

Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat

Stakeholders Meeting • October 19, 2010



Meeting Purpose

- Provide general updates on Salton Sea activities
- Provide specific updates on Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project to interested Stakeholders
- Provide opportunity for Stakeholders to provide informal input

Agenda

- Introductions and administrative changes
- Follow up on action items
- Salton Sea update
- Salton Sea Financial Assistance Program
- SCH Project update
 - Scoping
 - Alternatives development
 - Selenium management
 - Schedule

Introduction of Presentation Team

- Rick Davis – Davis Group
- Kim Nicol – Department of Fish and Game
- Kent Nelson – Department of Water Resources
- Lee Case – USGS
- Lorraine Woodman – Cardno ENTRIX
- Rob Thomson – Cardno ENTRIX
- Ramona Swenson – Cardno ENTRIX

Changes to SCH Team

- Kim Nicol
- Kent Nelson
- Leslie MacNair

June Stakeholders Meeting Follow-up

Response to Action Items



Previous Action Items

- SCH confirmed as Period 1 activity
- Restoration Fund Update posted and emailed
- Financial Assistance Program application emailed to Stakeholders for comment
- June Selenium Workshop
 - Technical report being reviewed by participants
 - Will be posted on DWR website (www.water.ca.gov/saltosea)

Salton Sea Status



Current Status of Salton Sea

- Salinity – currently at 53 ppt
- Water elevation – dipped below -230 feet this winter
- Bird disease – very low levels
- Bird numbers – very high last few years (especially fish-eating birds) due to continuing abundance of tilapia
- Fish die-offs – smaller ones continue, but no large events by historic Salton Sea standards
- Fishery – no signs of marine species return; tilapia fishery remains very robust
- Pileworm and barnacle populations – severely reduced; barnacle bars and beaches not replenished as Sea recedes

Legislative Update

- SB 51 signed by Governor
- Creates Governance Council
- Council consists of four groups
 - Executive committee (16 members)
 - Science committee
 - Local government forum
 - Stakeholder forum
- Becomes effective January 1, 2011
- Council shall provide a Restoration Plan to Governor and Legislature by June 30, 2013

Questions and Discussion

Salton Sea Financial Assistance Program



Financial Assistance Program General

- Provides Salton Sea Restoration funds to public agencies or non-profits
- Accepting two types of applications
 - Habitat restoration
 - Research study or pilot study projects
- Applications must be consistent with Salton Sea Restoration Act

Financial Assistance Program General

- Patterned after successful State financial assistance programs: structure and schedule
- Financial Assistance funds are from State, so CEQA required
- Environmental compliance/permitting must be completed to receive funds

Financial Assistance Program Proposal Solicitation

- Develop solicitation guidelines
 - Eligibility criteria
 - Project review criteria
 - Project scoring process
 - Project review teams
- Release solicitation to Stakeholders
- Accept project proposals
- Review and score proposals
- Award funds

Financial Assistance Program Accountability and Transparency

- Little Hoover Commission – June 24, 2009
- Report “Bond Spending: Expanding and Enhancing Oversight”
- Requirements
 - Expenditure oversight: CA Natural Resources Commission (CA Water Commission)
 - Agencies to establish web-based bond management system

Financial Assistance Program Accountability and Transparency

- Financial Assistance Internal Review (FAIR)
- New Bond Management System
 - Required administrative standard
 - Improves accountability for bond expenditures
 - Moves application process to the Web
 - Establishes consistency in bond programs
 - Emphasizes transparency
 - Enables efficient reporting

Financial Assistance Program

Where We Are in the Process

- DFG prepared solicitation concept
- Stakeholders reviewed solicitation
- Compiling comments and revising
- Assembling internal work team
- Incorporating requirements of DWR's Financial Assistance Internal Review process
- Reviewing examples of model solicitation programs

