

Smelt Monitoring Team – Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Participants

- CDFW
- DWR
- NMFS
- SWRCB
- USBR
- USFWS
- Kearns & West

Actions Items

- USBR to inquire if there are plans to include San Luis Reservoir in the operations outlook later this year.
- SMT members to provide feedback on SMT data sources to USBR by COB Friday (November 20th).

Meeting Summary

1. Agenda Review, Logistics, & Housekeeping

The facilitator reviewed the agenda and noted the group would skip the Barker Slough item until January 12th per CDFW's request at the previous meeting. CDFW reminded the group that the updated OMR guidance document should be finalized during the November 19th LTO meeting.

2. Relevant Actions & Triggers

USBR stated that there are currently no relevant actions or triggers for Delta Smelt. The First Flush Protective Measure will be activated at the onset of OMR management on December 1st.

CDFW noted that although most condition of approvals pertaining directly to OMR management described in the ITP also begin on December 1st, Condition of Approval 8.1.5.2 is currently in effect and requires weekly risk assessments be conducted for Delta Smelt and Longfin Smelt.

3. Current Operations & Outlook

USBR and DWR shared operations updates from the Outlook.

- USBR CVO noted that operators are looking for opportunities to reduce releases from Shasta reservoir to the Sacramento River and conserve storage when possible.
- CVO stated that precipitation from this week's storm event is not anticipated to generate much response in the river systems, as the watershed catchment basins are currently dry and should absorb any anticipated rainfall.
- The Delta cross-channel gates were closed Monday (November 16th) and will remain closed through the upcoming weekend. There may be another opening cycle the weekend following Thanksgiving.

- DWR noted that the Grant Line Canal barrier was breached on November 11th. The OMR Index equation changed accordingly that day to use different variables associated with the barrier status.
- The facilitator asked if there was any follow up needed on the action item from last week's meeting regarding potential release of excess aquatic vegetation with the removal of South Delta agricultural barriers. DWR and USBR indicated they had not heard of any concerns from the export facility operators.

4. Review of Environmental Conditions and Survey Updates

CDFW shared survey updates.

- Last week, no Delta Smelt or Longfin Smelt were captured in the FMWT; however during the first week of November seven Longfin Smelt were caught. Today (November 17th) is the last day of the November FMWT survey.
- Zero Delta Smelt and 42 Longfin Smelt (one in Suisun Bay; 41 downstream of the Carquinez Strait) were detected in the November Bay Study survey.

USFWS reported on EDSM.

- One Delta Smelt was caught in the Suisun Marsh stratum on November 9th. The abundance estimate for the week of November 9 to November 13 was 1,249 with a 95% confidence interval of 173 to 4,516. Today (November 17th), data available during the call reflected one Longfin Smelt was captured in Suisun Slough (83 mm, no sign of expression). After the call finished, 2 more Longfin Smelt were caught in Suisun Marsh by EDSM. This made for a total of 3 LFS caught in Suisun Marsh (Site 21-17-SM04 which is in Suisun Slough). They ranged from 67 to 83 mm, and none showed signs of expression.
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CDFW provided a salvage update (November 9th to 15th).

- No salvage of Delta Smelt or Longfin Smelt to report.
- There were no power outages or stoppage in pumping during this period.
- There were no reported reduced counts at either fish salvage facility.

USBR shared water quality data (three-station average daily water temperature as of November 16th was 13.1°C), the seven-day weather forecast for Antioch (rain today and tomorrow, then partly cloudy to sunny the rest of the week with light winds), and the X2 calculator (X2 estimated at approximately 92.5 km on November 16th).

DWR asked if there were plans to include San Luis Reservoir status in the operations outlook later in the season. USBR indicated they were not aware of any planned changes to the outlook, but would follow up to confirm.

5. Risk Assessment Questions for Weekly Evaluation of Delta Smelt

SMT members agreed that the answers to the risk assessment questions from last week are still appropriate given that none of the triggers or actions are relevant until December 1st.

USBR noted that the risk assessment questions will likely change once the updated OMR guidance document is finalized.

6. Executive Summary for Assessment

USBR proposed deleting the reference to a Delta Smelt caught last week because that data is reflected in the full assessment and is no longer new information for this week's updates and asked for other suggested edits to the executive summary language.

- USFWS agreed to remove the reference to the Delta Smelt captured last week and suggested adding a caveat about a small storm system moving through the region.
- The group agreed to revise the last sentence to, *"While a storm system is expected in the beginning of this week, first flush conditions are not anticipated to occur within the next seven days."*
- CDFW suggested deleting "that" from the first sentence.

7. ITP Longfin Smelt Risk Assessment

CDFW noted they would incorporate the edits from the executive summary into the ITP risk assessment for Delta Smelt. CDFW intends to acknowledge the broad range of potential OMR levels reported this week, but will categorize the risk of entrainment as low across all potential ranges of OMR discussed. Given there is still no evidence that Longfin Smelt are moving past Chipps Island, CDFW will carry over the risk assessment from last week with updated catch numbers.

- USFWS agreed with this categorization of risk.
- USFWS asked how far upstream Longfin Smelt have been reported so far this year. CDFW stated that seven Longfin Smelt were detected by the FMWT in November, with the farthest upstream found in Suisun Bay. The Bay Study found most Longfin Smelt downstream of Carquinez Strait. The Longfin Smelt captured today by the EDSM in Suisun Slough is the farthest upstream Longfin Smelt have been reported so far this season.

8. Additional Considerations/Discussion

- USBR reminded the group to share comments on the spreadsheet of SMT data sources by Friday (November 20th).
- Agencies reported no additional items for WOMT. USFWS, NMFS, and CDFW do not plan to elevate any items to WOMT.