

Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) Weekly Meeting

Conference call: 1/26/2021 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 on Water Operations and Biological Conditions
3. Open Discussion on species status
4. Live-edit Assessments (Proposed Action Assessment and ITP Risk Assessment)
5. Additional Considerations/Other Topics
6. Next Meeting

Agenda Item 2. Updates on 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. Positive impacts include preventing routing of listed fish through the DCC into the interior Delta. There is a possibility that the DCC gates could be opened before Jan 31st to prevent exceeding D-1641 water quality criteria if drought conditions are observed between December 1 and January 31, and modeling indicates that water quality concern levels are exceeded during this period if the gates remain closed. If these conditions are present, Reclamation and DWR will consider opening the DCC gates for up to five days for up to two events within this period to avoid D-1641 water quality exceedances following a risk assessment of this action. During a DCC gates opening between December 1 and January 31, the CVP and SWP will divert at Health and Safety pumping levels.

OMR Management Season: Onset of OMR Management season began on 1/1/21 due to the exceedance of the 5% threshold for the winter-run Chinook salmon population presence within the Delta. Old and Middle River (OMR) flows cannot be more negative than -5,000 cfs on a 14-day average. Additional restrictions and changes to operations may be required per the Proposed Action (PA) and the CDFW Incidental Take Permit (ITP).

ITP Winter-run Single-year Loss Threshold: DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with Condition of Approval 8.6.1 of the ITP. The ITP Winter-run Single-year Loss Threshold for this year is loss of length-at-date winter-run Chinook salmon from the CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 1.17% of the winter-run Chinook salmon juvenile production estimate (JPE)¹. If 50% of the threshold is exceeded, the required response is to reduce SWP exports by its proportional share, according to the coordinated operations agreement (COA), that would be required to reach a 14-day average OMR of -3,500 cfs. If 75% of this threshold is exceeded, the required response is to reduce SWP exports by its proportional share, according to the COA, that would be required to reach a 14-day average OMR of -2,500 cfs.

ITP Daily Loss Threshold: From 1/1/21 - 1/31/21, DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with Condition of Approval 8.6.3 of the ITP. The ITP Daily Loss Threshold for January is loss of older juvenile Chinook salmon from CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 0.00635% of the winter-run Chinook salmon JPE¹. If the threshold is exceeded, the required response is to reduce SWP exports by its proportional share, according to the COA, that would be required to reach an OMR of -3,500 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) 1/28/21.

Planned construction efforts on the DCC gates are ongoing. No updates regarding the progress of the construction actions were reported on the call.

A dead sturgeon (550mm in length) was found on the trash racks at the SWP facilities last week. The carcass has been retrieved for species identification and confirmed as a green sturgeon. Tissue sampling has occurred for further genetic analysis. NMFS, DWR, and Reclamation will confer to determine how to characterize the event in terms of take.

The SaMT discussed Fish Monitoring Gear Efficiency/Disruptions as addressed within the Operations Outlook and updated accordingly.

SaMT Estimates of Fish Distribution

SaMT estimates of the current distribution of listed Chinook salmon and CCV steelhead, as a percentage of each population, are based on recent monitoring data and historical migration timing patterns. These estimates are reported in the final Assessment document, available on [Reclamation’s Salmon Monitoring Team](#) webpage.

Location	Yet to Enter Delta	In the Delta	Exited the Delta (Past Chipps Island)
YOY winter-run Chinook salmon	Current: 35-65% Last week: 40-70%	Current: 35-65% Last week: 30-60%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%
YOY spring-run Chinook salmon	Current: 75-85% Last week: 80-90%	Current: 15-25% Last week: 10-20%	Current: % 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

¹ The IEP Winter-run Chinook Salmon Project Work Team JPE Subteam finalized a winter-run JPE on January 15, 2021. The final winter-run JPE letter was issued by NMFS to Reclamation on 1/25/21. The final JPE letter from CDFW was issued to DWR on 1/26/21.

Location	Yet to Enter Delta	In the Delta	Exited the Delta (Past Chipps Island)
Natural origin steelhead	Current: 75-85% Last week: 80-90%	Current: 10-25% Last week: 10-20%	Current: 0-5% Last week: 0%

Agenda Item 3. Open Discussion on Species Status

The first significant storm event of this water year is likely to occur this week, which may result in substantial increases in river flows. This may trigger salmonid downstream migration into the Delta, which in turn may increase exposure to the effects of exports in the Delta by the end of the week and the possibility of increased salvage at the SWP and CVP.

Agenda Item 4. Live edit Assessments

Proposed Action Assessment

SaMT reviewed and updated the PA Assessment document. The updated PA Assessment will be distributed to the SaMT via email by COB 1/28/21. The final assessment will be posted to [Reclamation's Salmon Monitoring Team](#) webpage.

ITP Risk Assessment

SaMT discussed the ITP Risk Assessment document. The updated draft ITP Assessment will be distributed via email by COB 1/27/21 for review by SaMT members with comments due COB Thursday, 1/28/21. The ITP Risk Assessment will be finalized by Friday, 1/29/21 and can be found at [CDFW's Water Project Operations webpage](#).

Agenda Item 5. Additional Considerations/Other Topics

A SaMT member asked if Upstream Life Stages should be added to the Population Status section for Chinook Salmon in addition to the current Delta Life Stages. This would also apply to other listed species within the Central Valley. The SaMT will revisit the discussion about what geographies should be included for particular life stages on the next SaMT call.

No additional considerations for WOMT were noted.

Agenda Item 6.

The next SaMT Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 2/2/21, at 9 a.m.