Financial Assistance Program Next Steps

- Revise solicitation
- Legal review of solicitation
- Public review
- Load solicitation onto the Web
- Establish proposal review teams
- Notify Stakeholders of solicitation availability
- Accept, review, and score proposals
- Award funds

Questions and Discussion

Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project

EIS/EIR Scoping



Scoping Process

- Scoping meetings held July 7 and 8
- Scoping report/comment letters on DWR website
 - <http://www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov>.
- All comments considered
 - Internal meeting held to discuss comments
 - Meetings with certain commenting agencies
 - Relevant comments to be addressed in EIS/EIR

Scoping Comments

- Range of targeted species
- Selenium exposure
- Mosquito/vector control
- Project design
- Water supplies
- Adaptive management and monitoring
- Siting criteria
- Baseline conditions
- Project impacts and mitigation measures
- Other

Comments on Project Impacts

- Agricultural resources
- Air quality/climate change
- Biological resources
- Hazards/hazardous materials
- Hydrology/water quality
- Cumulative impacts

Other Comments

- Preferred alternative process
- Use of existing information
- Water rights
- Stakeholder meetings
- Need for restoration of entire Salton Sea
- Relationship to QSA
- Cooperating agency status for Reclamation

Questions and Discussion

Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project

Alternatives Development Process



Goals of this Discussion

- Review alternatives development process
 - Review SCH policy decisions and goals
 - Review process and discussions to date
- Review issues driving alternatives development
 - Water needs (rights, demand, reliability)
 - Ways to avoid water quality issues
 - Salinity, sediment, and selenium management
 - Other projects (dust control, habitat development)
- Presentation of conceptual alternatives
- Presentation of initial layouts

Alternatives – NEPA

- Achieve objectives/purpose and need
- Governed by rule of reason
- Feasible
- Not exhaustive
- Provide a basis to evaluate the benefits of a proposed action in light of environmental risks
- May include alternatives outside the lead agency's jurisdiction
- No need to evaluate alternatives with more significant effects or the same effects

Alternatives – CEQA

- Reasonable range of feasible alternatives
- Attain most of basic objectives
- Avoid or substantially lessen significant impacts of proposed action
 - Even if alternative could impede attaining all objectives
 - Even if more costly
- Feasible—economic, social, legal technical
- Not remote or speculative
- Can't reject because
 - Beyond agency's authority
 - Would require new legislation
 - Too costly

Policy Guidance

- Provide habitat ASAP – No long-term processes
 - Not seeking DSOD variance
 - No long-term land use without willing owner
 - Water rights implications
 - Compatibility with other plans (geothermal, habitat, air quality)
- Low-cost structures and operations
 - Favor inexpensive construction designs
 - Favor gravity diversion over pumping
- Water from New, Alamo, and Whitewater rivers
 - No use of water directly from drains
 - Reliable supply without substantial reduction in river flow

Alternatives Development Process

- Evaluated available data
- Eliminated infeasible sites and components
- Combined feasible sites and major components to develop conceptual alternatives
- Further screening underway to
 - Refine project layouts/operations
 - Develop reasonable range for EIS/EIR

