

Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) Weekly Meeting

Conference call: 12/15/2020 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/Considerations for WOMT
6. Next Meeting

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, juvenile winter-run Chinook salmon, and young-of-year (YOY) or yearling spring-run Chinook salmon into the Delta interior from the Sacramento River Basin.

Planned construction efforts on the DCC gates are ongoing, no updates were reported on the call.

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 five 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) 12/17/2020.

Precipitation occurred over the weekend of 12/11-13/2020 and more precipitation is anticipated again mid-week (12/16 – 12/17/20). However-changes to the Freeport flows and turbidity are not expected to reach “First Flush” conditions within the next seven days that are required for the

protection of Delta smelt and longfin smelt under the PA and ITP. First Flush conditions have requirements for export reductions to meet OMR index flows of no more than -2,000 cfs for 14 days, which have the potential to benefit salmonids in the south Delta. The SaMT group agreed that precipitation events would likely stimulate downstream migration in juvenile salmonids towards the Delta.

It was noted that the highest carcass counts of Chinook salmon occurred last week on the American River, but that spawning has been occurring since the first week of November, so it is important to indicate that only the fry from the earliest spawning events are emerging there, as opposed to other rivers where fry emergence might be farther along.

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 (12/7/20 - 12/13/20).

The ICF model on the SacPAS webpage predicts 0 loss for this week which reflects consideration of the current forecast.

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. This document is available on the [Reclamation’s Salmon Monitoring Team](#) webpage.

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: 93-97% Last week: 95-99%	Current: 3-7% Last week: 1-5%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%
YOY spring-run Chinook salmon	Current: 97-99% Last week: 98-100%	Current: 1-3% Last week: 0-2%	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: 98-99% Last week: 99-100%	Current: 1-2% Last week: 0-1%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%

Agenda Item 3. Open Discussion on Species Status

Steelhead – Approximately 415,000 juvenile hatchery CCV steelhead from the Coleman National Fish Hatchery (CNFH) have been released at Red Bluff since last weekend, which is anticipated to spur natural origin steelhead movement downstream towards the Delta.

Levels of risk and change in risk

- Exposure risk is elevated from last week for winter-run and spring-run Chinook Salmon due to recent increases in precipitation which may trigger fish to start moving downstream towards the Delta.

- The ITP risk assessment for the North Delta won't change and overall risk of entrainment into the interior and south Delta will remain in the low category.
- Risk of entrainment in the South Delta into the facilities, as reflected in the Risk Assessment, is also unlikely to change.
- There is an increase of risk for the more negative end of the range of potential OMRs that may be operated to (-5000 cfs), although it is unlikely to be operated at that level due to water quality concern levels.
- Reclamation provided an update from CNFH regarding spring-run surrogates. CNFH has not released any late fall-run Chinook salmon at this time and are retaining fish until in-river conditions improve. If there is no improvement by January 1, 2021, CNFH will release the late fall-run Chinook salmon production and yearling spring-run surrogates to make room in the raceways for the fall-run Chinook salmon production fish.

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 12/17/2020. The final assessment will be posted to the [Reclamation's Salmon Monitoring Team](#) webpage.

Monitoring disruptions were noted at the Chipps Island trawl for the current week due to Covid-19 risks. The Chipps Island trawl is scheduled to resume next week. Schedules are made in two-week blocks, and future operations may be impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. Notifications will be made in a timely manner regarding the schedules for monitoring

ITP Risk Assessment

SaMT reviewed and updated the ITP Risk Assessment document. The updated draft ITP Assessment will be distributed via email by COB 12/16/2020 for review by SaMT members with comments due COB 12/17/2020. The ITP Risk Assessment will be finalized by Friday, 12/18/2020 and can be found at [CDFW's Water Project Operations webpage](#).

Agenda Item 5. Additional Considerations/Other Topics

1. Items to raise to WOMT
 - a. NMFS noted its concern regarding the potential of losing Chipps Island trawl completely, given its importance as a long-term monitoring station at the point of fish exiting the Delta. This would be a big concern in the event of a significant rain event that moves large numbers of fish through the Delta, or later in the season when juveniles are actively moving towards the ocean from the Delta. If cessation in monitoring is just for one week, then the concern is slightly less, but is still important to NMFS.
 - i. USFWS notes that Chipps Island trawl is tentatively scheduled to resume next week.
 - b. CDFW echoes this concern and indicates that it will relay this to their WOMT representative.
2. A presentation on the ICF Entrainment Tool is scheduled for Wednesday, 12/23/20 before 1pm.
 - a. ACTION ITEM: Rafi Silberblatt will confirm the specific time and update the SaMT.
 - b. ACTION ITEM: SaMT members should send questions to Rafi or Suzanne by COB Monday, 12/21, so they can be shared with presenters.
3. CDFW responded to a question from last week's SaMT meeting regarding the reporting out of a variety of OMR USGS gauge and index numbers. He indicated that these values should continue to be reported on the call as previously done. These values are also reported on the [SacPAS website](#).
4. Reclamation is actively working to get meeting notes, Assessments and Outlook documents posted online. Documents require special visual identity and accessibility formatting (Section 508 compliance) which is taking some time to complete. CDFW has posted all of their ITP Risk

Assessments from this water year to the [CDFWs' Water Operations Website](#). Kearns & West and Reclamation will be in touch with specific SaMT members regarding updated formatting requirements, as applicable in the coming weeks.

Agenda Item 6.

The next SaMT Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 12/22/20, at 9 a.m.