

Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) Weekly Meeting

Conference call: 12/8/2020 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. Roll Call
2. Updates Water Operations and Biological Conditions
3. Open Discussion on species status
4. Live-edit Assessments (Proposed Action Assessment and ITP Risk Assessment)
5. Other Topics
6. Additional Considerations for WOMT
7. Next Meeting

SaMT has a new agenda format starting this week based on the revised OMR Guidance Document circulated in advance of the weekly call. This includes review and live-editing of the Outlook, Assessment and ITP Risk Assessment documents, per usual, as well as an open discussion on special status species. The group will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the new agenda and adjustments can be made as needed going forward.

Agenda Item 2. Updates Water Operations and Biological Conditions Relevant Actions and Triggers

Delta Cross Channel (DCC) Gate operations: The DCC gates were closed on 12/1/20 and are expected to remain closed through mid-May 2021. A positive impact of the DCC gate closure is to prevent entrainment through the DCC route of any juvenile CCV steelhead, winter-run Chinook salmon, and young-of-year (YOY) or yearling spring-run Chinook salmon into the Delta interior from the Sacramento River Basin.

Incidental Take Permit (ITP) Daily Loss Threshold: From 12/1-12/31/2020, DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with Condition of Approval 8.6.2 of the ITP. The ITP Daily Discrete Loss Threshold for December is 26 older juvenile Chinook salmon. If the threshold is exceeded, the required response is to reduce SWP exports by its proportional share, according to the Coordinated Operation Agreement (COA), that would be required to reach an OMR of -5,000 cfs for consecutive days.

Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook, Current Operations

SaMT reviewed and updated the Outlook document. The updated Outlook document will be distributed to the SaMT via email by close of business (COB) 12/10/2020.

Fish Monitoring: Salvage

Salvage and loss of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species are reported in the Outlook and Assessment documents. No ESA-listed species were salvaged during this past week at either of the Delta fish collection facilities. No outages or reductions in fish salvage counts were reported for this past week (11/30/20 - 12/6/20).

SaMT Estimates of Fish Distribution

SaMT estimates of the current distribution of listed Chinook salmon and CCV 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.

Location	Yet to Enter Delta (Upstream of Knights Landing)	In the Delta	Exited the Delta (Past Chipps Island)
Young-of-year (YOY) winter-run Chinook salmon	Current: 95-99% Last week: 96-99%	Current: 1-5% Last week: 1-4%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%
YOY spring-run Chinook salmon	Current: 98-100% Last week: 99-100%	Current: 0-2% Last week: 0-1%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%
YOY hatchery winter-run Chinook salmon	Current: N/A Last week: N/A	Current: N/A Last week: N/A	Current: N/A Last week: N/A
Natural origin steelhead	Current: 99-100% Last week: 99-100%	Current: 0-1% Last week: 0-1%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%

Agenda Item 3. Open Discussion on Species Status

Winter-run Chinook salmon

- Adults are entering the Delta from the ocean on their upstream migration towards spawning grounds.
- Juveniles are moving downstream in the Sacramento River (5% or less in the Delta)

Spring-run Chinook salmon

- No adults are entering the Delta at this time from the ocean.
- Fry and juveniles are moving downstream out of Sacramento River basin (98%-100% Yet to Enter Delta)
- Emergence of spring-run Chinook salmon alevins may still be happening upriver. We are just starting to see an uptick in fry emerging in the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers. Spawning on the San Joaquin River has been continuous so it is difficult to distinguish between the end of spring-run or the beginning of fall-run Chinook salmon alevins and fry emergence.
 - Question: Is it too early to start talking about spring-run Chinook salmon originating from the San Joaquin River basin?
 - Answer: Some natural spawning has occurred below Friant Dam (and potentially in other tributaries in the San Joaquin River basin) – potential for yearling Spring-run Chinook salmon to be moving downstream at this time. Need to think about how to identify these fish as length-at-date size overlaps with “older juvenile Chinook salmon” from other watersheds as they are supposed to have a “*de minimus*” impact on exports.

Steelhead

- Adults are “in-river” within the Central Valley watersheds; early spawning is potentially occurring during December.
- Juveniles are rearing in the river and a small percentage of the juvenile population is moving downriver (99%-100% Yet to Enter Delta).

Green Sturgeon

- Juveniles are holding in upstream areas of the Sacramento River in the course of their downstream emigration during cool winter water temperature conditions.
- Juveniles and adults are present in the Delta.
- Adults that didn’t outmigrate over the summer should start migrating downstream now as river water temperature cools.

SaMT participants note that the majority of information shared within this section is also available within the Assessment and Outlook documents, with the exception of experimental populations of spring-run Chinook salmon.

Thiamine vitamin deficiency issue

Agency members of the SaMT continued a discussion of the thiamine vitamin deficiency noting the issue is captured in the Assessment and continues to be discussed. The winter-run Chinook salmon JPE project work team discussed how thiamine deficiency may be a concern.

Agenda Item 4. Live edit Assessments

Proposed Action Assessment

SaMT reviewed and updated the Assessment document. The updated Assessment will be distributed to the SaMT via email by COB 12/10/2020.

ITP Risk Assessment

SaMT reviewed and updated the ITP Risk Assessment document. The updated draft ITP Assessment will be distributed via email by COB 12/9/2020 for review by SaMT members with comments due COB 12/10/2020. The ITP Risk Assessment will be finalized by Friday, 12/11/2020. The final ITP Risk Assessment document can be found at [CDFW’s Water Project Operations webpage](#).

Agenda Item 5. Other Topics

1. ICF Presentation – Rafael Silberblatt has reached out to ICF regarding scheduling an entrainment tool presentation. Reclamation will send around a scheduling email to the SaMT once they hear back from ICF.
2. Reflections on new agenda and process: Rafael Silberblatt noted that SaMT ran out of time to discuss the new process, but further discussion can be had on the next call and SaMT members should feel free to email him with feedback.
3. Reclamation proposed skipping the reporting of OMR numbers on future calls, in light of their availability on SacPAS. Duane Linander, CDFW, responded that the ITP requires that OMR numbers be reported on the call. He will check as to whether this can be adjusted for future SaMT calls.

Agenda Item 6. Additional Considerations for WOMT

No additional considerations for WOMT were noted.

Agenda Item 7.

The next SaMT Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 12/15/20, at 9 a.m.