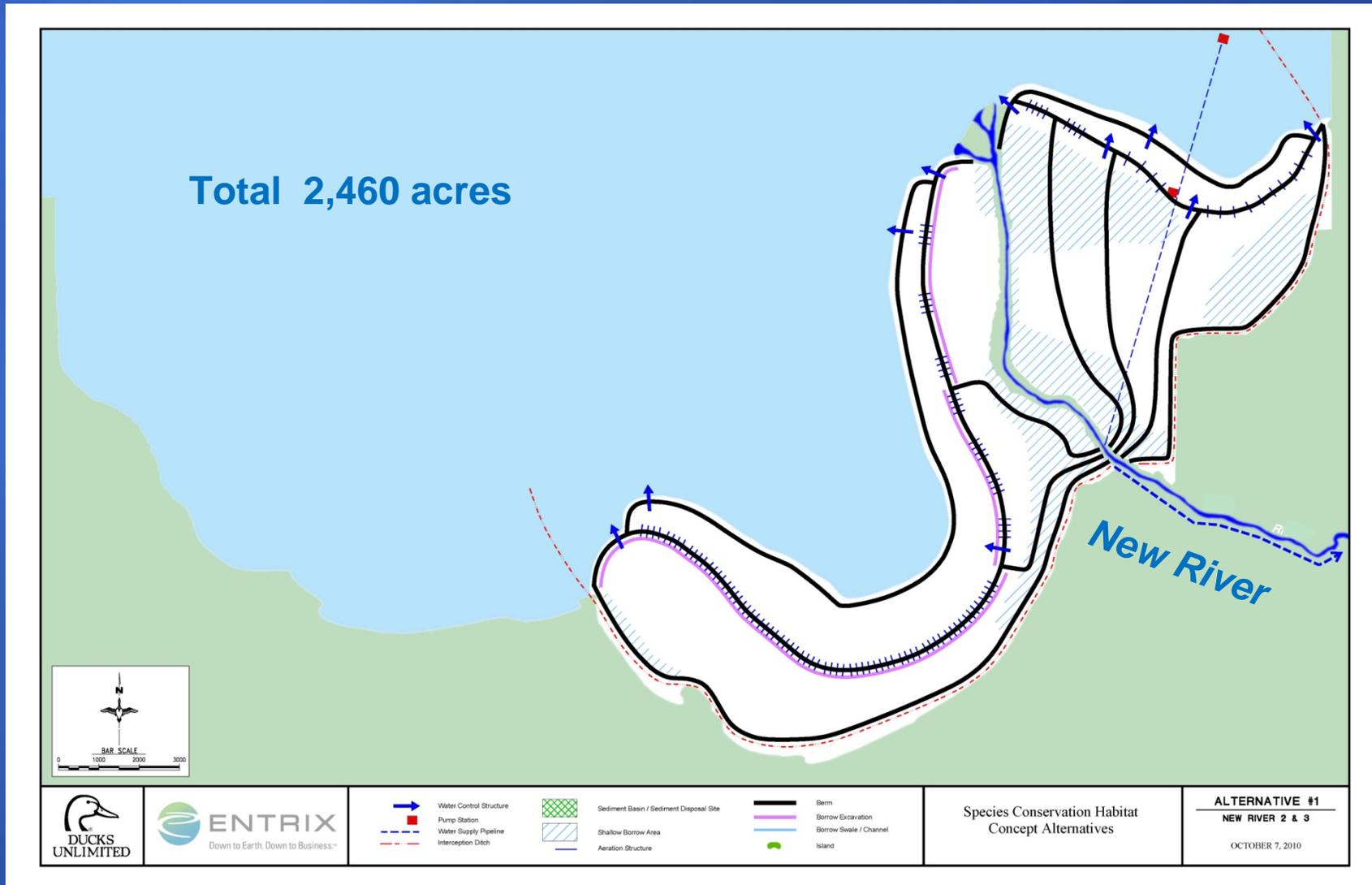
Screening Highlights

- Whitewater River sites eliminated due to
 - Water availability and long-term reliability
 - Land access
- Open channel conveyance eliminated due to land access and impacts
- Selenium treatment at diversion point if necessary
- Sediment removal needed for all alternatives
 - Upstream at diversion point (gravity conveyance)
 - Initial pond (pumping)
- Other components being refined

