

Water Operations Management Team Off-Cycle Meeting Notes

Water Year 2025 – January 29, 2025 – 4 pm

Off-cycle Meeting

Members Attending

- Reclamation: Present
- USFWS: Present
- CDFW: Present
- NMFS: Not Present (Abstained)
- DWR: Present
- SWRCB: Present

Relevant Assessments

"Information for Larval and Juvenile Longfin Smelt Protection Action (Date: 1/29/2025)"

Discussion Items

DWR requesting offramp from the Larval and Juvenile Longfin Smelt Protection Action (SWP ITP Condition of Approval 8.4.2 and Federal PA Section 3.7.4.5.1)

- DWR provided a verbal summary of the written Assessment (Attached)
 - The Age 1+ LFS Index highest since 1996, suggesting population rebound year
 - Higher population than any analyzed in the ITP Application
 - Estimated entrainment losses are typically a small proportion of population, based on study by Kimmerer and Gross (2022)
 - Turbidity is declining in Delta, and LFS are associated with turbid water
 - Rain is forecasted for this weekend, which could help move LFS westward
 - DWR would continue to monitor review factors for risk on week-to-week basis
- WOMT discussed whether there was a need for SMT to meet to discuss. CDFW clarified that this particular part of this measure does not have a requirement that SMT meet.
- WOMT discussed considerations related to the ESA consultation and the ITP.

- FWS recommended that Reclamation and DWR should determine whether there's a low risk of a population effect that is higher than what was analyzed and exempted in the FWS BiOp.
- CDFW noted that CESA does not similarly set take limits related to proportionality of population level effects, but that they can look to the ITP Effects Analysis for the level of take and minimization.
- CDFW asked whether DWR considered including additional quantitative and qualitative information in the assessments, including:
 - Modeling different operations and hydrology using PTM to see how larval LFS entrainment varies
 - Consideration for how this action's implementation (or lack of implementation) might affect future salvage risk as these individuals grow up and are later subject to entrainment and/or potential salvage
- DWR said this storm would increase flows and move larval LFS westward and away from the interior Delta.
 - CDFW asked whether storm will increase QWest flow to greater than 1500 cfs, which would result in the larval/juvenile LFS protection action ending naturally?
 - DWR answered that storm is expected to drop more rain to the North, which is not as large as a contributor to Qwest.
- Reclamation is supportive of DWR's request to off-ramp, and they consider this a joint request to off-ramp the current larval/juvenile LFS protection action.
- WOMET members discussed the process for elevation of decision-making to the agency Directors. FWS stated that by providing the risk assessment, DWR and Reclamation had allowed for the opportunity to provide input and met the intent of the PA.

Next Steps

- WOMET was unable to reach a consensus, decision making was elevated to the Director.
- DWR will email all Directors and Subdirectors on behalf of Reclamation and DWR and request that they confer regarding the request to off-ramp the larval LFS measure.