

Sonoma Water Federal Platform

2024-2025

Russian River Biological Opinion and Fisheries Restoration

Biological Opinion

Accomplishments: Having earlier secured in excess of \$33 million for the ecosystem restoration of Dry Creek to enhance the habitat of imperiled salmon and steelhead populations consistent with the 2008 Biological Opinion, the Agency was enabled to move ahead with restoration efforts with the assurance that the federal portion of the work was funded. Our success was due in large measure to ongoing engagement with the Corps both in California and at the highest levels in the Pentagon and at headquarters.

Priorities:

- Continue to meet with Corps officials, including in Washington, to keep them apprised of status updates on the project.
- Continue to work with landowners on right-of-way, monitoring of Corps implementation of Dry Creek habitat restoration.
- With the recent expiration of the 2008 Biological Opinion, continue to work toward the next one.

Pacific Coastal Salmon Restoration Fund (PCSRF)

Accomplishments: Since the establishment of PCSRF in FY2000, due in part to Sonoma Water's leadership and ongoing advocacy efforts, the program has received \$1.75 billion in federal funding. PCSRF provides critical funding that has been used by state, local, and tribal entities to restore and protect salmon habitat; develop local plans for restoration efforts and management; and conduct research to monitor, and support salmon conservation and recovery for the protection, restoration and conservation of Pacific salmon populations and their habitats.

Priorities

- Support continued appropriations for PCSRF in FY2024, FY 2025, and FY2026
- Coordinate with stakeholders to increase awareness of funding requests and project implementation

Fish Passage

Accomplishments: The IIJA authorizes the use of substantial amounts of federal-aid highway funding for wildlife crossing structures, including those related to fish crossing. Sonoma Water worked with the office of Senator Padilla to assure that fish crossings would be eligible for funding as wildlife crossing structures.

Priorities

- Continue to work to determine how and whether this eligibility might be utilized to further objectives in this area.

Water Supply

Quagga Mussels

Accomplishments: The Water Resources Development Act of 2020 included the Russian River basin with three much larger river basins as eligible for inclusion in a program that funds watercraft inspection stations for the purpose of preventing the infestation of invasive species; in our case, quagga mussels. Then, in the FY 2023 appropriations bill, we were able to include the Russian River basin as locations specifically designated as eligible for the \$16 million included for watercraft inspection stations under this program. for invasive species prevention and monitoring.

Priorities:

- Retain the \$13 million included in the committee report accompanying the Army Corps appropriations bill for FY '24, and the designation of the Russian River basin.
- Work with the Army Corps to secure some of this funding for watercraft inspection stations at Lake Sonoma and Lake Mendocino.

Operation and Maintenance of Dams

- Support funding for projects at the dam that are consistent with objectives of the Biological Opinion and the preservation of imperiled species
- Support funding for ongoing maintenance and operations of Warm Springs Dam (Lake Sonoma) and Coyote Valley Dam (Lake Mendocino)
- Support funding for dam safety projects

Potter Valley Project

Accomplishments: Sonoma Water supported successful efforts of Congressman Huffman to establish an Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration program that could benefit priorities related to the Potter Valley Project. The initial authorization for the provision when enacted in December 2020 was \$15 million annually for five years through FY2026. Sonoma Water supported Congressman Huffman's efforts to secure \$250 million over five years in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to fund the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration program.

Priorities

- In June 2023, Sonoma Water applied for funds made available under the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration program when the Bureau of Reclamation releases its Notice of Funding Opportunity. As of early October, the grant announcements have not been made. Assuming that Sonoma Water receives the planning grant, it will Apply for project funding for construction of

the selected fish passage and diversion option. Continue to brief federal officials on the merits and importance of the New Eel-Russian Facility proposal, which has been submitted to PG&E to include in its license surrender application and decommissioning plan. Continue to pursue opportunities to support our efforts to secure federal funding to assist with planning, construction, permitting and operations of the New Eel-Russian Facility.

Climate Adaptation and Resiliency

Wildfire Resiliency

Accomplishments: The committee report accompanying the FY '24 Senate Appropriations bill funding the programs and projects of the Army Corps directs the Corps to “expand efforts to implement wildfire mitigation projects at its facilities to protect Federal property and neighboring communities . . . to protect against the increasing threat of wildfires.”

Priorities:

- Assure retention of this language as legislation moves toward enactment.
- Work for increased budgeting for wildfire resiliency at both Warm Springs and Coyote Valley dams
- Work toward possible language in Army Corps authorizing legislation that might facilitate these efforts.

Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO)

Priorities

- Ensure sufficient funding is provided to support FIRO through budgetary requests to update both the Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma water control manuals.
- Monitor regulations or legislative efforts in support of FIRO
- Seek, as needed, funding to support FIRO efforts throughout the nation through the budget for
 - Water Operations Technical Support Program, US Army Corps

Seasonal to Sub-seasonal (S2S) Precipitation Forecasting)

Accomplishments: In FY2023, \$1.0 million was appropriated to seed innovative research testbeds for a pilot project for S2S precipitation forecasts for water management in the western United States. We built, leveraged, and coordinated a growing coalition to increase awareness of forecasting needs and priorities, established relationships with policymakers in the Legislative and Executive Branches to support funding and programmatic requests, facilitated an opportunity to testify before the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee to advocate for inclusion of S2S in upcoming Weather Act reauthorization, and organized and participated in meetings in Washington, DC to advocate for S2S forecasting priorities.

Priorities

- Identify and pursue opportunities to work with the Office of Atmospheric Research's U.S. Weather Research Program, to leverage the FY2023 appropriation.
- Support additional funding for, and prioritization of, increased modeling and technology for enhanced weather forecasting.
- Identify and leverage opportunities present to and build support with likeminded stakeholders, including:
 - National Association of Counties' Western Interstate Council
 - Houston Water
 - National Water Resources Association
 - Association of California Water Agencies or

Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information Program

Accomplishments: \$900,000 was appropriated in FY2023 for a regional radar array demonstration project to enable better forecasting of extreme West Coast precipitation events, like atmospheric rivers.

Priorities

- Identify and pursue opportunities to leverage \$900,000 appropriated in FY2023 for
- Continue to seek federal appropriations, we are in the Senate appropriations bill for \$900,000 for FY 24.
- Coordinate with growing coalition to build support for future federal funding, ensure other agencies are submitting a similar appropriations request each year.

Climate Adaptation, Resiliency, and Watershed Recovery

Priorities

- Pursue funding through the \$17 billion included in the IIJA includes for Corps programs to address resiliency issues in the categories of flood control, ecosystem restoration, and coastal emergencies, which will provide opportunities for federal funding to support these priorities.
- Pursue funding available through several programs under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to assist us in our efforts to ensure a more resilient watershed during times of disaster and to aid us in recovery efforts if/when they occur received significant funding in the recently enacted IIJA, including:
 - *Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program*: \$1 billion (\$200 million per year) to support pre-disaster and hazard mitigation activities undertaken by states, U.S. territories, Indian tribal governments, and local communities.
 - *Flood Mitigation Assistance Program*: \$3.5 billion in flood mitigation assistance grants over five years (\$700 million per year) for FY 2022-2026. This program provides financial and technical assistance to states and communities to reduce the risk of flood damage to homes and businesses through buyouts, elevation, and other activities. In previous years, the annual grant cycle for the program ranged from \$150-\$200 million a year.
 - *Safeguarding Tomorrow Through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act*: \$500 million in grants (\$100 million per year) to establish a revolving fund for mitigation assistance to

reduce risks from disasters and natural hazards. Such funds would provide assistance to local governments in States for projects to reduce disaster risks to homeowners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and communities to decrease the loss of life and property, the cost of insurance claims, and federal disaster payments.

- Support funding programs aimed at putting national climate change policies into practice at the local level
- Support funding of the Sonoma Water Climate Adaptation Plan
- Support legislation and programs increasing funding opportunities in alignment with Sonoma Water's Carbon Free Water program

Sanitation and Flood Control

Sanitation District Funding

Accomplishments: Worked with Senator Padilla's office to include \$1.45 million in FY2023 appropriations for the Occidental County Sanitation District wastewater pipeline project.

- Work with EPA to secure the \$1.45 million funding and explore sources of funding for construction of project, as needed.
- Continue to support increased funding for Reclamation's WaterSMART programs that provide assistance for recycled water and other water management projects
- Support federal appropriations for the Clean Water and Drinking Water revolving loan and grant programs
- Review new infrastructure initiatives and position Sonoma Water and its wastewater districts/zones to be eligible for funding from these programs

Flood Protection Funding

- Support flood protection facility funding
- Seek authorization and appropriation of funding in the Farm Bill to support infrastructure improvements within the Central Sonoma Watershed Project

Regulations

Legislative and Regulatory Review

- Track legislative and regulatory developments as reported by Sonoma Water advocates and information provided by coalitions and trade organizations
- Communicate Sonoma Water positions on legislation or regulatory initiatives consistent with Board direction through engagement with policymakers and staff