



"The New Voice of Salmon"
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**BDCP Oversight Hearing
October 19, 2011
Dick Pool Verbal Testimony**

Thank you Mr. Chairman. My name is Dick Pool. I am a manufacturer of salmon fishing equipment located in Concord California. I have been involved in salmon recovery issues for over 30 years. Today, I am here speaking on behalf of the Golden Gate Salmon Association. I have submitted written testimony and will summarize my comments here.

I believe everyone in this room knows the salmon industry and the Central Valley salmon have had very tough times in the last few years. The Salmon runs continue to crash and because of the three year shutdown the industry and its people are hurting badly.

We are looking for actions that will rebuild the salmon runs and do so at an early date. We do not feel the current BDCP plan helps our cause. We are deeply concerned about it. We believe it fails to address the necessary steps for the recovery of Central Valley salmon and in so doing falls short of the state and federal legal requirements for a valid habitat conservation plan. In our opinion, major changes must be made within the BDCP to address these failings. Absent major changes, GGSA believes the project will not be approved.

There are seven major areas where we believe the current BDCP fails. I will comment on each of them.

Number One

The BDCP Plan is based on restoring 83,000 acres of Delta habitat with eight major projects which are all in the Delta. Some of these can aid salmon recovery in the distant future. But, their positive impact is dependent on future pumping rates, Delta flows and saltwater intrusion. Nowhere in the plan does the BDCP

analyze the “effects” of these. Neither does the BDCP compare these actions to other recovery options which could occur much sooner and be more effective. Finally, nowhere does the BDCP acknowledge and evaluate the single greatest action needed to recover salmon, which is increased through Delta flows.

Number Two – Missing Effects

A number of “effects” are missing. The project proponents are seeking more water available for export. The amount of water exported, the timing and location of those exports, and the resulting conditions in the Delta will all have a dramatic impact on salmon recovery. There is no analysis of those “effects” in the plan. In addition, the project operations will also significantly impact a number of upriver conditions that will determine if salmon fail to survive or will be recovered. Absent analysis of these “effects” with mitigating actions, GGSA believes the project fails to meet its stated objectives

Number Three - Costs

The cost of implementing the BDCP Delta projects is staggering. The estimates range from \$3 to \$3.7 billion. When GGSA asked the BDCP where this money would come from, the answer was “undetermined”. The water contractors have made it clear they will contribute nothing and propose that most of the money come from the public. We do not feel this current plan deserves any public money.

Number Four – Delta Only Projects

GGSA questions the BDCP focus on only the Delta. We feel much of the money could be wasted on marginal salmon improvements. In 2002, following major salmon improvements in the Sacramento River, a modern salmon return record was set totaling 780,000 returning adults. In the same year another 720,000 fish were harvested in the ocean. All of those fish migrated through the Delta in its configuration of the late 1990s. Today the Delta is in much the same configuration as it was then. It has the same channels, the same riparian conditions and the same levies. Those conditions were present in 2002 and they are mostly still present today. Why then have the runs crashed? The answer is not in a lack of Delta riparian, flood plain and tidal marsh habitat as proposed by the BDCP but in other factors. The principal other factor was the increases in pumping that occurred in the past decade.

Number Five – Upstream Improvements

The nature of salmon losses suggests that recovery actions need to go well beyond the Delta. Smolt losses in the Delta are extremely high but NMFS studies have found that losses in the rivers feeding the Delta are also very high. If river losses cannot be improved, the Delta habitat improvements or other Delta changes will do little good in restoring the runs. The right answer is a combination of fixes that address both passage in the Delta and improved habitat in the upper river and tributaries. If public money is to be included in the BDCP conservation actions, GGSA feels there are many other projects that will yield better salmon results sooner and with less money than those proposed by the BDCP.

Number Six - Timing

In addition to costing billions, the proposed BDCP conservations actions take decades to complete. The earliest implementations take almost ten years and most of them are not completed for forty years. This is too far in the future. The salmon can't wait. We cannot wait for the speculative benefits of a project that may never come to pass or fails to meet its objectives. In instances like this, the Federal courts have frequently ruled against biological opinions that are too far in the future to be reasonably certain to occur.

Number Seven - Governance

GGSA is also very concerned about the governance of the BDCP project and the adaptive management provisions. The Delta and its watershed problems are highly complex and the solutions are equally complex. Even with the best science currently available, there are bound to be failures or shortcomings in fisheries recovery. If this recovery effort is to avoid future problems or failure, we believe it is mandatory that the fishery agencies must be positioned in the governance structure where they can have the final call on recovery issues.

In summary, GGSA is not against the stated goals of the BDCP. We simply think they have missed the mark badly on the habitat plan. We will do our part to help and we hope the BDCP can be changed to aid in the salmon rebuilding process. Our special thanks to Jerry Meral and Karla Nemeth for their help in working with us.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to present our views.