

# Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) Weekly Meeting

**Conference call: 5/18/2021 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. Reclamation informed SaMT that the DCC gates will remain closed until further notice in an effort to address salinity intrusion into the lower Sacramento River due to the ongoing drought conditions and to maintain water quality standards at Emmaton. 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](#))<sup>1</sup>. The ITP hatchery-origin Winter-run Single-year Loss Threshold for this year is loss of length-at-

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

date hatchery-origin winter-run Chinook salmon from the CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 0.12% of the hatchery production winter-run Chinook salmon JPE<sup>2</sup>. 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 5/1/21-5/30/21, DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with Condition of Approval 8.6.3 of the ITP. The ITP Daily Loss Threshold for May is loss of natural older juvenile Chinook salmon from CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 0.0077% of the natural winter-run Chinook salmon JPE<sup>1</sup>. 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 three 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) 5/18/21.

Chance of precipitation in the Central Valley is low over the next week and is not likely to affect hydrological conditions in the Delta.

The Emmaton electrical conductivity (EC) standard requiring a 14-day average less than or equal to 2.78 mS/cm is the regulatory factor that is currently controlling Delta export operations for the SWP and CVP.

The SaMT discussed Fish Monitoring Gear Efficiency/Disruptions as addressed within the Operations Outlook and updated accordingly. CDFW monitoring at Mossdale began on 5/10/21.

*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
Young-of-year (YOY) winter-run Chinook salmon	Current: 0-1% Last week: 0-1%	Current: 5% Last week: 5-10%	Current: 94-95% Last week: 89-95%
YOY spring-run Chinook salmon	Current: 0-5% Last week: 0-5%	Current: 30-40% Last week: 40-50%	Current: 55-70% Last week: 45-60%

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

Location	Yet to Enter Delta	In the Delta	Exited the Delta
YOY hatchery winter-run Chinook salmon <sup>3</sup>	Current: 0-1% Last week: 0-1%	Current: 0-1% Last week: 5%	Current: 98-100% Last week: 94-95%
Natural origin steelhead	Current: 5% Last week: 5%	Current: 15-30% Last week: 20-35%	Current: 65-80% Last week: 60-75%

### 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 5/18/21. 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 5/18/21 for review by SaMT members with comments due COB Thursday, 5/20/21. The ITP Risk Assessment will be finalized by Friday, 5/21/21 and can be found at [CDFW’s Water Project Operations webpage](#).

A SaMT member suggested including consideration of the effects of lower riverine flows on the Sacramento River when considering routing risks into the Delta interior. The lower Sacramento River flows are not offsetting tidal influence at the junctions with Georgiana Slough and Threemile Slough, leading to an increased potential for diversion of fish into the Delta interior through these routes..

### Agenda Item 5. Additional Considerations/Other Topics

No additional considerations for WOMT were noted.

Reclamation and DWR submitted a temporary urgency change petition (TUCP) to the SWRCB on Monday 5/17/21 in light of extreme drought conditions. Proposed actions include the following:

- From 6/1 to 6/30/21: Reduce net delta outflow (NDOI) requirements for salinity control from 4,000 cfs to 3,000 cfs on a 14-day running average.
- From 7/1 to 7/31/21: Reduce NDOI requirements for salinity control from 4,000 cfs to 3,000 cfs on a monthly average.
- Cap the combined SWP and CVP exports at 1,500 cfs when Delta outflow is less than 4,000 cfs. SWP and CVP exports may exceed 1,500 cfs when Delta outflow meets D-1641 or for moving transfer water after 7/1/21.
- From 6/1-8/15/21: Relocate the Western Delta Agriculture compliance point from Emmaton to Threemile Slough.

Reclamation noted its request to begin collecting tissue samples from any adipose clipped Chinook salmon observed at the Tracy Fish Facility that do not have CWTs. Despite observation of several fish

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

meeting these criteria over the last several weeks, none were observed this past week, subsequent to the request. It is possible that some of the fish observed recently were marked by hand or used half tags. Elissa Buttermore will inquire and report back to SaMT with any details.

**Agenda Item 6.**

The next SaMT Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 5/25/21, at 9 a.m.