

# Smelt Monitoring Team Meeting Summary

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

## Meeting Objective

To collectively assess how current operations and environmental conditions could be impacting Delta Smelt and Longfin Smelt and to provide information to Water Operations Management Team (WOMT) on the status of Delta Smelt and Longfin Smelt, their exposure to operations of the CVP and SWP, and their potential sensitivity to environmental and operational changes; i.e., assess changes in risk week-to-week.

## Participants

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- California Department of Water Resources (DWR)
- State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Kearns & West (K&W).

## Action Items

- SMT agencies to seek clarification about the language in the Actions with their management and report back to the Smelt Monitoring Team (SMT) via email.

## Advice to WOMT

- No advice to WOMT.

## Announcements

- None.

## Meeting Summary

### Part 1: Updates on Water Operations and Biological Conditions

#### *Relevant Actions & Triggers*

- COA 8.4.2, Larval and Juvenile Longfin Smelt Entrainment Protection, was triggered on 1/19/2025 due to the 7-day average QWEST value dropping below +1,500 cfs and the

most recent SLS detection over 50 larval LFS at stations 809 and 812. This COA will limit OMRI to be no more negative than -3,500 cfs on a 7-day average for 7 days.

- The SWP and CVP are both operating to D-1641 standards.
- OMR Management Season limits the 14-day averaged OMRI to no more negative than -5,000 cfs.

The table below has been updated with the 2024 SWP ITP Conditions of Approval.

OMR Management Season for smelts began on December 16, 2024, when the IEWPP was triggered. The table below summarizes the status of OMR Management Measures and Conditions of Approval on a week-to week-basis through updates in the "Action Status" column on the far right. For full descriptions of OMR Management Measures and Conditions of Approval, please see the OMR Guidance Document or ITP.

#### Proposed Action

Measures	Requirement	Time Frame	Trigger	Action Status
Integrated Early Winter Pulse Protection (IEWPP) ("First Flush" Turbidity Event)	Reduce exports for 14 consecutive days so that the 14-day averaged OMR index for the period shall not be more negative than -2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs).	Dec 1 to Jan 31	(1) Running 3-day average of daily flows at Freeport >25,000 cfs; and (2) Running 3-day average of daily turbidity at Freeport ≥50 Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU <sup>1</sup> ); or (3) Real-time monitoring indicates a high risk of migration and dispersal into areas at high risk of future entrainment or a spent Delta Smelt (DS) has been collected in monitoring surveys.	See ITP table for current actions under 2024 ROD

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<sup>1</sup> The current instrumentation measures turbidity in Formazin Nephelometric Units (FNU).

Measures	Requirement	Time Frame	Trigger	Action Status
OMR Management	Manage to a more positive OMR than -5,000 cfs.	Onset of OMR management to the end.	Onset Triggered by: Integrated Early Winter Pulse Protection ("First Flush" Turbidity Event) "First Flush" may only be initiated once during the December through January period After January 1, if more than 5 percent of any one or more salmonid are estimated to be present in the Delta	See ITP table for current actions under 2024 ROD
Turbidity Bridge Avoidance ("South Delta Turbidity")	If the daily average turbidity at Bacon Island cannot be maintained less than 12 NTU, manage exports to achieve an OMR no more negative than -2,000 cfs until the daily average turbidity at Bacon Island drops below 12 NTU.	After the first flush or Feb 1 (whichever comes first) and until a ripe or spent female DS is detected or April 1 (whichever is first).	Average daily turbidity in Old River at Bacon Island (OBI) at a level of more than 12 NTU.	See ITP table for current actions under 2024 ROD

Measures	Requirement	Time Frame	Trigger	Action Status
Juvenile Delta Smelt	Run hydrodynamic models and forecasts of entrainment, informed by the Enhanced Delta Smelt Monitoring (EDSM) or other relevant survey data to estimate the percentage of larval and juvenile DS that could be entrained. If necessary, manage exports to limit entrainment to be protective based on the modeled recruitment levels.	On or after March 15 of each year until off-ramp criteria are met.	If QWEST is negative AND larval or juvenile DS are within the entrainment zone of the pumps based on real-time sampling of spawning adults or young of year life stages.	See ITP table for current actions under 2024 ROD
End of OMR Management	OMR criteria may control operations until June 30 (for DS and Chinook salmon), until June 15 (for steelhead/rainbow trout), or when the species-specific off ramps have occurred, whichever is earlier.	During OMR management to June 30, or when the DS temperature off ramp has been reached.	DS: when the daily mean water temperature at Clifton Court Forebay (CCF) reaches 77°F for 3 consecutive days	See ITP table for current actions under 2024 ROD

