

# Smelt Monitoring Team – Tuesday, June 29, 2021

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## Post-Season Meeting #1: OMR Guidance Document-Related Process Items

### PARTICIPANTS

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- California Department of Water Resources (DWR)
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
- State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Kearns & West (KW)

### ACTION ITEMS

- CDFW to complete and share document outlining the process and relevant contacts if ITP Conditions of Approval are triggered.
- USBR to review PA and identify any actions that might require off-cycle meeting or coordination among SMT members.
- USBR to share list of data sources with SMT.
  - SMT to review and add any additional data sources as well as note the relevant time of year and/or life stage when data sources are most useful for each species.
  - USBR to share updated list incorporating SMT feedback at beginning of next season.
- CDFW to circulate an outline of the current ITP Risk Assessment. SMT members to share feedback on which sections could be improved for next season.
- CDFW and DWR to form a subteam to develop a new structure for the ITP Risk Assessment discussion.
- USBR to ask management for direction on additional post-season SMT meeting(s).
- SMT members who attended the June 30<sup>th</sup> LTO group meeting to share outcomes and suggested next steps via email.

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### OMR Guidance Document Recommendations

SMT members recommend documenting the following processes in the OMR Guidance Document:

- Regarding the ITP Risk Assessment:
  - CDFW will lead the SMT in developing bullet points describing the key ideas to be incorporated into the ITP Risk Assessment.
  - CDFW will seek consensus on the executive summary as well as any advice to WOMT via live editing these sections of the ITP Risk Assessment.
  - SMT members will identify supporting data, references, and other pertinent information to support their assessments of low, medium, or high risk.
- Regarding information received outside of SMT meetings:

- SMT members will share data corrections or new data via email with a subject line highlighting the new information.
- SMT members will memorialize new or corrected data in the meeting notes as a post-meeting update.

## Request for Clarification from the LTO Group

SMT members noted that the current critically dry conditions could lead to low Fall Midwater Trawl Survey (FMWT) catches this autumn. SMT members requested clarification on the following:

- If the FMWT Index for Longfin Smelt (LFS) is zero, can the SMT conduct a risk assessment based on biotic and abiotic factors, per ITP Conditional of Approval 8.3.3 (Adult LFS Entrainment Protection)?

## Other Topics

### SMT Processes

- In their weekly review, SMT members will continue to identify any language carried over from previous ITP Risk Assessments that should be revisited by the group. SMT members will then discuss any flagged language at the next SMT meeting.
- CDFW started to develop a document that summarized each ITP Condition of Approval, how a condition could be triggered, and what steps should be taken if a trigger is met, including the appropriate points of contact. CDFW will revisit this document and share with the SMT.
  - USBR offered to review the PA and develop a similar document if responding to triggers from any PA actions would require off-cycle coordination of the SMT.
  - Both documents could be added to the OMR Guidance Document at a later date.
- SMT members discussed their process for reaching consensus. SMT members agreed that they define consensus as developing recommendations that the group is comfortable with and capturing any disagreement in the meeting notes, including any concerns that will be elevated to WOMT.

### Data Sources

- CDFW noted that the ITP provides the SMT with the flexibility to consider a broad range of data sources. Developing a conceptual model that identifies which data is most relevant at a given time of year or life stage for each species. CDFW encouraged SMT members to raise whatever data they believe to be relevant at SMT meetings.
  - DWR noted that some typically secondary data sources can become more important during years when data is limited overall, e.g., broodstock collection data was helpful this season due to a lack of detections in other surveys.
  - USBR will circulate a list of data sources they developed at the beginning of this season. SMT members can update this list with additional resources (e.g., broodstock collection, DWR's X2 tool, qualitative larval sampling) and indicate the time of year and/or life stage when data sources are most relevant for each species.
- SMT members shared suggestions for additional data sources that could be considered if the FMWT Index is zero in future seasons, including:
  - Environmental surrogates
  - Catch data from other surveys:
    - Bay Study
    - December Kodiak Trawl for Delta Smelt (DS)

- EDSM
- Estimates from life cycle model
- Occupancy modeling
  - Although FMWT does not do replicate sampling, USFWS indicated it may be possible to combine tows within a region to develop occupancy values by subregion.

