

Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) Weekly Meeting

Conference call: 10/26/2021 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. 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

USBR noted that a discrepancy between the Mill Creek mean daily flow number as reported on the California Data Exchange Center (CDEC) website versus on the SacPAS website is a matter of significant digits. USBR also noted that SacPAS just completed a transition from degrees Fahrenheit to degrees Celsius. NMFS noted that using the 15-min and hourly calculated flow data on CDEC for Mill Creek provided a different average daily value than observed on either CDEC or SacPAS websites for the daily average.

Agenda Item 2. Updates on Water Operations and Biological Conditions

Relevant Actions and Triggers

The DCC gates are currently closed due to high flows but are being monitored for possible weekend opening if conditions allow. See Outlook document for additional details and Proposed Action (PA) Assessment for DCC gate recommendations and potential impacts to salmonids. However, the PA Assessment erroneously indicates that the DCC gates were closed on October 25 to reduce straying of Mokelumne River fall run Chinook salmon attracted by lower river Mokelumne River flows. At the time the change order was submitted, the DCC gates were scheduled to be closed for Rio Vista requirement and salinity/seasonal weekend operations. A historically significant storm materialized, and the actual reason for the DCC gate closure was to reduce potential scouring and flooding that might occur in the channels on the downstream side of the gates consistent with the Proposed Action 4.10.5.3. DCC gates may be closed for up to 5 days within 48 hours of start of lower Mokelumne River (LMR) attraction flows to avoid straying of adult fall-run Chinook as described in the Proposed Action 4.10.5.3. There is no managed LMR attraction flow scheduled for this week.

Although, the closure of the DCC gates does provide fish protection benefits as described in the PA Assessment.

DWR noted that water quality is improving as a result of increased freshwater outflows but is still operating to electrical conductivity (EC) concerns. A request has been submitted by DWR to delay a planned herbicide application to Clifton Court Forebay (CCF) from 11/1/21 to 11/3/21 as a result of storm flows and the desire to capture more of these elevated flows in exports. The application will entail a temporary stoppage of Banks Pumping Plant likely lasting three days.

CDFW asked if exports at CCF might reach 6,000 cfs. DWR indicated yes, potentially higher, but the duration of elevated exports will depend on how quickly and to what degree the Sacramento River comes back down. Inflow to CCF may also be constrained by the Export to Inflow ratio (E:I) as Delta inflow declines.

Reclamation noted that the Stanislaus River is in the middle of its Fall Pulse Flow and as a result, flows are changing daily between 450 and 1,200 cfs until 11/5/21.

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) 10/26/21.

SaMT reviewed edits to the Related Environmental and Fish Conditions column of Table 1 as proposed by the American and Stanislaus Watershed Teams. DWR will reach out to a representative of the Feather River Watershed team to ensure incorporation of their feedback within Table 1.

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

NMFS asked if there have been any problems with debris impacting monitoring. USFWS indicated that it hasn't heard of any issues for its monitoring locations. Reclamation noted that GCID raised its rotary screw trap (RST) cones on 10/22/21 in anticipation of high flows. CDFW noted that the Knights Landing RST may be raising its cones today (10/26/21) due to high flows and debris making operations hazardous for the crew.

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: 97-99% Last week: 98-100%	Current: 1-3% Last week: 0-2%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%
YOY spring-run Chinook salmon	Current: NA Last week: NA	Current: NA Last week: NA	Current: NA Last week: NA

Location	Yet to Enter Delta	In the Delta	Exited the Delta
YOY hatchery winter-run Chinook salmon ¹	Current: NA Last week: NA	Current: NA Last week: NA	Current: NA Last week: NA
Natural origin steelhead	Current: 100% Last week: 100%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%	Current: 0% Last week: 0%

DWR asked if there is any means of making distribution estimates for yearling spring-run Chinook. CDFW indicated no; there are very few detections so it is difficult to make a distribution estimate.

Agenda Item 3. Open Discussion on Species Status

NMFS noted highly elevated flows in Deer and Mill creeks as well as other unregulated tributaries resulting from the recent storm event and cited the risk of toxic run-off from adjacent burn scars in multiple watersheds. NMFS asked SWRCB whether any action has been taken related to first flush events or listing of impaired waterways in conjunction with these burned areas. SWRCB was unaware of any action in that regard but will inquire internally and respond to SaMT as appropriate. NMFS noted that high turbid pulses resulting from the recent storm event may trigger fish to start moving.

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 10/26/21. The final assessment will be posted to [Reclamation's Salmon Monitoring Team](#) webpage.

ITP Risk Assessment

Ken Kundargi noted that CDFW will not produce an ITP Risk Assessment until the beginning of November. The ITP Risk Assessment's format will be refined from WY 2021 versions.

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, 11/2/21, at 9 a.m.

¹ Estimation of YOY hatchery winter-run Chinook Salmon distribution is complicated by multiple releases over a prolonged period of time.