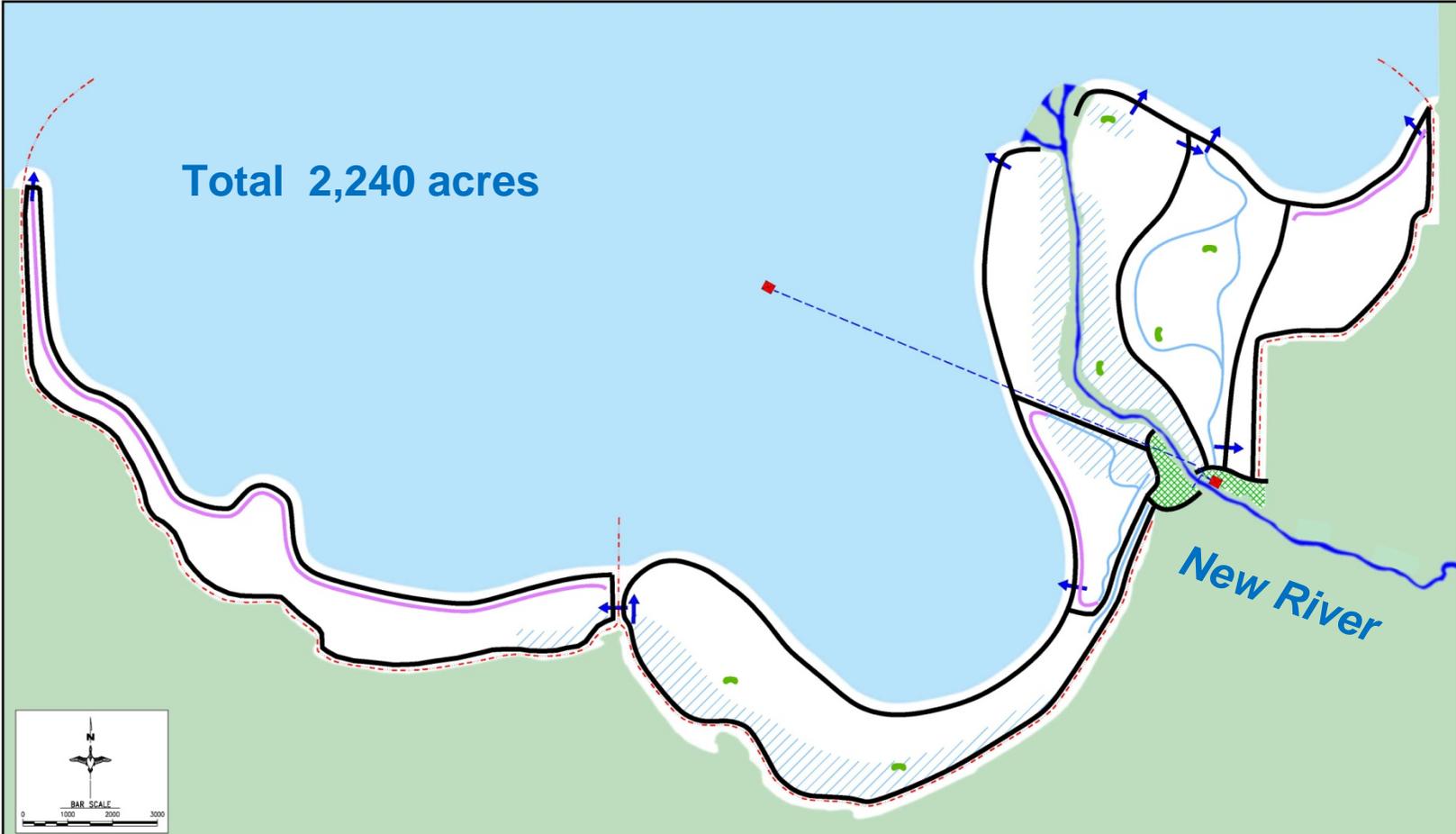
Conceptual Alternatives

- Six conceptual alternatives (conceptual design)
- Combinations of New and Alamo River sites
 - SCH only at New River
 - SCH only at Alamo River
 - Combination of New and Alamo River sites
- Water diversion mechanisms
 - River – gravity diversion or pumped diversion
 - Sea – pumped diversion
- Boundaries based on recent survey data at selected points
- Developed to cover range of internal components
- Uses current understanding of depth, temperature, DO relationship

