

Upper Sacramento Scheduling Team

Flow Smoothing Coordination

Wednesday, September 1, 2021 | 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants

Agency	Attendees
CDFW	Crystal Rigby, Doug Killam, Ken Kundargi, Lauren McNabb, Mike Harris, Sheena Holley, Vanessa Kollmar
DWR	Kevin Reece, Mike Ford
Kearns & West	Alyson Scurlock, Julie Leimbach, Terra Alpaugh
NMFS	Garwin Yip, James Gilbert, Stephen Maurano
Reclamation	Elissa Buttermore, Mike Wright, Raymond Bark, Suzanne Manugian, Tom Patton
SWRCB	Craig Williams, Jeff Laird, Matt Holland, Michael Macon
SRSC	Lewis Bair, Mike Deas, Wes Walker
USFWS	Bill Poytress, Curtis McCasland, Craig Anderson, Craig Isola, Jim Early, Matt Brown

Action Items

- Reclamation to update Keswick daily flows in the flow spreadsheet with the volumes required to account for an estimated 200 TAF of water transfers; create new Alternative H for fisheries agencies to respond to.
- Reclamation to generate new fall-run Chinook salmon dewatering estimates for the flow Alternatives, including new Alternative H.

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

Meeting Objectives

1. Shared understanding of interests and external conditions for scheduling flow transitions
2. Collaboratively develop flow smoothing and reduction Alternatives as a means to support salmon recovery
3. Strive for Alternatives that enjoy broad support from USST members
4. Test of support for real-time and planned flow schedules

Fishery Update on Redds Dewatered

CDFW provided the fishery monitoring update on redds dewatered.

- 2 of the 64 remaining shallow redds that CDFW is tracking were top dewatered at 6,800 cfs.
- Since flow drops are occurring less frequently, CDFW's shallow redd/stranding team has shifted their focus to the stranding surveys.
 - CDFW has rescued 4 winter-run Chinook salmon out of stranding pools, and they are actively checking other sites.

- Stranding information will be integrated into the 2021 Winter-run Chinook Update File on CalFish.

Objectives, Constraints, and Preferred Flow Alternatives/Rationale

The group discussed the following objectives, constraints, and preferences for the flow Alternatives.

Objectives

1. Low stable flows for fall-run Chinook salmon spawning.
 - During a good year, fall-run Chinook salmon spawning is only about 20% in November. In 2014, about 90% of fall-run Chinook salmon spawned by November 1.

Constraints

1. Higher October-December flows required for downstream needs beyond what was previously realized.
2. Increased water transfer volume estimates.
 - Reclamation received revised water transfer numbers; official numbers will not be received until later in the season. An estimated 200 TAF of transfer water needs to be moved by the end of the year.
 - Water transfer volumes were proposed at 150 TAF in April and estimated at a conservative 170 TAF in initial July modeling. Water users were urged to do water transfers/fallow their land; water transfer volumes ended up being more than modeled.
3. Timing of water transfers stated by Reclamation:
 - Re-consideration for water transfers to happen in December to provide more steady flow over longer period since not characterized as true transfer water.
 - Water transfers later in December cause more water to be pumped in the Delta which leads to more fisheries issues.
 - Water cannot be moved during the spring of 2022; the transfer water belongs to the buyers, and they need the water this fall. Delaying water transfers to next year would cause the buyers to put millions of dollars at risk because they could lose some of the water they purchased due to runoff and spill.
 - There are a lot of constraints in Delta exports during the springtime for winter-run Chinook salmon and steelhead.
4. Low carryover storage for Water Year 2022.
 - If 200 TAF of transfer water is moved after 9/30/21, storage might be closer to 750 TAF depending on how the water transfers are shaped.
5. Uncertain water temperatures during the fall period.
 - Very difficult to recommend flows in November timeframe due to uncertain water temperatures.

Flow Alternatives and Rationale

- Alternative G
 - Hold flows at 6,800 cfs longer and drop to 3,250 cfs immediately in mid-October.
 - Rationale:

- Get transfer water through and stabilize flows for fall-run Chinook salmon spawning.
- Alternatives A-G
 - Discussion:
 - Earlier flow Alternatives may not be viable anymore due to updated water transfer volumes; need guidance on what flows are required in October and November to plan recommendations around.
- Alternative H
 - Reclamation will develop a flow Alternative H that takes into account higher water transfer volumes (200 TAF).
- Consideration for November Pulse Flow
 - If water transfers occur in mid- to late-November, idea to implement pulse flow instead of increased base flow to help move fish downstream.
 - Concerns about November pulse flow. Did smaller pulse flow in October 2019 and saw more fry were flushed downstream into potentially adverse habitat.
 - Concerns about pulse flow impact on fall-run Chinook salmon spawning, stranding, and dewatering.

Recommendations

Formal recommendations were not solicited at this meeting. The USST will reassess the flow Alternatives once Alternative H and subsequent proposed Alternatives are developed.

- NMFS - There is not a lot of fisheries input that is actionable right now given the October-December constraints and the total release volumes set by Reclamation. If flows are held at 6,800 cfs and dropped to 5,000 cfs for the rest of the year, it will be detrimental for fall water temperatures, fall-run Chinook salmon spawning, and carryover storage for next year.
- DWR - Preference for keeping flows higher slightly longer if there is coldwater pool volume available to minimize winter-run redd dewatering.
- SWRCB - Outlook for fisheries for any Alternative is grim.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 8, 9:00-10:00 a.m.