

9. FUTURE ACTIONS

This chapter summarizes upcoming alternatives formulation activities for the NODOS Investigation, the study and project schedule, and related issues.

9.1 ALTERNATIVES FORMULATION

Developing alternatives is an iterative process. The initial alternatives will be refined as the NODOS Investigation proceeds, to optimize the set of alternatives into plans for detailed evaluation in the PFR. Refinement will include applying the formulation criteria discussed in Chapter 5 to each project alternative before detailed studies are undertaken. From the alternative plans, a tentatively preferred plan will be identified during the Plan Formulation Study for further evaluation in the FS. Other important future actions include the following:

- ❖ Complete environmental baseline studies;
- ❖ Complete hydrologic, hydraulic, temperature, and related modeling studies and economic evaluations;
- ❖ Identify potential impacts and mitigation features of the alternative plans;
- ❖ Prepare a PFR describing the alternative plans;
- ❖ Develop a tentatively selected plan from the alternative plans;
- ❖ Complete designs, cost estimates, and cost allocation studies and define the requirements for non-federal participation in the plan;
- ❖ Complete environmental compliance investigations; and
- ❖ Prepare and complete an integrated FS (federal decision document and NEPA/CEQA compliance).

9.2 SCHEDULE

A PFR focusing on alternative plans and environmental compliance issues is scheduled for fall 2007. An integrated FS and EIS/EIR draft is scheduled for release to the public and federal agencies for review in spring 2008. The final FS is scheduled to be provided for Washington-level review through Reclamation in winter 2008.

9.3 INVESTIGATION PROCESS FACTORS

As the NODOS Investigation progresses toward potential project implementation, issues will emerge that must be addressed and resolved. Many of these issues or concerns will become better defined and more appropriate for resolution once the alternative plans, and later the tentatively selected plan, have been defined.

Currently, two primary objectives exist for a project resulting from the NODOS Investigation: (1) water supply, reliability, and management flexibility and (2) ecosystem benefits, which include improving anadromous fish survival, improving Delta water quality for aquatic species, and providing potential benefits to other fish species. However, projects supporting secondary objectives, including recreation, incremental flood control storage, and ancillary hydropower, will require further investigation. In

addition, cost allocation will indicate financial responsibility(ies) between federal and non-federal partners.

For each potential objective, a non-federal sponsor must be identified that is willing to share in the cost of the objective. Representatives of contractors to the CVP, SWP, and other water supply interests have expressed strong support for the NODOS Investigation. In addition, much interest has been identified for implementing broader recreational opportunities in the northern Sacramento Valley. Identifying specific non-federal sponsor interest in these objectives will be an important factor in future study efforts.

9.4 ADDITIONAL PLAN FORMULATION CONSIDERATIONS

9.4.1 Delta Pelagic Fish Decline

Recent declines in pelagic fish species in the Delta have elevated the concern over the vulnerability of the Delta ecosystem to changes in water use and/or management within the Central Valley. The cause of the decline is unknown, but it is thought to be linked to three dominant factors:

- ❖ Water quality impacts (natural as well as manmade);
- ❖ Food chain/ecosystem relationships (invasive species); and
- ❖ Project or operational changes affecting the ecosystem.

Future NODOS studies need to be cognizant of the roles of operational parameters, or the degrees to which they contribute to these three factors in the Delta. Future studies should determine, if possible, what beneficial contributions NODOS may afford the Delta (and to what extent) in resolving the pelagic fish issues.

9.4.2 Banks Pumping Plant Permitted Capacity

An operational component action of the South Delta Improvements Program proposes to increase the permitted limit for diversions into Clifton Court Forebay. The SWP Banks Pumping Plant has an existing installed pumping capacity of 10,300 cfs. Flow diverted from the Delta into Clifton Court Forebay is limited by permit to 6,680 cfs, with two exceptions: (1) July through September, an additional 500 cfs is allowed for the EWA and (2) during winters, when the San Joaquin River flow is above 1,000 cfs. Increasing the permitted limit for diversions into Clifton Court Forebay from 6,680 cfs to 8,500 cfs would provide opportunities to increase water deliveries to the SWP and CVP contractors and for environmental uses south of the Delta by improving the operational flexibility of the Banks Pumping Plant (Reclamation, October 2005).

Conveyance capacity in the South Delta is 6,680 cfs for present-day conditions and assumed to be increased to 8,500 cfs for future without-project conditions. In the event that operational criteria in the future (for whatever reasons) modify or nullify this flow assumption, NODOS plan formulation must reassess the operational flexibility of potential alternatives with respect to their supply to and reliability for users south of the Delta.