## ITP Risk Assessment

- CDFW requested feedback on how to structure the ITP Risk Assessment discussion.
  - CDFW suggested developing a conceptual model or outline to help guide the conversation while still giving the SMT the flexibility to consider a broad range of relevant data.
  - CDFW offered to form a subteam to work on developing a structure for the ITP Risk Assessment discussion over the summer. DWR agreed to participate.
- CDFW also requested feedback on how to improve the ITP Risk Assessment, e.g., which sections could be streamlined, removed, or expanded.
  - If the outline of the ITP Risk Assessment is revised during the off-season, and updated version can be incorporated into the OMR Guidance Document prior to next season.
- SMT members discussed external users of the Risk Assessment and meeting notes and how to make these documents more helpful to those outside the SMT.
  - CDFW recommended asking the Delta Monitoring Workgroup for input.
- SMT members discussed developing definitions for high, medium, and low risk.
  - CDFW suggested low risk could indicate a near-zero probability of entrainment in the near-term; high risk could indicate entrainment is imminent or continued entrainment is imminent; medium risk could indicate entrainment is likely or conditions will set up entrainment in the near future.
  - SWRCB emphasized the importance of ensuring any definitions preserve the SMT's ability to make professional judgements based on the best available information.
  - CDFW agreed that maintaining flexibility was useful.
  - USFWS pointed out that it is also important to consider cumulative risk, e.g., two weeks of medium risk can develop into a high-risk scenario.
  - DWR recommended developing definitions that would be consistent both within and across seasons.
  - CDFW suggested staying away from numerical definitions of risk, as this does not provide the flexibility needed to assess risk as populations fluctuate. Instead, the SMT should provide supporting data to put their risk assessments in context.
  - DWR noted that new tools may be in development that could shift how the SMT interprets risk in the future; this is another reason to avoid developing numerical definitions at present.
  - USFWS supported the continued use of language such as, "current OMRI levels are sufficiently protective".

## Topics for Future Meetings

Prior to the meeting, SMT members provided feedback on how to prioritize the additional post-season topics listed below. The group discussed potential next steps for addressing these topics.

- USFWS encouraged the SMT to further discuss these topics to assess what would be feasible without approval from other groups (e.g., the LTO group). USFWS also noted that a topic should not necessarily be considered low priority because it requires external approval.

- USBR suggested that the topics related to on-ramping OMR management might need to be elevated to the LTO to address in the Guidance Document.
  - CDFW noted that the ITP includes language that empowers the SMT to discuss these topics internally and direction from the LTO group is not needed.
- USFWS encouraged the SMT to first develop recommendations for any items that might need to be elevated to the LTO group; this will help the LTO group provide a more informed response.
- USBR will clarify with their management whether the SMT can hold additional post-season meeting(s).
- The SMT leads will present an initial list of topics for consideration to the LTO group at a meeting on June 30<sup>th</sup>.
  - SMT members who attend the June 30<sup>th</sup> meeting will report back on outcomes and next steps.
  - The SMT has time reserved for an additional post-season meeting on July 6<sup>th</sup>; the group will determine whether or not to use this time based on feedback from the LTO group.
- USFWS noted that they circulated a document outlining preliminary considerations for revisiting the temperature off-ramp criteria for DS with the SMT on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. USFWS is still interested in receiving feedback from SMT members on this document.
  - CDFW agreed the SMT should further discuss this topic, but noted that revising the temperature off-ramp for DS would require amending the existing ITP and PA language. This would require elevation above the LTO group.

If the SMT is directed to meet again on July 6, the group will review the following topics to confirm which items can be addressed internally by the SMT and which, with additional context, should be shared with the LTO group.

### **Additional SMT (Non-Guidance Document) Process Items**

- a. Add San Luis Reservoir levels to the outlook.
- b. Develop criteria and/or decision-making frameworks, including conceptual models, to help make decisions more repeatable, particularly related to:
  - i. On-ramping of OMR management -- Especially in response to no first flush trigger/drought conditions
  - ii. Interpretation of PTM runs
  - iii. Initiation of OMR management for adult LFS protection
- c. Standardize data distribution across all surveys
- d. Consider whether PTM runs or other tools could inform Barker Slough advice.
- e. Should shorter tow durations be considered when calculating average catch per tow?
- f. Can the SMT use information from reaching triggers to inform risk to young of year fish?

### **Items that likely need to be elevated to LTO Group, potentially with a recommendation from the SMT**

- a. Consider using SLS to monitor the smaller Delta Smelt larvae in case these stages are better sampled than using the 20-mm Survey in March.
- b. Timing and purpose of qualitative larval sampling.
- c. Reconsider the method for determining the salvage trigger for DS.
- d. Reconsider the temperature off-ramp for OMR management.

### **Proposed Studies & Data analysis**

- a. Explore if OMR management can have a positive effect on adult distribution and reduce later young of year entrainment and salvage.

- b. Determine what would be a meaningful site-specific change in catch (i.e., could increases of one or two individuals at a single station be the result of random sampling variability, tow time, etc.).
- c. QWEST investigations:
  - i. Explore how QWEST effects salvage and distribution.
  - ii. Explore the role of OMRI and QWEST in the initial distribution of fish using the first year of December SLS data.
- d. Analyze DJFMP data to better understand movement of LFS past Chipps Island and into the south Delta.
- e. Explore the relationship between larval distribution and X2 during spawning/adult migration.
- f. Develop a web tool using historical data to help identify patterns in DS life history in the absence of DS detections.
  - i. Also incorporate abiotic surrogates for distribution.
- g. Ground truth the DWR X2 tool.
  - i. Integrate tool onto webpage.