

Suisun Ecological Work Group Becomes a Project Work Team

Eliza Sater, DWR

In the 1995 Bay/Delta Plan, SWRCB directed DWR to convene a work group to evaluate the technical basis of the Suisun Marsh water quality objectives and their effects on beneficial uses. Consequently, in May 1995, the Suisun Ecological Work Group was formed to review the scientific basis of the Suisun Marsh channel water salinity standards and develop recommendations for comprehensive brackish marsh standards. Representatives from SWRCB, DWR, USBR, DFG, USEPA, USFWS, NMFS, Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, Suisun Resources Conservation District, California Native Plant Society, Ducks Unlimited, California Waterfowl Association, San Francisco Estuary Institute, The Bay Institute, and Metropolitan Water District of Southern California have contributed technical expertise to the work group.

The Suisun Ecological Work Group, which meets monthly or bi-monthly, has recently become a project work team under the Interagency Program.

As a project work team, we hope to increase public awareness of our activities and develop a broader peer review process. Heidi Bratovich (SWRCB) and Brenda Grewell (DWR) will co-chair the team.

Initial activities of the Suisun Ecological Work Group included developing background information on brackish marsh ecology, the history of Suisun Marsh, management of diked seasonal wetlands, the scientific basis for Decision 1485 Suisun Marsh standards, and identifying beneficial uses of the marsh.

Our first technical task since the initial investigations has been to evaluate water quality objectives for resources such as plants, wildlife, and fish. To facilitate this, the work group divided into four resource-specific subcommittees: Brackish Marsh Vegetation, Wildlife, Waterfowl, and Aquatic Habitat. Each subcommittee will evaluate effects of existing western marsh salinity standards (1995 Water Quality Control Plan and Order 95-6) on the resource being considered and develop recommendations for

resource-specific water quality objectives, as well as for future studies and compliance monitoring programs. A fifth subcommittee is working in conjunction with DWR Suisun Marsh Planning to evaluate water quality and hydrology issues in the marsh.

The subcommittees began meeting independently in October 1995, produced work plans in February 1996, and are scheduled to complete their analyses by October 1997.

The next step will be to evaluate the impacts of resource-specific objectives and to develop appropriate multi-resource (ecosystem) water quality objectives. This process will be undertaken by the work group as a whole and is scheduled to be completed by October 1998, when the Suisun Ecological Work Group will present its recommendations to SWRCB.

For more information about the Suisun Ecological Work Group or to see meeting summaries or subcommittee work plans, please visit our home page at www.wiep.water.ca.gov/sew/sew.html.

AGENDA

INTERAGENCY ECOLOGICAL PROGRAM ANNUAL WORKSHOP

and

BAY-DELTA MODELING FORUM ANNUAL MEETING & WORKSHOP

February 25-28, 1997

Asilomar Conference Center
800 Asilomar Avenue P.O. Box 537
Pacific Grove, California 93950
408/372-8016