## ITP Conditions of Approval

Approval	Requirement	Time Frame	Trigger	Action Status
8.3.1 (First Flush Action)	Adjust south Delta exports for 14 consecutive days to maintain a 14-day average OMR index no more negative than -2,000 cfs within three days of when the criteria are met.	Dec 1 through Feb 28	3-day running average daily flows at Freeport greater than, or equal to, 25,000 cfs, AND 3-day running average of daily turbidity at Freeport is greater than, or equal to, 50 FNU.	<b>Off-ramped</b> on 1/2/2025
8.3.2 (Adult Delta Smelt Entrainment Protection)	Adjust south Delta exports to achieve a 5-day average OMR index no more negative than -3,500 cfs until the daily average turbidity in at least one of the three turbidity sensors is less than 12 FNU for two consecutive days.	After First Flush Action (8.3.1) or Dec 20 until the three-day average Jersey Point or Rio Vista water temperature reach 53.6°F	<p>Daily average turbidity at or greater than 12 FNU at each of three turbidity sensors in the OMR corridor; Old River at Franks Tract near Terminous (OSJ), Holland Cut (HOL), and Old River at Bacon Island (OBI).</p> <p>Temporarily offramps when daily average flows at Vernalis are great than 10,000 cfs immediately reinstated when the daily average flows at Vernalis drop below 8,000 cfs.</p>	Active, Not Triggered

Approval	Requirement	Time Frame	Trigger	Action Status
8.3.3 (Adult Longfin Smelt Entrainment Protection)	Adjust south Delta exports to achieve one of the following depending on when the salvage threshold was exceeded: From December 1 to the start of the OMR Management season, Permittee, in coordination with Reclamation, shall adjust south Delta exports to achieve an OMR index no more negative than -5,000 cfs on a 7-day average for seven consecutive days and then, initiate OMR Management season; OR from the start of the OMR Management season to the end of February, if OMR Management was initiated by a different Condition of Approval, Permittee shall, in coordination with Reclamation, adjust south Delta exports to achieve an OMR index no more negative than -3,500 cfs on a 7-day average for seven consecutive days.	Dec 1 through Feb 28	Salvage threshold for water year (WY) 2025 is 181.	Active, Not Triggered

Approval	Requirement	Time Frame	Trigger	Action Status
8.4.1 (Larval and Juvenile Delta Smelt Protection)	<p>Adjust south Delta exports to achieve a 7-day average OMR index no more negative than -3,500 cfs until the average Secchi disk depth is greater than 1 meter.</p> <p>Adjust south Delta exports to achieve a 7-day average of the OMR index no more negative than -5,000 cfs when the average Secchi disk depth in the most recent survey is great than 1m.</p>	After the end of Adult Delta Smelt Entrainment Protection (8.3.2) until the end of OMR management	<p>Average Secchi disk depth from all stations on the San Joaquin River upstream of Jersey Point and stations south of the lower San Joaquin River in the most recent survey is less than 1 meter.</p> <p>Temporarily offramps when daily average flows at Rio Vista are greater than 55,000 cfs OR daily average flows at Vernalis are greater than 8,000 cfs, immediately reinstate when either daily average flows at Rio Vista are below 40,000 cfs or daily average flows at Vernalis are less than 5,000 cfs.</p>	Not Active

Approval	Requirement	Time Frame	Trigger	Action Status
8.4.2 (Larval and Juvenile Longfin Smelt Entrainment Protection)	<p>Adjust south Delta exports to achieve a 7-day average of the OMR index no more negative than -3,500 cfs for seven days.</p> <p>If the WY cumulative juvenile LFS salvage at the SWP and CVP salvage facilities exceeds 50% of the average annual salvage observed from 2009 through the preceding WY, then adjust south Delta exports to achieve a 7-day average OMRI of -3,500 cfs for 14-days.</p> <p>If the WY cumulative juvenile LFS salvage at the SWP and CVP salvage facilities exceeds 75% of the average annual salvage observed from 2009 through the preceding WY, then adjust south Delta exports to achieve a 7-day average OMRI of -2,500 cfs for 14-days. If salvage of juvenile LFS continues after the 14-day action, then SMT shall advise WOMT on an appropriate measure.</p>	Jan 1 through the end of OMR management	<p>The seven-day average QWEST is less than 1,500 cfs AND larval and juvenile Longfin Smelt (LFS) catch in the most recent Smelt Larval Survey (SLS) or 20-mm Survey at stations 809 and 812 exceeds the catch threshold set by the age 1+ LFS Index. This threshold for WY 2025 is 50.</p> <p>Temporarily offramps when daily average flows at Rio Vista are greater than 55,000 cfs OR daily average flows at Vernalis are greater than 8,000 cfs, immediately reinstate when either daily average flows at Rio Vista are below 40,000 cfs or daily average flows at Vernalis are less than 5,000 cfs.</p>	<b>Active, Triggered</b> on 1/19/2025
8.6 (End of OMR Management)	If triggered, OMR Management would be off-ramped for LFS and DS.	Onset of OMR management through June 30	Daily mean water temperature at CCF is greater than or equal to 25° C for three consecutive days.	Active, Not Triggered



