



# Water Operations Management Team Notes

Water Year 2025 – November 20, 2024

## Members Attending

- Reclamation: Elizabeth Kiteck
- USFWS: Jana Affonso
- CDFW: Kristal Davis-Fadtke
- NMFS: Not Available
- DWR: Tracy Hinojosa
- SWRCB: Craig Williams (Acting)

## Topics/Actions

- Approval of Meeting Notes from last week: Approved
- Upcoming Meetings
  - Salmonid Monitoring Team (meets weekly on Tuesdays): 11/26
  - Smelt Monitoring Team (meets weekly on Tuesdays): 11/26
  - Feather River Operations Group (meets monthly first and third Thursdays): 11/21
  - American River Group (meets monthly on third Thursday, and as needed): 11/21
  - Stanislaus River Watershed Team (meets monthly on third Wednesday): 12/18
  - Clear Creek Technical Team (meets quarterly on third Thursday): 12/12
  - Sacramento River Temperature Task Group (meets monthly on fourth Thursday): 11/21; USST (as needed): met on, 10/08
  - Shasta Planning Group (as needed): met on, 10/08
- Relevant Assessments
  - Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook 11/19/24 – 11/25/24
  - 20241119 Proposed Action Assessment
- Operational Updates

- CVP: Trinity River release is 300 cfs. Clear Creek (Whiskeytown Dam) release is 200 cfs. Sacramento River (Keswick) release is 4,000 cfs. American River (Nimbus) release is 2,000 cfs. Stanislaus River (Goodwin) release is 200 cfs. Reclamation's Delta export is currently 4 units and will be increasing to 5 units on Friday in anticipation of storm runoff to the Delta. Federal share of San Luis Reservoir is 356 TAF. Delta Cross Channel Gates scheduled to open on Friday but may be kept closed for the anticipated increase in flow from the Delta, which will be decided tomorrow.
- SWP: Feather River (Oroville-Thermalito Complex) releases are at 1,750 cfs. Clifton Court Forebay exports are at 1,500 cfs but will be increasing to 6,680 cfs over the next few days as storm flows reach the Delta. State share of San Luis Reservoir is 697 TAF.
- Hydrology Update (DWR and Reclamation)
  - Strong atmospheric weather is coming in northern part of state, with some precipitation in the southern part of the state this week. Anticipating reasonably high runoff in the coming days.

## Upcoming Actions, Updates, and Discussion Items

- Reclamation:
  - No upcoming actions, updates, or discussion items.
- USFWS:
  - No upcoming actions, updates, or discussion items.
- CDFW:
  - No upcoming actions or updates.
  - SaMT Discussion on Surrogate Releases
- NMFS:
  - No upcoming actions, updates, or discussion items.
- DWR:
  - No upcoming actions, updates, or discussion items.
- SWRCB:
  - No upcoming actions, updates, or discussion items.

### Discussion Items

- SaMT Discussion on Surrogate Releases
  - CDFW: SaMT made a recommendation to use a release group of late-fall-run Chinook Salmon from Coleman National Fish Hatchery that will be released today

as the first yearling spring-run surrogate group rather than one discussed previously. CDFW is looking for approval from WOMT to make formal decision on release group, as described in the 2024 SWP Incidental Take Permit (ITP) Condition of Approval 8.4.5..

- DWR: Acknowledged that this is a new process from the 2020 permit, but recognizes there is no formal Biological Opinion or ROD that have been released that requires WOMT approval on the Federal side. DWR has been informed by the technical lead in SaMT on the proposal and could weigh in on merits of proposal but is unable to make a decision in WOMT.
- CDFW: This discussion was presented to WOMT as it may trigger a change in operations. Depending on timing, CDFW believes it could be helpful if there is an agreement in WOMT on the use of the surrogate group. The surrogate release does contribute to a cumulative loss threshold for salvage at the SWP and CVP facilities. This may be a discussion item again later in the season when a trigger would be met, and the new Biological Opinion and ROD are in effect.
- DWR: What recommendation was presented by the technical team in SaMT that CDFW could provide?
  - CDFW: SaMT discussed the proposed yearling Spring-run Surrogate Release Schedule from Coleman National Fish Hatchery (all are late-fall-run Chinook Salmon, 100% coded wire tagged (CWT) and marked):
    - **Production Release:** Releasing ~700,000 fish on Wednesday, Nov 20
    - **1st surrogate release:** Releasing ~67,000 - 74,000 fish about 3 days after the production release, regardless of precipitation events (around Nov 25)
    - **2nd surrogate release:** Releasing ~67,000 - 74,000 fish in Late December, ideally preceding (by ~3-7 days) a precipitation event and at least a week after the previous surrogate release.
    - **3rd surrogate release:** Releasing ~67,000 - 74,000 fish in Mid-January, ideally preceding (by ~3-7 days) a precipitation event and at least a week after the previous surrogate release.
  - CDFW: Acknowledges the tight turnaround for a decision since the first release group is today. Both production and surrogate releases will be 100% CWT which likely allows more recaptures and data. This will allow for a better understanding as these fish move through the system. The idea of replacing the first surrogate release group that was planned with the production release group will potentially improve SaMT's data collection both with numbers and also with timing of releasing it ahead of this week's storm. This would give the surrogates a day to acclimate

before flows come up and a couple more days in the river. SaMT members were in agreement with this proposal.

- DWR: Are surrogates part of any triggers for operational criteria? If so, are they based on percentage of raw number of take?
  - CDFW: If there is more than 0.25% of a release group in salvage, it triggers an OMR of 3,500 cfs for 7 consecutive days per the ITP, which is consistent with the Proposed Action that was jointly developed under LTO and is currently being evaluated in the NMFS Biological Opinion.
- CDFW: Acknowledges that since the Biological Opinion has not been issued by NMFS, the surrogate discussion could remain between CDFW and DWR for resolution. This discussion was brought for WOMT's awareness in case there is a trigger later in the season based on this release group.
- DWR: DWR is confirming that the proposal that DWR and CDFW will make a decision on is regarding what those release groups are, which CDFW agrees. DWR also confirms that the release group would apply towards a salvage trigger on the CVP side as well, which CDFW also agrees to.
  - USFWS/Reclamation/SWRCB: Voted in support that the appropriate path forward is for CDFW and DWR to discuss together for resolution.
- Voting to Approve Proposed Surrogate Plan from SaMT, using the first Production release of late-fall-run Chinook Salmon from Coleman National Fish Hatchery as the first surrogate release group:
  - CDFW: CDFW supports recommendation to use release group today as the first surrogate for that condition of approval.
  - DWR: DWR confirms approval of recommendation based on the feedback from technical representative on SaMT.
  - USFWS and Reclamation: Abstained.
- SaMT/SMT Holiday Meetings
  - CDFW/DWR/Reclamation/SWRCB/USFWS: Voted in support of moving SaMT/SMT meetings that fall on holidays.
    - Decision on when to move it to will be left with SaMT/SMT representatives. WOMT facilitator provided this update to K&W.
- WOMT Holiday Meetings
  - Meeting will be kept on calendar, but WOMT facilitator will reach out week of to see if a meeting will be held or if an email will be sufficient.
    - CDFW/DWR/Reclamation/USFWS: Voted in support of this path forward for the holiday schedule.
- Action Items

- No action items.
- Elevation Items
  - No elevation items.

#### **Next Meeting**

- Wednesday, December 04, 2024, 1-1:50 p.m.