

## **Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta Flow Criteria and Biological Objectives**

This past year, legislation passed requiring the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to develop and recommend to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) flow criteria and quantifiable biological objectives for aquatic and terrestrial species of concern, which depend upon the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta (Delta). In developing the objectives and flow criteria, DFG was required to use the best available science, and consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

SWRCB also was required to develop new flow criteria to protect the public trust resources in the Delta ecosystem. In developing the flow criteria, SWRCB was required to consider the volume, quality and timing of water necessary for the Delta ecosystem under different conditions, and hold a public proceeding to solicit data and information to aid in the preparation of flow criteria. DFG is sharing its biological data that describes the relationship between water flow and species abundance, the effect of inflows on salmon emigration, the effects of water temperature on salmon in streams tributary to the Delta and methodology for developing flow criteria. It is hoped this information will ensure the important consideration of the Delta's wildlife issues in balancing resource and human requirements.

Supporters of this effort, including the environmental community, believe existing water flows are insufficient in many areas to maintain healthy fish populations. They believe a scientifically defensible and quantitative approach is the only method for determining and enforcing adequate flows for fish. However, this concurrent effort has raised concerns among water contractors, municipalities, agricultural interests and other parties that may be affected from increased constraints on water supplies.

DFG is finalizing flow criteria and quantifiable biological objectives. A draft report has been reviewed by a scientific panel and the public. The report will be revised as appropriate prior to being submitted to SWRCB on November 22, 2010. The two will work together over the next several years to identify priority streams and begin the process for determining the necessary flows for these waterways. This will involve fisheries biologists and other scientific staff measuring characteristics of the stream and its water flow, and using this information to determine instream flow requirements. The legislation specified a 2018 deadline for this effort.