New River – Gravity Feed Diversion, Cascading Ponds



New River – Pumped Diversion, Flow-Through Ponds

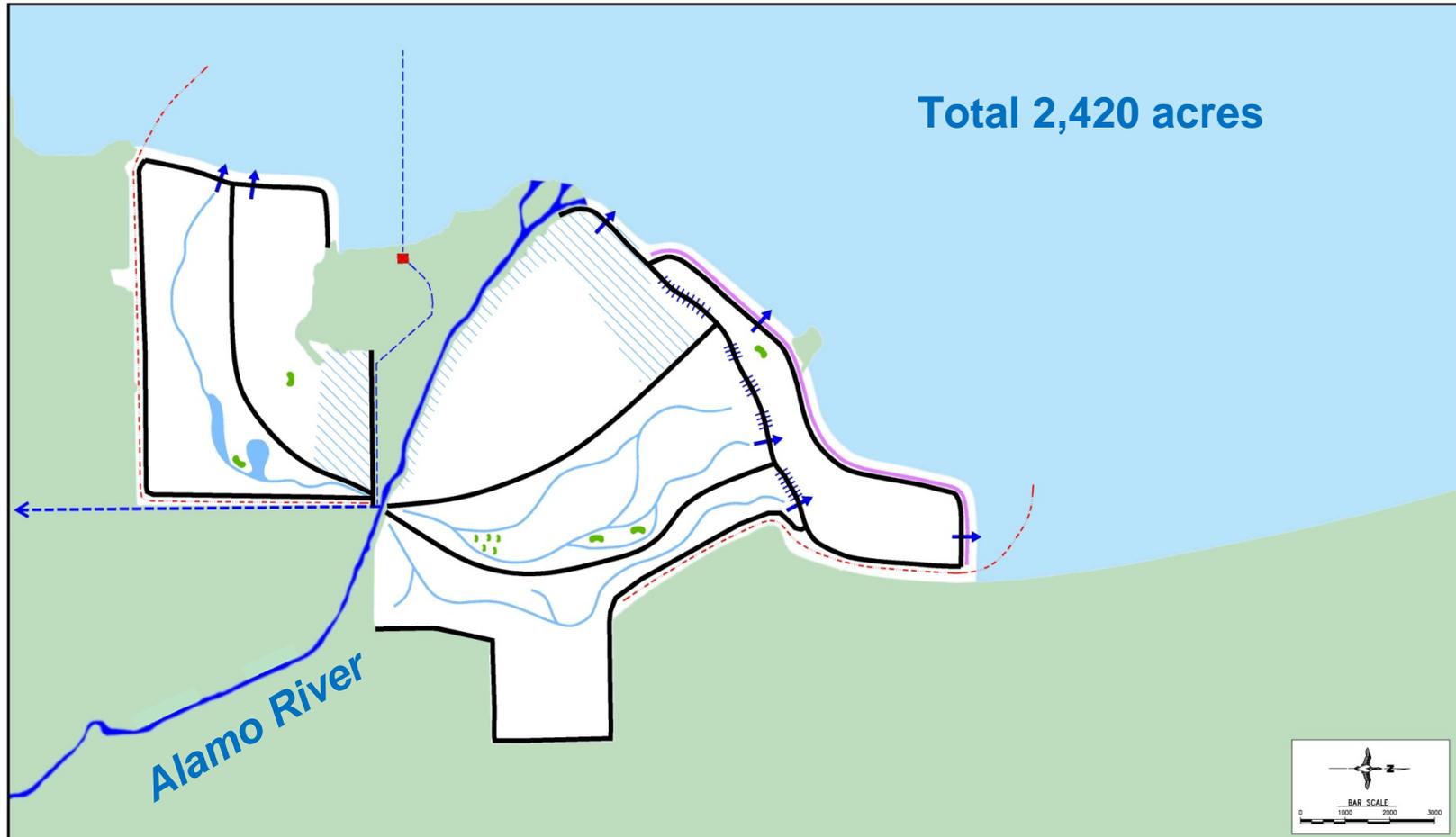


| | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Water Control Structure | Sediment Basin / Sediment Disposal Site | Berm |
| Pump Station | Shallow Borrow Area | Borrow Excavation |
| Water Supply Pipeline | | Borrow Swale / Channel |
| Interception Ditch | | Island |

