

Upper Sacramento Scheduling Team

Fall Flow Reduction Coordination

Tuesday, August 18, 2020 | 10:00 am – 11:00 am

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants

Reclamation	Elissa Buttermore, Josh Israel, Ben Nelson, Tom Patton, Janice Pinero
USFWS	Matt Brown, Jim Earley
NMFS	Flora Cordoleani, Stephen Maurano, Cyril Michael, Garwin Yip
CDFW	Matt Johnson, Ken Kundargi,
DWR	Brett Harvey, Kevin Reece
SRSC	Roger Cornwell, Anne Williams (MBK)
Kearns & West	Terra Alpaugh, Julie Leimbach

Action Items

- KW to update “interests” document based on USST discussion. [DONE]
- USBR to provide additional information on Term 91:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/term_91/.
[DONE]
- CDFW to confirm with management whether there are preliminary escapement estimates in mid-September that USST can use to assess population size for take purposes.
- USST members to provide feedback on spreadsheet flow planning tool.

Key Discussion Topics with Summary of Perspectives, Outcomes, and Agreements

Meeting Objectives

1. Confirm agreement on USST schedule
2. Review past objectives and refine for this year
3. Share USBR’s initial flow proposal for discussion
4. Provide update on fishery conditions and current operations

Update summary of 2019 interests to establish 2020 interests

KW provided a list of stakeholder interests that were identified as driving the 2019 fall flow coordination process and asked participants to share refinements or additions.

Perspectives shared by USST members included:

- NMFS pointed out that in 2019 the group did not establish a limit on the incidental take of redds as stated in Salmon Interest #6, “limit incidental take of salmon to less than 1% of redds.” Instead, they made a qualitative judgement about what level of take was acceptable when balanced with the other interests. For instance, there are inherent tradeoffs between protecting redds of different runs. The current #6 does not specify if it is referring to a specific run or the total population.
- CDFW noted that last year they did not have enough information on Agricultural Interest #1, “predictability of water deliveries for rice decomposition.” The group should have more information

on the magnitude and timing of demand for water by the contractors in order to better synchronize and optimize their decisions about flows.

- SRSC requested to add two agricultural interests: ensuring water deliveries for Pacific Flyway needs and for the fish foodweb.
- Parties identified the importance of knowing whether Term 91 would be enacted by the SWRCB on November 1. Under Term 91, which is generally applied in drier years, SRSC cannot access contract water after Nov 1. Instead, they divert under winter water rights permits which have different conditions. SRSC explained that under dry conditions, they usually assume Term 91 will be in place and call for all their contract water deliveries in October; when there is more certainty that Term 91 will be not enforced, SRSC can extend their diversions over a longer period of time, making them able to more flexibly accommodate different flow alternatives.
 - USBR noted that SWRCB coordinates with USBR to assess river and Delta conditions that influence whether to enact Term 91 conditions. The SWRCB website provides a descriptions of Term 91 curtailment conditions:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/term_91/
- NMFS noted that in 2019 coordinating fall flows in an attempt to provide USBR with reduced flows and also protect listed species was a pilot project. They did not yet know whether a focus on redd dewatering would be part of the BiOp. Now in 2020, this effort is formalized as a proposed action and allowed for in the NMFS incidental take statement.

Fisheries Monitoring Update

For future meetings, CDFW will be providing written monitoring updates in advance of the meetings. At this meeting, they reported that they are still seeing a relatively high number of winter run redds being constructed. In the 7/30 aerial survey, they identified 51 redds and on the 8/1 flight they saw 20 additional new redds. This means that there will be winter run in the gravel throughout the temperature management season through the end of October. Given the flow reductions occurring now, there is at least one redd in less than 10 inches of water, which they will be monitoring along with its estimated emergence timing.

Perspectives and questions shared by USST members included:

- USFWS asked whether the 1% take standard is based only on shallow water redds or the full population and whether monitoring is robust enough to provide that estimate. CDFW noted that last year they were not planning based on that standard, but that the four to five redds that were dewatered would have been much less than 1% of the population but a much higher proportion of the shallow water redds. USBR explained that 1% is now the regulatory threshold; to exceed that number would put USBR above their allowed take. NMFS noted that the NMFS BiOp appears to be referring to 1% of all the redds, not just shallow ones. CDFW stated that due to the physical limitations of the aerial surveys, their redd count will never be an accurate gauge of the total number of redds; the best metric is the number of females spawning in the river, derived from the carcass survey. CDFW has preliminary carcass survey numbers in mid-September but they generally do not finalize the escapement estimate until mid-November. CDFW will check with management to determine whether the group could use the preliminary September numbers to guide their planning.

Operations Update

USBR reviewed the 90 and 50 percent exceedance forecasts, which are relatively similar at this time of year, and walked through the spreadsheet tool they have used in past years to evaluate alternative flow plans. They asked for feedback on the tool and whether participants liked that approach or would prefer to change it.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, August 25, 2019 at 10:00 am.