was added regarding baseline juvenile survival and monitoring needed to assess the biological goals.

BOARD CONSIDERATION

More details regarding the Board Item and time will be provided with release of the Board Agenda which will be posted at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_info/calendar/. A draft Resolution, including Board action approving the draft biological goals, will also be released with the Board Agenda.

Video and Teleconference Option: This meeting will occur with both a physical meeting location with an option for the public to participate from a remote location.

September 6, 2023

Joe Serna Jr. CalEPA Headquarters Building
Coastal Hearing Room – Second Floor
1001 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814
And via Video and Teleconference

For those who only wish to watch the meeting, the webcast remains available at either <https://www.youtube.com/user/BoardWebSupport/> or <https://video.calepa.ca.gov/> (closed captioning available) and should be used UNLESS you intend to comment.

For members of the public who wish to comment on an agenda item or are presenting to the Board, additional information about participating telephonically or via the remote meeting option will be available at least 10 days before the meeting at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_info/remote_meeting/

DOCUMENT AVAILABILTY

The Draft Final Initial Biological Goals Report is available on the [Implementation Activities for Lower San Joaquin River Flows](#) webpage. You may also request a copy of the Draft Final Initial Biological Goals Report with tracked changes by contacting State Water Board staff at: LSJR-SD-Comments@waterboards.ca.gov.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information regarding LSJR flow objectives, implementation, and biological goals, visit the Bay-Delta Plan Update and Implementation of the [Lower San Joaquin River](#) webpage. For information on other Bay-Delta Plan update and implementation activities, please visit the [San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Estuary Bay-Delta Watershed Efforts](#) webpage.

FUTURE NOTIFICATIONS

Any person desiring to receive future notices concerning the Bay-Delta Plan must sign up for the public information distribution list. To sign up for the public information distribution list, access the [Email Subscription Signup webpage](#). Under

“Subscription Topics”, select the box for “Bay Delta Notices” (located within the section entitled “Water Rights”), click “Submit”, and then provide the required information.

CONTACT

Individuals who require special accommodations are requested to contact staff at LSJR-SD-Comments@waterboards.ca.gov prior to the workshop. If you have any questions regarding this notice or related efforts, you may send an email to LSJR-SD-Comments@waterboards.ca.gov.

Date August 8, 2023



Courtney Tyler
Clerk to the Board