Approval	Requirement	Time Frame	Trigger	Action Status
8.10.1 (Barker Slough Pumping Plant Larval Delta Smelt Protection)	Barker Slough Pumping Plant will operate to a maximum 7-day average diversion rate less than 60 cfs (March 1 to April 30) or 100 cfs (May 1 to June 30).	March 1 through June 30 of dry and critical water years	Catch of larval DS (<25 mm fork length) in the 20-mm Survey at station 718 exceeds 14% (March 1 to April 30) or 5% (May 1 to June 30) of the total catch of larval DS across the Cache Slough area of the north Delta (20-mm Survey stations 716, 718, 719, 720, 723, 724, and 726).	Not Active due to Above Normal water year type.
8.10.2 (Barker Slough Pumping Plant Larval Longfin Smelt Protection)	Barker Slough Pumping Plant will operate to a maximum 7-day average diversion rate less than 100 cfs.	Jan 1 through March 31 of dry and critical water years	Water year type changes to dry or critical after Jan 1	Not Active due to Above Normal water year type.

**Not active:** The COA could become active in this season, but the on-ramp conditions have not been met.

**Active, not triggered:** The on-ramping condition has been met, but the trigger condition has not been met.

**Active, triggered:** The trigger condition has been met.

**Off-ramped:** This COA could no longer become active in this season.

\* Glossary

### ***Review of Delta and Longfin Smelt Tables from the Fish and Water Operations Outlook***

The SMT did not live edit or review the Fish and Water Operations Outlook.

### ***Biological Conditions: Agency Survey Updates***

Agencies did not share survey updates or salvage updates. The SMT is not required to share or discuss this under the new permitting structure.

## **Part 2: Open Discussion on Species Status (Structured-Unstructured Time)**

The SMT did not discuss species status.

## **Part 3: Live-edit Assessments**

SMT live-edit of weekly assessments are no longer required under the 2024 ROD and ITP.

## **Part 4: Additional Considerations/Discussion**

Agencies reported no items for elevation to WOMT.

### ***Action Implementation***

- Reclamation asked operators when the new action under COA 8.4.2 would be implemented and its duration.

- DWR responded they likely began operating to the new threshold on 1/20/2025 and the action will end on 1/26/2025. DWR will notify the SMT when a final decision is made by their management.
- Reclamation noted that there was some uncertainty around the language of the COA 8.4.2 action and sought confirmation about whether the action could be offramped if QWEST falls below +1,500 cfs on a 7-day average.
  - CDFW responded that there are ongoing conversations about permit intentions compared with permit language. Agency management is discussing the possibility of whether or not the COA could be offramped and CDFW representatives will notify the SMT when they receive clarification.
  - Reclamation noted that they would seek guidance from their management as well.
  - CDFW then asked for clarification from DWR about whether COA 8.4.4 (Natural-origin Winter-run Weekly Loss) would be controlling and if so noted that could give them additional time to clarify permit language around the possible off-ramp and/or retriggering of COA 8.4.2.
  - DWR responded that salmon catch occurred on 1/19/2025 and would run from 1/20/2025 -1/26/2025 but could be off-ramped if the Chinook is genetically confirmed to not be Winter-run.
  - CDFW responded that they would prioritize addressing the questions about COA 8.4.2.
  - DWR noted that the 7-day average QWEST is expected to stay below +1,500 cfs in the next 7-days.
- Reclamation reminded the SMT that action durations may be modified with assessments and WOMT agreement. Reclamation asked the SMT if an assessment is requested by WOMT what the process is for getting agency scientists the information that they need to make a complete assessment, including potential particle tracking model (PTM) runs.
  - CDFW responded that while COA 8.1.6 (Real-time Information Sharing Process) notes that, "All information intended for discussion in WOMT shall be provided and discussed in SMT, SaMT, and WSMT prior to discussion in WOMT." CDFW noted that they are seeking clarification from their management about whether this applies to COA 8.4.2. This will also affect the draft interim communication plan presented at the SMT meeting last week.
  - Reclamation noted that they had not discussed COA 8.1.6 and would share with their management who have been reviewing meeting cadence.
- Reclamation asked the SMT about the protocol if the action is off-ramped on 1/26/2025 and then retriggered when the new survey information is available mid-next week, noting there would be a gap of several days between when the action would end and could then possibly be retriggered.

### *SMT Communications Plan*

- CDFW shared that in the future they will initiate a discussion about the beginning of larval sampling but that conversation is on hold temporarily.
- Reclamation asked the SMT how they would like to convene when WOMT calls for an SMT meeting. Reclamation sought logistical input about future SMT meetings.
  - SWRCB shared that SaMT is continuing to meet so any reoccurring meetings should be kept during the normal SMT timeframe to avoid conflict.
  - The SMT discussed possible meeting times and whether to keep a calendar invite during the 11am to 1pm meeting time.
- Reclamation asked operators what DWR and Reclamation communications look like and what conversations are happening to come to agreement about how information can be shared with agency biologists.
  - Reclamation operators shared that they meet with DWR daily and discuss all topics. There is agreement to coordinate on operations.

### **Next SMT Meeting**

The next SMT meeting will tentatively be held on Tuesday 1/28/2025 on Microsoft Teams.