



Stakeholder Assessment

*Salinas River Operations
Habitat Conservation Plan*

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August 16, 2023

Presentation Overview

- Stakeholder Assessment Purpose
- Salinas River HCP Primary Interests
- HCP Desired Outcomes
- Potential Conflicts & Pathways for Resolution
- Role of Regulatory Agencies
- HCP Relevance to Regional Project Activities
- Perspectives & Resources for Public Involvement
- Discussion

Interview Purpose & Approach

- **Purpose:** to gain an understanding of key stakeholder interests and perspectives related to all aspects of the HCP, including re-operation protocols for Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs
- **Methodology:** 15 interviews; qualitative interview guide; synthesis of themes without attribution
- **Participant affiliations:** Arroyo Seco GSA, CA Dept of Parks & Recreation, Central Coast Wetlands Group, Monterey Waterkeeper, Grower-Shipper Association of Monterey County, Marina Coast Water District GSA, Monterey County Farm Bureau, Monterey County Vintners & Growers Association, NRWMAC, Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, Salinas Valley Basin GSA, Salinas Valley Water Coalition, Trout Unlimited, Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge

“The HCP has the opportunity to benefit from 20 years of dialogue and coordination in the Salinas Valley.”



Primary Interests



- Improve agency coordination and streamline permitting
- Build upon environmental principles in LTMP and existing stream maintenance plan
- protect natural ecosystems and habitat values
- Recognize habitat values and help with management and protection of species (western snowy plover, steelhead)
- Manage Salinas Lagoon balancing environmental interests and flood protection

Primary Interests

- Operate reservoirs to maintain aquifer health and recharge while attempting to balance recreational uses
- Clarify what HCP can do for ongoing stream maintenance
- Acknowledge the benefit of stream maintenance in preventing flood effects
- Ensure an understanding of how surface water and groundwater are interacting and work with partners for consistency with Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs)

Desired Outcomes

- Those with a stake in the Salinas River figure out how to address flood protection and environmental protection in a balanced way
- Establish a release program from reservoirs that makes sense with a range of opportunities for winter releases consistent with the steelhead lifecycle and effectively utilizes reservoir storage and maintains aquifer recharge
- Optimize the reservoir release regime to meet the full potential of the SRDF
- Coordinate federal regulatory agency goals and attain a good working permit on the river
- Take a programmatic approach for river maintenance and provide a prioritization of actions
- Make it easier and less expensive to clear the channel of invasive vegetation and sediment

“People walk away feeling that everyone got something they wanted and we achieve an agreement that we all can live with.”



Desired Outcomes

- A better understanding about how to manage the lagoon itself
- Opportunity to explore how the HCP takes into consideration climate change and climate adaptation
- Acknowledge the need to have connected flow between the Arroyo Seco and the Salinas River to support Steelhead migration
- An HCP that is additive and complementary to other planning processes and doesn't add another layer of complexity
- An inclusive HCP development process that is broadly supported by the public and the regulatory agencies
- Decisions made based on high quality data

Potential Conflicts & Avenues for Resolution

- There are substantive areas of potential conflict or tension related to base flow needs, fish passage and other habitat needs, agricultural interests, and a complex regulatory framework
- Conflicts within Agricultural community itself—North and South have different needs and perspectives
- Tension between flood control and environmental protection
- The regulatory agencies can have siloed conflicting approaches



Potential Conflicts & Avenues for Resolution



- Find middle ground to balance needs of steelhead and meet principal water needs of Agriculture
- Leverage collaboration and conflict resolution already achieved through SGMA and the IRWM
- The Low Effect HCP should help reduce potential conflicts associated with managing the Lagoon for multiple benefits

“We want the system operated in a way that balances competing needs and interests.”



Role of Regulatory Agencies

- High levels of support for regulatory agencies to participate in process and to take a proactive approach with agencies to cultivate alignment with stakeholders
- An opportunity to foster cohesiveness and consistency among the regulatory agencies
- Importance of participating regulatory agencies representatives to have decision-making authority
- Some concern expressed that regulatory agencies take a one size fits all approach that may not align with stakeholder interests
- Importance of having a clear understanding of what regulatory agencies want to achieve

HCP and Other Project Activities

- Need to have a full understanding of how the Interlake Tunnel project and HCP would interact
- Ensure consistency with Projects and Management Actions in Groundwater Sustainability Plans
- Importance of working with the IRWM to think beyond conventional funding and think bigger and more comprehensively for multi-benefit outcomes in the watershed



“Be as collaborative as possible and build on efforts of other groups. Everyone’s time is valuable and the process shouldn’t place a burden on the community.”



Other Information & Resources for Public Involvement

- Make accessible to the public in a way that is truly understandable and that builds trust
- This effort is going to be large and expensive. Having professional messaging to help build stakeholder and public support and a clear understanding of realistic costs needs to be done upfront and throughout.
- Ensure interactive public involvement
- Develop a set of scenarios and give a clear articulation of benefits and tradeoffs
- Those stakeholders participating need to educate their own constituencies





Discussion