Species Conservation Habitat
Concept Alternatives

ALTERNATIVE #2
NEW RIVER 1, 2 & 3
OCTOBER 7, 2010

Alamo River – Gravity Feed Diversion, Cascading Ponds



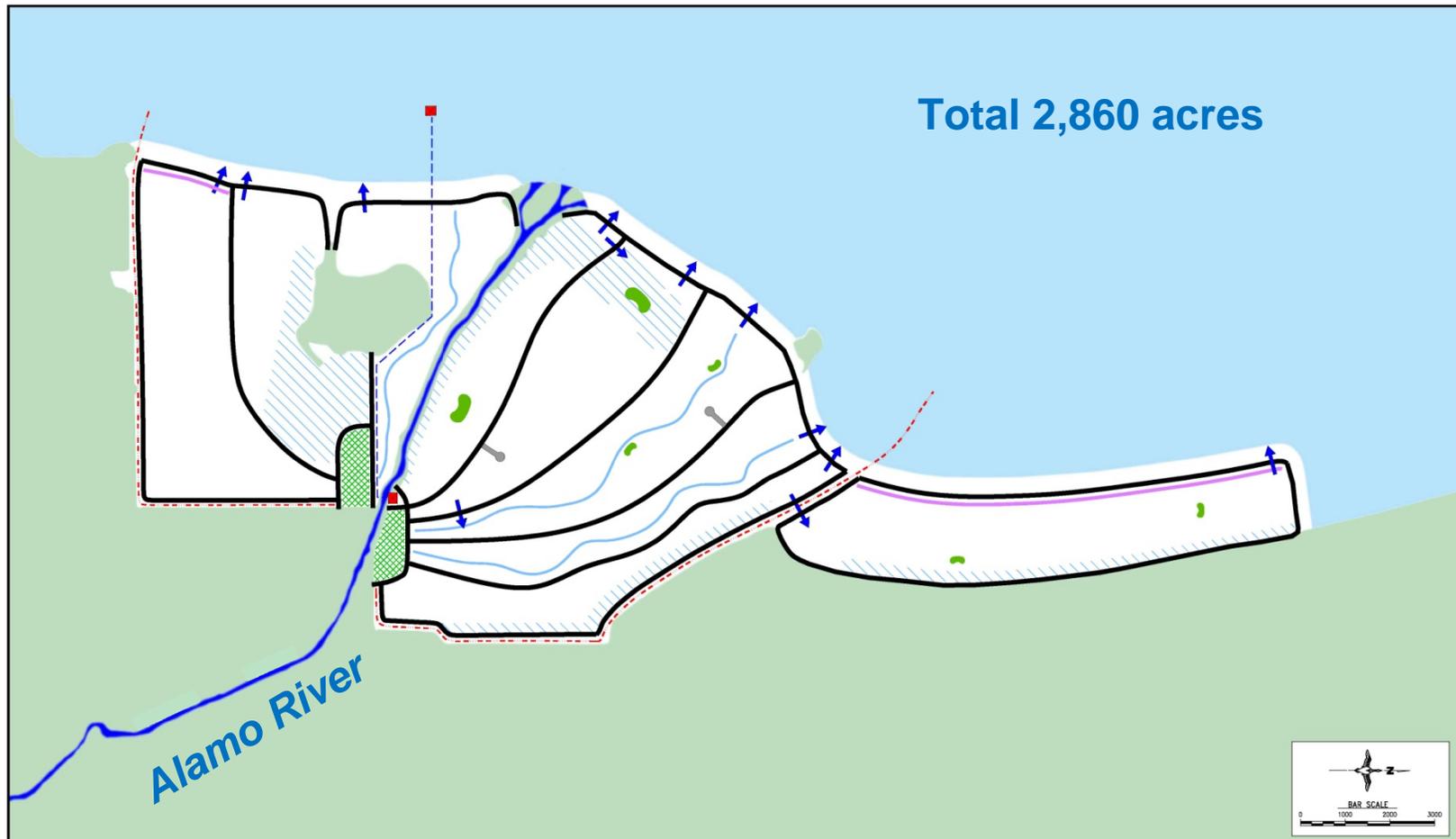
Species Conservation Habitat
Concept Alternatives



