

# Delta Monitoring Workgroup

## Meeting Record 03/12/2024

### Working Group Members in Attendance

- USBR: Randi Field, Erika Kegel, Cat Pien, Brian Mahardja
- USFWS: Leif Goude
- NMFS: Not in attendance
- CDFW: Erica Meyers
- DWR: Mike Ford, Katie Osborn, Farida Islam, Brian Schreier, Nicole Kwan
- SWRCB: Matt Holland
- Water Contractors: Shawn Acuña (MWD), Chandra Chilmakuri (SWC), Darcy Ausin (SWC), Heidi Williams (Valley Water), Jose Rangel (WWD), Tom Boardman (WWD), Cindy Meyer (SLDMWA), Yuan Liu (CCWD), Deanna Sereno (CCWD), Jennifer Buckman (ARSC), Ian Buck-Macleod (FWA)

### Review Operations Outlook (USBR, DWR)

- Effective yesterday (3/11/2024) CVP and SWP operations are limited to an OMRI of no more negative than -500 cfs as decided from the 3/7 Director's meeting.
- On the Sacramento River, change orders are out for 3/14-3/19 to reduce flows to 6,000 cfs for ACID Dam installation and adjusting as necessary.
- On the American River, change orders are out for 3/13 to 5,250 cfs for storage conservation now that Folsom Dam is out of encroachment.
- Freeport daily average flows yesterday were approx. 58,500 cfs, dropping to 56,000 today and expected to continue to decline.
- Vernalis daily average flows yesterday were approx. 6,500 cfs and expected to decline.
- Fremont Weir is no longer spilling into the bypass, indicating dryer conditions and decreasing flows in the system.
- Combined exports yesterday (3/11/2024) were 4,200 cfs and dropping to 3,500 cfs tomorrow (3/13/2024).
- JPP exports today (3/12/2024) are 2,700 cfs and dropping to 1,800 cfs tomorrow due to OMRI requirements.
- Clifton Court exports today (3/12/2024) are 900 cfs and will likely increase to 1,500 cfs tomorrow (3/13/2024) to make up for JPP decreases; after this, exports will likely slowly decrease once again in tandem with decreasing Vernalis flows.
- Releases on the Feather River at Oroville are at 10,000 cfs today and holding depending on potential snowmelt from the expected warmer temperatures.

- Refer to the Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook for more information.

#### Additional Questions or Comments

- **Question:** When are you expecting to fill CVP shares at San Luis Reservoir this week?
  - **Answer:** We expect to be 2,000 acre-feet shy of filling shares at San Luis by the end of tomorrow. Shares will likely stall here for a period of time.

#### Review PA Assessment (USBR)

USBR then provided the PA Assessment update. For more information, please refer to the PA Assessment document.

#### Additional Questions or Comments

- **Question:** Can you clarify why hatchery steelhead take numbers are being reported when thresholds are set for wild steelhead?
  - **Answer:** We provided the hatchery numbers to give a sense of what proportion of salvage is hatchery relative to what steelhead are out there. This is to provide further context to help answer the question of how much the steelhead population is being affected.
- **Question:** What is the conversation around what the plan is for steelhead when the Incidental Take Limit (ITL) resets to the April-June 15 bracket? Will OMRI recommendations increase or likely stay low?
  - **Answer:** If the ITL is exceeded, this might be up to the WOMT members or the Directors to make recommendations for April through June. If the ITL is not exceeded, the OMRI should reset in April.
- **Question:** To be clear, will the ITL reset April 1st? Will there be any spillover from December-March exceedance into April-June?
  - **Answer:** The ITL will start over April 1<sup>st</sup> and there should not be any spillover from December through March. Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Biological Opinion, exceeding the ITL should trigger reconsultation. However, we are already in reconsultation.
- **Question:** Thank you for adding the hatchery entrainment estimates for steelhead as a surrogate for natural populations. Some of the language in the Proposed Action is unclear, for example where it says, “encroaching on incidental take.” The ITP Risk Assessment includes a discussion on Winter Run entrainment (p. 1, paragraph 4), but there is no mention that the pattern of entrainment is Length-at-Date based and not genetically based despite this being acknowledged for Spring Run just below in this section. There should be a correction to indicate the fish are clearly Length-at-Date based.
  - **Answer:** This information can be relayed to CDFW.

