



# **MCWRA Salinas River Stream Maintenance Program Update**



## **Salinas River Management Public Workshop**

### **Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board**

Salinas, CA  
March 6, 2014



## Salinas River Watershed

-  Watershed Boundary
-  Monterey County Boundary





# Where We Have Been

- In the old days – things were easier...
  - Less Requirements to get work done...
  
- State and Federal Regulations
  - State: Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act – 1969
  - Federal: Clean Water Act – 1972; '77 and '87 amendments
  
  - Federal – Endangered Species Act – 1973
    - Red-Legged Frog, threatened – 1996
    - Steelhead, threatened – 1997
    - Salinas River designated as critical Steelhead habitat – 2005



# Where We Have Been (cont.)

- Other changes that have occurred...
  - MCFC&WCD became MCWRA by Agency Act – 1991
    - Inserted BOD
    - Dual Governance
    - Do not receive any County General Fund monies
  
  - Authority over County water
  - Responsibility where funded
  
- Proposition 218 - 1997



# Where We Have Been (cont.)

- Pre 2008 – Work done / allowed...
  - USACE / State
    - Cleared lower Salinas River – 1952
    - Repaired private levees – 1982 / 1983
    - Issuance of Emergency Permit – 1995



# Where We Have Been (cont.)

- Work has been done locally...
  - Public / Private efforts
    - Salinas River Channel Coalition formed: 1995
    - MCWRA held Master Regional General Permit: 1997 – 2001, work performed by landowners
    - MCWRA held Regional General Permit: 2003-2008, work performed by landowners
    - MND for new RGP met with opposition: 2009





# MCWRA Approach

- Historical process needs to change
  
- MCWRA has to shift strategy
  - Recognized it could not ‘go it alone’
  
- Two Phase approach:
  - Short-term to deal with immediate need
  - Long-term for holistic stream management approach



# What is at Stake?

- Transportation throughout County
- Wastewater Treatment Facilities / Other City infrastructure
- \$4 billion annual agricultural production value
- Food Safety
- Jobs





# Short-Term Approach

- Stream Maintenance Program (SMP)
  - Short-term project (5-10 years)
  - Address frequent flooding events (up to 10-year flow)
  - Vegetation and sediment removal to increase carrying capacity of river
  - Examining 92 miles of river for flooding



# Where We Are

- MCWRA began EIR preparations for new program: 2010
  - Final EIR completed in 2013
  - Certification delayed due to many interested parties requesting additional work be performed
  - MCWRA held four follow-up meetings: 10/2013-2/2014
    - Understand concerns and proposal
    - Develop possible project or process changes



## Where We Are (cont.)

- Many good ideas out of Stakeholder meetings:
  - Short-term focus
    - Develop more specific activities and locations
    - Additional activities such as trash removal, bank stabilization and bypass channel construction
  - Some clarity and revision to the project and the EIR, would benefit this program
  
- Months of additional public process have provided a better understanding for all parties involved



# Short-Term Pathway Forward

- Project support and guidance provided by:
  - Salinas River Task Force (GSA,SRCC, FB,SVWC)
  - Monterey County Coastkeeper
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - Resources Conservation District of Monterey County
  - General Farm Investments
  - And additional interested parties



# Phased Approach for Short-Term

- Invasive Species removal (RCD lead)
- 404 Permit for Chualar and Gonzales RMUs (TNC lead)
- 404 Permit on larger scale – develop specific information (MCWRA lead)
  - Umbrella project to include a range of activities
  - Include project-specific details
  - Develop performance standards based on different reaches
  - Adaptable to meet changing conditions of river and participation
  - System-wide benefits, solution for whole river



# Why This Approach?

- Start something sooner
- Increased resources from other organizations
- Demonstrating processes that may be replicated
- Stepping stones towards broader permits
- Offers a variety of activities
- Increases clarity and understanding of Program
- Approach helps guide towards Long-Term Program





# Necessary Steps for Short-Term

- Continue to work with The Nature Conservancy on the demonstration project
- Develop a phased approach that encompasses range of options
- Get more detailed project and site specific information
- Update project for revised CEQA analysis
- Begin preparing permit applications and necessary documentation for larger system



# Why a Long-Term Program?

- A River Management Program would encompass more than clearing the channel
  - Comprehensive program to protect cities and agriculture land from flooding
  - Measures to enhance fish and wildlife habitat and fish passage
  - Improvement in Water Quality for environment and urban uses
  - Mitigation of sea water intrusion
  - Maximization of surface water and groundwater quality
  - Consideration of the impact of the Salinas River on the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary



# Long-Term Salinas River Management Program: Idea Development

- Board of Directors Strategic Planning Workshop (2012) outcomes:
  - Conceptual Plan based on:
    - Premise that Agency cannot “go it alone”
    - Seeking State assistance in the development of a comprehensive Salinas River Management Program
    - State Legislature create a steering committee to develop Long-Term River Management Program



# Long-Term Salinas River Management Program: Recent Activities

- Legislation introduced February 2014
  - AB 155 by Assembly Member Alejo
  - SB 1398 by Senator Cannella



# Feedback on Conceptual Plan

- Needs to be a local process
- Neutral professional facilitation needed
- Technical team needed
- Public involvement in a transparent process
- Do not establish another layer of bureaucracy
- Respect private property rights



# What makes the Salinas River especially challenging?

- The Salinas River Channel is owned by individual landowners with no public access
- Regulatory agencies often pursue focused objectives that can conflict with other regulatory agencies' objectives
- Pathway for funding is elusive





# Long-Term Path Forward

- Establish funding for Salinas River Management Program development
- Identify governance structure
- Create long-term goals and objectives
- Begin a facilitated process that includes:
  - Environmental/conservation interests
  - Landowners/growers
  - Resource agencies with decision-making authority
  - Municipalities
  - Other interested parties



# Summary

- Paradigm shift needed due to changed environment
- MCWRA could not ‘go it alone’ – strategy shift
- Two Phase Approach
  - Short-term: addressing critical needs
  - Long-term: holistic river system focus
- Working with Stakeholders has been beneficial
- Partnerships are key to success