

# Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) Weekly Meeting

Conference call: 11/24/2020 at 9:00 a.m.

**Objective:** Provide information to the Water Operations Management Team (WOMT), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and California Department of Water Resources (DWR) on measures to reduce adverse effects from Delta operations of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the State Water Project (SWP) on salmonids and green sturgeon. Meeting notes will be posted to [Reclamation's Salmon Monitoring Team](#) webpage. Meeting participants include representatives from: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), DWR, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), Reclamation, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

## Agenda Items:

1. Introductions
2. Relevant Actions and Triggers
3. Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook, Current Operations
4. Fish Abundance and Distribution
5. Fish Exposure and Behavioural Cues, Current Conditions, Sensitivity to Operational Actions
6. Other Topics
7. Additional Considerations for WOMT
8. Next SaMT Meeting

### Agenda Item 2. Relevant Actions and Triggers Review

#### *Delta Cross Channel (DCC) Gate Operations*

From 10/1 to 11/30, Reclamation proposes to operate the DCC gates consistent with past operations. See Reclamation's Proposed Action (PA), Section 4.10.5.3 (page 4-55).

DCC gates are scheduled to be open from 11/25-11/30 and closed on 12/1/20. The gates are scheduled to remain closed through mid-May based on the PA's description of DCC gate operations. The DCC gates closure reduces entrainment of winter-run and spring-run Chinook salmon juveniles that are potentially present in the Sacramento River near the DCC gates into the interior Delta. The effects of DCC gate closure would be positive, if juvenile salmonids are present in the vicinity of the gates.

*Early-season Natural Winter-run Chinook Salmon Discrete Daily Loss*

From 11/1 to 11/30, DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with Condition of Approval 8.6.2. The Incidental Take Permit (ITP) daily discrete loss threshold for 11/1 – 11/30 is 6 older juvenile Chinook salmon. If the threshold is exceeded, the response is to reduce SWP exports by its proportional share (COA 8.10) to reach an OMR of –5,000 cfs.

**Agenda Item 3. Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook, Current Operations**

*Project Operations*

SaMT reviewed and updated the Outlook document. The updated Outlook document will be distributed via email by close of business (COB) 11/25 and also will be posted to [Reclamation’s Salmon Monitoring webpage](#).

**Agenda Item 4. Fish Abundance and Distribution**

*Fish Monitoring: Salvage*

Salvage and loss of ESA-listed species are reported in the Outlook and Assessment documents. No listed species were salvaged this past week at either fish collection facility. No outages or reductions in fish salvage counts were reported for this past week.

*SaMT Estimates of Fish Distribution*

SaMT estimates of the current distribution of listed Chinook salmon and California Central Valley steelhead, as a percentage of the population are based on recent monitoring data and historical migration timing patterns. These estimates are reported in the final Assessment.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Yet to Enter Delta (Upstream of Knights Landing)</b>	<b>In the Delta</b>	<b>Exited the Delta (Past Chipps Island)</b>
<i>Young-of-year (YOY) winter-run Chinook salmon</i>	Current: 97-99% Last week: 98-100%	Current: 1-3% Last week: 0-2%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%
<i>YOY spring-run Chinook salmon</i>	Current: 99-100% Last week: 99-100%	Current: 0-1% Last week: 0-1%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%
<i>YOY hatchery winter-run Chinook salmon</i>	Current: N/A Last week: N/A	Current: N/A Last week: N/A	Current: N/A Last week: N/A
<i>Natural origin steelhead</i>	Current: 99-100% Last week: 99-100%	Current: 0-1% Last week: 0-1%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%

SaMT noted that a small number of yearling spring-run Chinook salmon are being observed in the Butte Creek Rotary Screw Trap (RST) and fyke traps at the Parrot Phelan Diversion Dam monitoring location. If natural YOY or yearling spring-run Chinook salmon are present near the DCC gates, they would benefit from gate closures.

SaMT noted that the fact that if YOY winter-run Chinook aren’t being seen in Delta monitoring locations, this doesn’t mean they aren’t moving into the Delta at this time. There is the potential that

individuals are avoiding the traps due to low flows and low turbidity, which reduce the trap's efficiency to capture fish. The SaMT proposes an increase of 1% based on historical timing of juvenile winter-run Chinook salmon entry into the Delta from upstream.

The group also expressed concern that more YOY winter-run Chinook are not being seen in downstream monitoring locations compared to what has been seen upstream at the RBDD and GCID. The low numbers may represent a decline in their survival in the lower Sacramento River and may have implications in estimating the juvenile production estimate this year.

#### *Fish Monitoring Disruptions due to COVID-19*

USFWS has suspended all DJFMP beach seining with the exception of the Sacramento area beach seines due to the recent rise in COVID-19 cases in the Central Valley. USFWS does not anticipate any disruption in the program's trawl monitoring at this time.

CDFW Knights Landing lead biologist stated that no discussions have yet taken place indicating any further modifications to sampling protocol based on COVID-19.

See the Monitoring Program disruption table in the Assessment document.

### **Agenda Item 5. Fish Exposure and Behavioral Cues, Current Conditions, Sensitivity to Operational Actions**

SaMT reviewed and updated the Assessment document. The updated Assessment will be distributed via email by COB 11/25 and will be posted to [Reclamation's Salmon Monitoring webpage](#).

Elissa Buttermore and Suzanne Manugian have been working to create and update tools and visualizations within the SaMT SacPAS webpage. Please share feedback on data visualization as well as data accuracy with Elissa or Suzanne and/or click the "contact us" button on the SacPAS web site to contact University of Washington.

#### *ITP Risk Assessment*

SaMT reviewed and updated the ITP Risk Assessment document. The updated draft ITP Assessment will be distributed via email by COB 11/24 for review by SaMT members with comments due COB 11/25. The ITP Risk Assessment will be finalized by Friday, 11/27.

### **Agenda Item 6. Other Topics**

Jeff Stuart, Elissa Buttermore, and Suzanne Manugian communicated with Coleman National Fish Hatchery to request the release of the surrogate spring-run salmon under the same schedule as they have in the past. The planned release schedule is as follows:

- Production release: targeting early December, in concert with a significant precipitation event
- 1st surrogate release: ~3 days after the production release, regardless of precipitation events.
- 2nd surrogate release: Late December, ideally preceding (by ~3-7 days) a precipitation event and at least a week after the previous surrogate release.
- 3rd surrogate release: Mid-January, ideally preceding (by ~3-7 days) a precipitation event and at least a week after the previous surrogate release.

The winter-run juvenile production estimate (JPE) team is scheduling a meeting for early December. Contact Erica Meyers (CDFW) if you are interested in participating in the winter-run JPE.

**Agenda Item 7. Additional Considerations for WOMT**

SaMT had no recommendations to change operations. However, they were concerned about winter-run survival to the Delta due to the thiamine vitamin deficiency issue, and how this would factor into this year's winter-run JPE calculations. They identified this as an important issue for WOMT to consider.

No additional considerations for WOMT were noted.

**Agenda Item 8.**

Next SaMT Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 1 at 9 a.m.