- **Answer:** I don't see mention of steelhead in the ITP Risk Assessment, other than it is controlling. I believe this [passage] is copied from the PA Assessment each week to summarize considerations for WOMT. I will make a note to provide additional context for the final Risk Assessment document so that it does not cause confusion.
- **Question:** Due to the 100% exceedance of steelhead and a potential exceedance of winter-run Salmon, have these factors triggered any need for independent science review as per the guidance documents for the implementation of LTO? Also, is NMFS planning on moving up their 2025 review of the Take Statement and guidance document for steelhead?
  - **Answer:** USBR cannot speak on behalf of NMFS, but yes, the language has stated an independent scientific review needs to happen. However, we are not exactly sure what will happen if the ITL is exceeded.
- **Question:** The ITP Risk Assessment includes language about assessing the risk of winter- and spring-run Salmon entering the Delta to be medium despite hydrologic events. What is the basis of this recommendation and why is there medium risk?
  - **Answer:** SaMT ran long this morning and held an additional meeting this afternoon to review the ITP Risk Assessment. Entrainment risk was classified as medium due to migration of Winter-Run and Spring-Run in the Delta. We continue to observe high entrainment of Winter- and Spring-Run salmon in the pumps, which means that Winter-Run and Spring-Run are being entrained into the South Delta.
- **Question:** Can this reasoning be clearly explained? This assumes there is a connection between salvage and what fish are entering the Delta.
  - **Answer:** The information provided here is the summary of the SaMT discussion. The full ITP Risk Assessment should include all that information and highlight the rationale for the stated risk level.
- **Question:** Is the next decision point for steelhead next Tuesday, March 19?
  - **Answer:** There has been no specific timeframe identified for changing or removing the current OMRI restriction of no more negative than -500 cfs. The need to continue or modify the limit will be discussed at WOMT and Agency Management Levels and may change as new information becomes available.
  - **Comment (Facilitator):** We will work to keep this group updated if new operational decisions are made before next week's meeting.

### Review ITP Risk Assessment (DWR)

DWR provided the LFS update. For more information, please refer to the ITP Risk Assessment document.

### Additional Questions or Comments

- No additional questions or comments

## Acronyms

- CVP – Central Valley Project
- DCC – Delta Cross Channel
- DOI – Delta Outflow Index
- DWR – California Department of Water Resources
- DCI – Delta Mendota Canal – California Aqueduct Intertie
- DS – Delta Smelt
- FNU – Formazin Nephelometric Unit
- I:E – Inflow to Export
- IOP – Interim Operations Plan
- ITP – Incidental Take Permit
- ITL – Incidental Take Limit
- JPE – Juvenile Production Estimate
- LFS – Longfin Smelt
- NTU – Nephelometric Turbidity Unit
- OBI – Old River Bacon Island Station
- OMR – Old and Middle River Tidally Averaged Flow
- PA – Proposed Action (Federal)
- PTM – Particle Tracking Model
- SaMT – Salmon Monitoring Team
- SLS – Smelt Larval Survey
- SMT – Smelt Monitoring Team
- SWP – State Water Project
- SWRCB – State Water Resources Control Board
- TFCF – Tracy Fish Collection Facility
- TUCP – Temporary Urgency Change Petition
- TUCO – Temporary Urgency Change Order
- USBR – United States Bureau of Reclamation
- WCS – Winter Run Chinook Salmon
- WOMT – Water Operations Management Team
- WQ – Water Quality
- YOY – Young of Year