

## Upper Sacramento Scheduling Team

Fall Flow Reduction Coordination

Tuesday, August 25, 2020 | 10:00 am – 11:00 am

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### Participants

Reclamation	Elissa Buttermore, Josh Israel, Ben Nelson, Tom Patton, Janice Pinero, Randi Field, Natalie Wolder
USFWS	Matt Brown, Jim Earley
NMFS	Flora Cordoleani, Stephen Maurano, Cyril Michel, Garwin Yip
CDFW	Matt Johnson, Ken Kundargi
DWR	Brett Harvey, Kevin Reece, Mike Ford
SRSC	Roger Cornwell, Anne Williams (MBK), Thad Bettner
SWRCB	Erik Ekdahl, Diane Riddle
Kearns & West	Erin Bothwell, Julie Leimbach

#### Action Items

- NMFS, CDFW, USFWS – convene to discuss the 1% take and how to minimize even below that.
- Thad Bettner - provide Alternative 2 Flow Schedule
- Julie - consult with Reclamation on schedule next meeting to be an hour and a half long for deliberations over alternatives
- Diane Riddle - see if the proposed shift of water demands from Oct to Nov. could change when the Board declares Term 91 and/or impacts on other water users.
- Matt Johnson - confirm with CDFW if they are okay with using draft late-Sept estimates of females to estimate take.
- Julie – explore updating the Alternatives Spreadsheet to reflect the objectives at different time periods.

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

##### *Meeting Objectives*

1. Provide update on fishery conditions and current operations
2. Outline a range of flow proposals for discussion
3. Agree on next steps and key information needed to inform preferred alternative

##### *Fishery Monitoring Update*

- Estimated emergence date is based on current water temperatures with the assumption the water temperatures are in a steady state. Estimated emergence is expected to shorten in warmer temperatures, assuming no more mortality issues. The emergence timing for shallow redds is estimated for October, with a theoretical change occurring in September.

- The carcass survey showed 3,360 carcasses have been handled (compared to 2,994 last year). Visibility is good this year and the carcass group have been successful in locating and retrieving carcasses.
- CDFW has not been able to obtain a complete count of redds in the river and may use the number of females spawning as an estimate for the number of redds. Late September would be the earliest a draft estimate of the number of females spawning would be available.
- The peak spawning time for fall-run Chinook is estimated for the second and third week of October. A fairly low base flow will ease to minimal flow in late November with impacts on fall redds minimized. October is a critical month for fall-run Chinook redd construction.

### ***Operations Update***

- The 90-50 exceedance comes out monthly and the long-term forecast has not changed since last week's update. The new monthly forecast will be available in early September.
- Current operations are releasing 8,500 CFS today. Reductions are scheduled and depletions in the system are easing off as the Shasta releases are ramping down.

### ***Discuss Proposals for Range of Alternative Operations***

Tom Patton reviewed the Alternative Flow Schedule Worksheet components and updates:

- Alternative Two is a copy of alternative one that people can change the numbers in and play with the effects.
- Current depletion numbers include estimated diversions by settlement contractors. In drier years like this one, Reclamation diverts as much contract water as possible in October.
- Request for updating the Spreadsheet of Alternatives with objectives at different time periods.

Ann Williams, MBK and Thad Bettner reviewed elements of a proposed alternative flow schedule including:

- Alternative to shift demand from October into November. Move 1,000 cfs from mid-late October to distribute through November.
- Need to balance water for fall-run Chinook and winter-run Chinook with water for non-fishery species including bird and refuge habitat.

The group discussed the proposal:

- Fisheries agencies expressed an interest in exploring a strategy for diversions to be increased in August and September rather than increasing in November since flows at Wilkins Slough are seasonally higher now.
  - SRSC explained that a lot of this current water diversions will go to rice decomposition from week of Aug. 31- to week of Sept. 14) Growers will use more water - the bulk of the water diversions – when the harvest is done, which will be late September. Water diversions can serve other uses right now such as habitat land, bird habitat.
- Potentially deeper, higher flows in September to protect winter run redds, with low flows in December.
  - Shifting the water users diversions earlier would be beneficial for covering winter-run shallow redds in September and decrease flows in November when they are trying to get the flows to be as close to the winter base flows as possible to avoid dewatering

- fall-run spawning in the transition to winter base flows.
  - From the perspective of protecting fall-run Chinook, it would be beneficial to move diversions out into November if it means flows are 500 cfs lower in Oct.
- If Keswick releases are reduced on August 27 that will likely dewater 6-7 winter-run redds. Redd depth is changed when we see those flow drops and the related effects on depth and position of the remaining redds.
- SRSC can live with a 10% change in moving demand earlier when the growers would have more access to water and more flexibility for when they divert. However, the growers divert most of the water after harvest which is delayed this year due to smoke from fires. Water cannot be used until after the bulk of the rice harvest is done (likely by the third week of September). Smoke from fires slows down crops' maturity and has pushed back harvest 1-2 weeks.
- Moving water diversions from October to November may change or impact State Board Term 91.
- SRSC outlined the following alternative flows for a subsequent alternative flow schedule for the group to consider:
  - Sept. 6,000 - 7,500 cfs
  - Oct. 5,000 cfs
  - Nov. 4,000 cfs
  - Dec. 3,250 cfs

Group members requested and discussed the following information:

- Order of magnitude of flow changes to inform the target of less than 1% take of winter-run redds.
  - Request for more information from growers' needed diversion magnitudes and timing.
  - What are the lowest flows the growers could tolerate in November?
- Flexibility of flow requirements for Delta Outflows
  - If Reclamation can meet the min. flow target of 4,000 cfs at Wilkins Slough, then they can meet their other Delta outflow goals.
  - Upstream, there is quite a bit of flexibility for Keswick flow releases.
  - SRSC facilities are designed for 5,000 cfs but they can go down to 4,000 cfs. That is a hardline minimum flow for those facilities.
- Effects on Term 91 of moving water diversions from Oct – Nov and effects on other water users.

#### Implementation and Communications

- SRSC would need to start messaging the new fall flow schedule in 2 weeks by Sept 7.
- SRSC would start pro-rating and capping diversions on everyone (30 diverters). For each district, SRSC will need to talk to the growers to pro-rate capacity to each district of growers.
- SRSC offered transparency to USST on their detailed diversion schedule.

#### *Next Meeting*

Tuesday, September 1, 2020 at 10:00 – 11:00 am.