





TODAY'S ACTION

Consider receiving an update on the status of the Salinas River Habitat Conservation Plan



Committee Action

- The Planning Committee receives regular updates on the Habitat Conservation Plan
- The Reservoir Operations Advisory Committee received an update at their September 29, 2022 meeting

Financial Impact

- Grant funding agreements will make available a total of two million dollars in reimbursable Federal funds and \$750,000 in reimbursable State funds.
- The approved FY23 Agency budget contains staff time and reimbursable funds for HCP development within Agency Fund 116. The remaining reimbursable and in-kind funds under this grant will be identified in future Agency budgets.

Discussion

- **What is a Habitat Conservation Plan?**
- HCPs are planning documents required as part of an application for an incidental take permit. They describe the anticipated effects of the proposed taking; how those impacts will be minimized or mitigated; and how the HCP is to be funded.

<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/habitat-conservation-plan-fact-sheet.pdf>

Discussion (cont.)

- **Why does the Agency need an HCP?**
- The Agency is seeking an Incidental Take Permit for core activities including at a minimum:
 - Releases from Nacimiento and San Antonio Dams
 - Operation of the Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF)
 - Sandbar management at the Salinas River Lagoon

Discussion (cont.)

Background

- USACE construction permit for SVWP included a formal consultation with NMFS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- NMFS issued a Biological Opinion in 2007
 - Included the 2005 SVWP Flow Prescription for Steelhead Trout in the Salinas River
- The USACE permit expired in 2017
- Because SVWP operations do not involve a federal action, Section 7 of the ESA was not triggered ultimately leading to the withdrawal of the NMFS BO in 2019

Discussion (cont.)

Background

- It was determined that an HCP would be required to secure an ITP for ongoing SVWP operations
- The Agency began a phased approach to develop an HCP in 2018
 - Phase 1: Salinas River Long-term Management Plan (completed in 2019)
 - Phase 2: Salinas River HCP (in progress)
 - Phase 3: Salinas River HCP NEPA/CEQA
- Agency, NMFS, USFWS, signed a Charter formalizing the commitment to pursue an HCP in December 2020

Discussion (cont.)

Grant Funding for Phase 2

- \$1,000,000 2019 Non-Traditional Section 6 HCP Grant
 - Awarded in April 2020
 - Funding agreement signed in February 2022
- \$750,000 Proposition 1 Integrated Regional Water Management Implementation Grant
 - Awarded in July 2020
 - Funding agreement signed in August 2021
- \$1,000,000 2021 Non-Traditional Section 6 HCP Grant
 - Awarded in October 2021
 - Funding agreement signed in April 2022

Discussion (cont.)

Building Blocks needed to inform the HCP:

- Covered activities
- Permit term
- Permit area
- Covered species
- Mechanisms of impact
- Quantifying the impact
- Mitigation actions
 - Location
 - Proportional to impact?
 - Feasible?

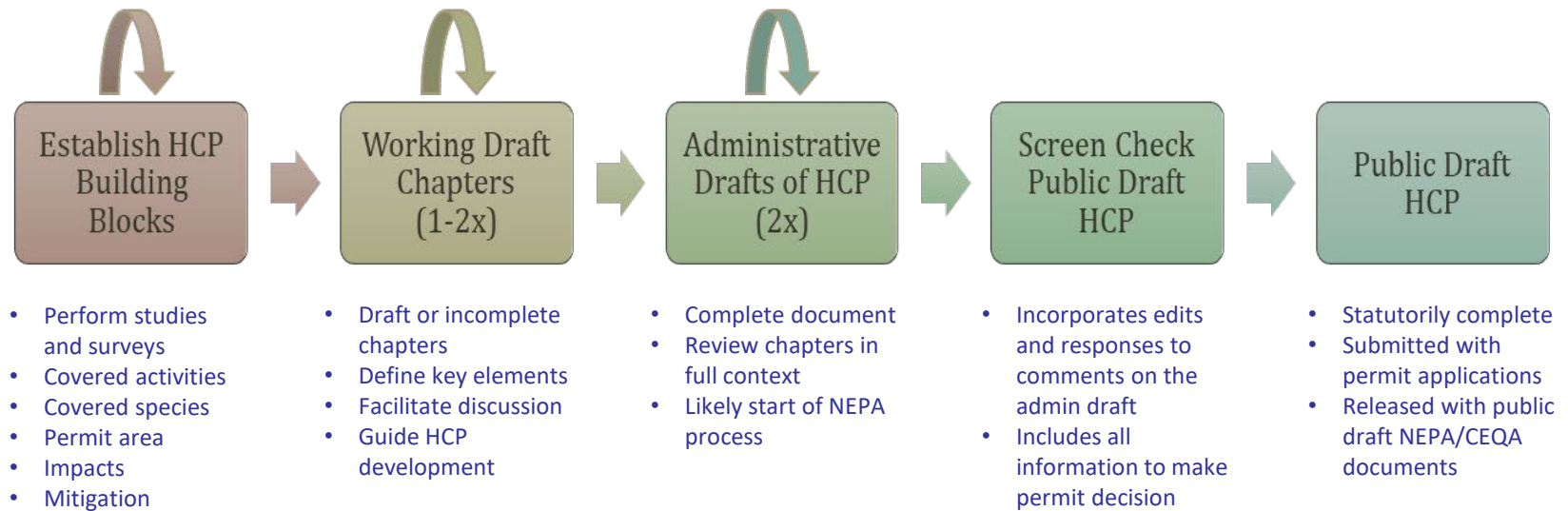
Discussion (cont.)

