

# Peer Review Plan

**Date:** 6/1/2012

**Source Center:** U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)  
California Water Science Center  
Placer Hall, 6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

**Preliminary Title:** Synthesis of Studies in the Fall Low Salinity Zone of the San Francisco Estuary, September-December 2011

**Point of Contact for Comments/Questions:** Larry R. Brown (Phone: 916-278-3098, Email: [lrbrown@usgs.gov](mailto:lrbrown@usgs.gov))

**Subject and Purpose:** In 2008, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), issued a Biological Opinion (BiOP) on Central Valley Project/State Water Project operations that concluded that aspects of those operations jeopardize the continued existence of delta smelt (a state and federally listed species) and adversely modify delta smelt critical habitat. As part of the BiOP, a Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) was issued that calls for the adaptive management of fall Delta outflow following "wet" and "above normal" water-years. The Service determined that the fall Delta outflow RPA was required to alleviate both jeopardy to delta smelt and adverse modification of delta smelt critical habitat. The fall Delta outflow action was hypothesized to improve habitat suitability and contribute to a higher average population growth rate of delta smelt.

The RPA action is intended to maintain the position of the low salinity zone (1-6 salinity) in a region considered favorable for delta smelt during the fall. Although the RPA was not formally implemented in 2011, naturally high flows and water management actions resulted in conditions very similar to those expected under the RPA. A variety of studies were implemented as early as possible, given the logistical constraints, providing data on what might be expected when the RPA is implemented in the future.

A key step in the adaptive management process is analysis and synthesis of data collected during the assessment of the outcomes from management actions. The purpose of this report is to document the conduct of the integration and synthesis of data collected during Fall 2011 to determine if predictions made in the adaptive management plan were supported. The report may also include science-based recommendations regarding future implementations of the RPA.

Complete copies of the BiOP and draft adaptive management plan can be obtained at <http://www.fws.gov/sfbaydelta/OCAP/index.cfm>.

The published product will be released as a USGS Scientific Investigations Report.

**Impact of Dissemination:** This product is considered to be a Highly Influential Scientific Assessment.

**Timing of Review:** July 2012 – August 2012. Deferrals are not anticipated at this time.

**Manner of Review, Selection of Reviewers, and Nomination Process:** Review will be by a panel of peer reviewers selected by representatives of the Delta Science Program, the

scientific department of the Delta Council. Representatives of the Delta Science Program will contact potential reviewers from the selection list to determine their availability and will ensure selected panel members do not have a conflict of interest. Delta Science Program will assemble the reviewers, facilitate their deliberations, and prepare one combined report of their peer review comments.

**Expected Number of Reviewers:** The panel will include 4 to 10 reviewers.

**Requisite Expertise:** Engineering, water management, fisheries biology, hydrology, water quality, estuarine ecology/restoration, and species conservation.

**Opportunity for Public Comment:** No, there will not be an opportunity for formal public comment; however, the draft report will be included in a public release of the documents supplied to the review panel to aid in their deliberations. The public release will also prepare the public to understand the review comments delivered orally by the panel during their public meeting and provide a basis for the public to formulate questions to the panel.

**Agency Contact:** [peer\\_review\\_agenda@usgs.gov](mailto:peer_review_agenda@usgs.gov).