ALTERNATIVE #3
ALAMO RIVER 1 & 2

OCTOBER 7, 2010

Alamo River – Pumped Diversion, Flow-Through Ponds



Species Conservation Habitat
Concept Alternatives



ALTERNATIVE #4
ALAMO RIVER 1, 2 & 3

OCTOBER 7, 2010

Questions and Discussion

Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project

Selenium Management Update



Selenium Management Update

- Selenium in water and sediments poses a potential ecological risk for fish and wildlife
- Approach to develop Se management strategy
 - Identify wildlife at risk
 - Identify selenium sources
 - Characterize foodweb pathways and risk
 - Source control and mitigation measures to reduce wildlife exposure
 - Water treatment if appropriate

Selenium Treatment Technologies Workshop (June 2)

- Challenging to reduce low levels of Se in water
- Recommend less intensive technologies
- Biological treatment
 - Anaerobic bacterial treatment – works but complex, costly
 - Algal treatment – complex, unproven
 - Constructed wetlands
 - Removes Se but efficiency varies
 - Bioavailable forms present
 - Need to prevent wildlife use
- Summary report posted on DWR website

Selenium Management Strategies Workshop (September 21)

- Ecorisk modeling to test scenarios
- Reduce exposure and risk
 - Dilute river water (higher Se) with saline water
 - No emergent vegetation
 - Reduce detention time
 - Keep wildlife from sediment ponds, treatment areas
 - Deeper to discourage shorebird use?
 - Treat water supply to reduce Se?
- Monitor water, sediment, biota
- Technical report in preparation

Questions and Discussion

Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project

Schedule Update



Reasons for Schedule Changes

- Significant work previously done, but incomplete
- Need to develop
 - Detailed description of alternatives
 - Evaluate sites and components
 - Develop water requirements
 - Address water rights issues
 - Identify habitat requirements
 - Develop construction strategies
 - Project operations plan
 - Adaptive management strategy
- Extensive coordination required
 - Special studies (delays)
 - Stakeholders



Current Schedule (Subject to Change)

- NEPA/CEQA scoping – June/July 2010
- Draft NEPA/CEQA document – Spring 2011
- Draft permit applications – Spring 2011
- Final NEPA/CEQA document – Late 2011 to early 2012
- Final design – Mid to late 2012
- Permits complete – Mid 2012
- Begin construction – Late 2012

Questions and Discussion

SCH Information Dissemination

- Website (www.water.ca.gov/saltonsea)
- Stakeholders meetings/workshops
- Periodic newsletters
- Public meetings

Contact Information

- Financial Assistance Program Lead
 - Kent Nelson, DWR Program Manager
 - (916) 653-9190
 - knelson@water.ca.gov
- NEPA and CEQA Leads
 - Lanika Cervantes, Corps Project Manager
 - (760) 602-4838
 - Lanika.L.Cervantes@usace.army.mil
 - Leslie MacNair, DFG Project Manager
 - (949) 458-1754
 - lmacnair@dfg.ca.gov

USGS Salton Sea Science Office Activities Update