The content of the chapters will guide the development of the HCP

Proposed HCP chapters:

- Chapter 1. Introduction
- Chapter 2. Covered Activities
- Chapter 3. Environmental Setting
- Chapter 4. Effects of Covered Activities and Impact of the Taking
- Chapter 5. Conservation Strategy
- Chapter 6. Conditions on Covered Activities and Program Participation
- Chapter 7. Monitoring and Adaptive Management Program
- Chapter 8. Plan Implementation
- Chapter 9. Cost and Funding
- Chapter 10. Assurances
- Chapter 11. Alternatives to Take

Discussion (cont.)



Discussion (cont.)

Work Product	HCP Building Block	Status
Long-Term Management Plan	HCP chapters and components (e.g., environmental setting, covered activities)	Completed in 2019
Gabilan/Tembladero Watershed Assessment	Environmental setting	Completed in 2021
Least Bell's Vireo Surveys	Covered species selection	Completed in 2021
Salinas River Lagoon Surveys	Environmental setting	Completed in 2021
Arroyo Seco Habitat Assessment	Environmental setting, conservation strategy	Completed in 2021
Striped Bass Assessment	Environmental setting, conservation strategy	Completed in 2021
Tidewater Goby and Steelhead Surveys (Lagoon)	Environmental setting, effects analysis, conservation strategy	Ongoing, last conducted in spring 2022
Draft Chapter 1, Introduction	HCP overview	1 st Administrative Draft Complete
Draft Chapter 2, Covered Activities	Identifies and describes the activities proposed for coverage under the incidental take permits; provides context for effects analysis	1 st Administrative Draft Complete (missing core covered activity – the reoperations protocol)
Draft Chapter 3, Environmental Setting	Environmental conditions that inform the effects analysis and conservation strategy	1 st Administrative Draft Complete
Low Effect HCP	Covered activities, effects analysis, and conservation measures for three covered species that will be adapted to the Salinas River HCP	On-going (winter 2021 – winter 2022)
Critical Riffle Analysis	Informs SVIHM inputs and ultimately, reoperations protocol	Ongoing (2022 – spring 2023). Methods developed winter/spring 2022.
Dam Passage Feasibility Study	Conservation strategy	Ongoing (spring 2022 – spring 2023)
Update of Project Web Site www.salinaserivermanagementprogram.org	Stakeholder engagement	Ongoing



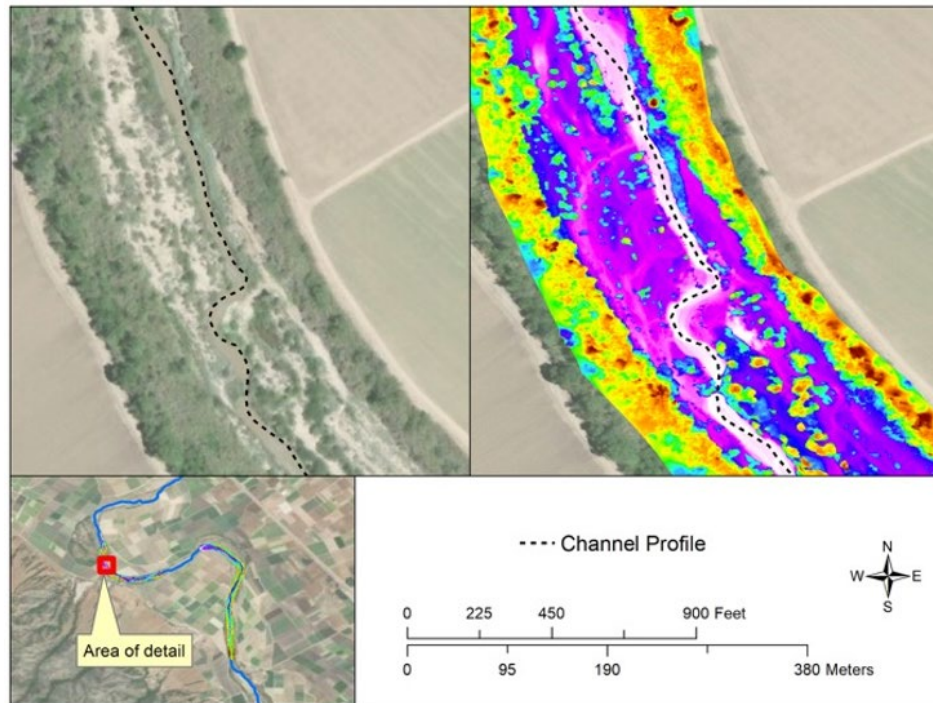
Discussion (cont.)

- **Critical Riffle Analysis**
 - Determine flow requirements for steelhead migration in the lower reaches of the Salinas and Arroyo Seco Rivers
 - Past surveys have identified areas prone to sandbars and riffle features that could restrict fish passage under low flows
 - Wet channel surveys are effective but require a range of flows



Discussion (cont.)

- **Critical Riffle Analysis continued...**
 - No guarantee required flows will occur during HCP development
 - Developed method with fisheries consultant (FISHBIO) to use drone photogrammetry to create models of critical river reaches
 - Pilot study conducted in late June downstream of Chualar
 - Method refined to improve accuracy
 - Next round of surveys following first flow





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