

Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) Weekly Meeting

Conference call: 4/20/2021 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. Final versions of the Meeting Notes, Proposed Action Assessment, and Fish and Water Operations Outlook 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.

OMR Management Season: Onset of Old and Middle River (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. 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 natural-origin Winter-run Single-year Loss Threshold for this year is loss of length-at-date natural-origin winter-run Chinook salmon from the CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 1.17% of the natural winter-run Chinook salmon juvenile production estimate ([JPE](#))¹. The ITP hatchery-origin Winter-run Single-year Loss Threshold for this year is loss of length-at-date hatchery-origin winter-run Chinook salmon from the CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 0.12%

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

of the hatchery production winter-run Chinook salmon JPE². If 50% of either 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 either 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 4/1/21 - 4/30/21, DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with Condition of Approval 8.6.3 of the ITP. The ITP Daily Loss Threshold for April is loss of natural older juvenile Chinook salmon from CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 0.0507% of the natural 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.

ITP Spring-run Hatchery Surrogate Loss Threshold: From 3/1/21 – 6/30/21, DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with Condition of Approval 8.6.4 of the ITP. The ITP Hatchery Surrogate Loss Threshold includes five release groups, including two release groups of fall-run Chinook salmon from Coleman National Fish Hatchery and two release groups of spring-run Chinook salmon from Feather River Fish Hatchery. If cumulative loss from CVP and SWP is greater than 0.25% for any release group, 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) 4/20/21.

The DCC gates are currently closed. Testing will be conducted in May to prepare for normal operations post-construction.

A SaMT member noted the goal of installing agricultural barriers starting May 1, for the Middle River location, at least. Low flows are already creating some issues with agricultural users in the south Delta.

A SaMT member noted that a number of adult Chinook salmon have been captured in the rotary screw trap (RST) on Butte Creek and asked if they are considered spring-run. Ken Kundargi, CDFW, indicated that he will check in on any genetic testing results of those fish and report back.

Oakdale RST numbers don't show a lot of outmigrating juvenile fall-run Chinook salmon. Outmigration numbers for juvenile Chinook salmon on the Stanislaus River at the Caswell location also appear to be low – close to one fifth or one sixth of what is typical. Warming river water temperatures and dropping flows over the next few weeks have the potential to trigger the remaining juveniles to move out of the system.

The SaMT discussed Fish Monitoring Gear Efficiency/Disruptions as addressed within the Operations Outlook and updated accordingly. USFWS will begin sampling at Mossdale on 5/1/21 while CDFW awaits approval to take this sampling over. San Joaquin River beach seine locations will start to be sampled again on 5/1/21.

SaMT Estimates of Fish Distribution

² The single-year loss threshold and loss tracking for hatchery winter-run Chinook salmon does not include releases into Battle Creek.

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
Young-of-year (YOY) winter-run Chinook salmon	Current: 1-5% Last week: 5%	Current: 20-30% Last week: 30-40%	Current: 65-79% Last week: 55-65%
YOY spring-run Chinook salmon	Current: 5% Last week: 5-10%	Current: 65-75% Last week: 70-85%	Current: 20-30% Last week: 10-20%
YOY hatchery winter-run Chinook salmon ³	Current: 0-5% Last week: 10-15%	Current: 25-35% Last week: 25-50%	Current: 60-75% Last week: 40-60%
Natural origin steelhead	Current: 5-15% Last week: 10-20%	Current: 35-50% Last week: 35-50%	Current: 45-50% Last week: 40-45%

Agenda Item 3. Open Discussion on Species Status

No discussion items were noted.

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 4/20/21. 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 by CDFW via email by COB 4/21/21 for review by SaMT members with comments due COB Thursday, 4/22/21. The ITP Risk Assessment will be finalized by Friday, 4/23/21 and can be found at [CDFW’s Water Project Operations webpage](#).

Agenda Item 5. Additional Considerations/Other Topics

No additional considerations for WOMT were noted.

Agenda Item 6.

The next SaMT Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 4/27/21, at 9 a.m.

³ Estimation of YOY hatchery winter-run Chinook Salmon distribution is complicated by multiple releases over a prolonged period of time .