



Delta Monitoring Workgroup

Meeting Record 01/16/2024

Working Group Members in Attendance

- USBR: Elissa Buttermore, Randi Field, Nick Bertrand, Alex Jensen, Chase Ehlo, Erika Kegel, Brian Mahardja, Cat Pien
- USFWS: Not in attendance
- NMFS: Not in attendance
- CDFW: Erica Meyers
- DWR: Mike Ford, Brian Schreier, Nicole Kwan, Farida Islam, Kevin Reece
- SWRCB: Not in attendance
- Water Contractors: Shawn Acuña (MWD,) Chandra Chilmakuri (SWC), Darcy Austin (SWC), Ian Buck-MacLeod (FWA)

Review Operations Outlook (USBR, DWR)

- Releases from Goodwin Dam on the Stanislaus River continue at 1,000 cfs for flood management. These elevated releases are anticipated for the rest of the week.
- Salinity conditions are currently favorable in the Delta.
- Under condition 8.4.2 of the ITP, DWR was notified of the need for OMR protection for Longfin Smelt on January 11 (based on data collected from January 10). The corresponding export adjustment was implemented on January 14. The ITP condition restricted the State's share of OMRI to -3,500 on a 7-day average as recommended by the SMT; this is not binding for the CVP. The SWP will maintain there until the recommendation changes. This recommendation will be reviewed again next week.
- A first flush action could be triggered during the week of January 21, 2024, depending on the severity of storms this weekend.
- Refer to the Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook for more information.

Additional Questions or Comments

- Question: Do you know what QWEST is?
 - Answer: QWEST is approximately +1,500 cfs today and will hover near there for the next couple of days.

Review PA Assessment (USBR)

Reclamation noted that in the last week it has had continued discussions to determine its changes to operations in response to ITP amendments. As of December 29, 2023, the court extended the 2023 Interim Operations Plan through March 21, 2024. The court's ruling does not include the lengths outlined in the ITP for winter run daily loss (8.6.3). Subsequently, Reclamation will continue to operate to the 2023 ITP extension which does not include this latest amendment. The 2023 ITP extension does include an amendment that took place in Water Year 2023 for genetic identification of winter-run. In response, Reclamation will be operating to a January threshold for daily loss of 14.91 which is calculated from the final JPE issued during the week of January 7, 2024. That is the daily winter-run loss threshold that Reclamation will use to determine if it needs to trigger an action under 8.6.3.

Reclamation then provided the PA Assessment update. For more information, please refer to the PA Assessment document.

Additional Questions or Comments

- Question: To confirm, there was a court order issued on December 29, 2023, to continue operating to 2023 IOP?
 - Answer: Yes, that interim operations extension did not include the latest amendment to the ITP that was done in the last month.
- Question: What is DWR's threshold for winter-run loss for SWP given Reclamation's update?
 - Answer: January's loss threshold is 2.91 which is informed by the JPE number we received on January 12, 2024.

Review ITP Risk Assessment (DWR)

DWR provided the LFS update. For more information, please refer to the ITP Risk Assessment document.

Additional Questions or Comments

- Question: What is the threshold for QWEST that would change risk characterization?
 - Answer: Based on what was discussed on January 11, 2024, we would expect QWEST to play out as follows: +300 to +500 for a -2,000 OMR; -300 to -500 for a -3,500 OMR; and -1,000 to -1,500 for a -5,000 OMR. This is the framework the SMT was looking to for hydrology. During the January 16, 2024 SMT meeting, the group acknowledged the anticipated variability in QWEST over the course of the week of January 14, 2024, until the next storm system arrives. QWEST is typically a dynamic metric. As such members of the SMT were looking to have more certainty about the consistency of positive QWEST values before adjusting the OMRI recommendation. There is no set threshold per se as numerous factors inform how risk is determined.

- Comment: Regarding Longfin Smelt, waiting another week is too costly. This decision should be revisited by WOMT sooner than that, especially considering conditions on the ground are already signaling significant positive QWEST.
- Comment: It does not make any sense that Reclamation is able to identify a specific amendment that they will be operating to. Not operating to the most recent amendment does not add up. I am unsure what the basis for that decision making process is. From a general fish protection perspective, why can Reclamation operate towards over 14 fish versus SWP operating to under three fish? I would appreciate WOMT paying additional consideration to this.
 - Response: To clarify, this direction reflects discussions with the solicitors' office. The IOP that was extended originated from 2023. Whenever interim operations come online for 2024, it would be anticipated that they would supersede the current approach.

Acronyms

- CVP – Central Valley Project
- DCC – Delta Cross Channel
- DOI – Delta Outflow Index
- DWR – California Department of Water Resources
- DCI – Delta Mendota Canal – California Aqueduct Intertie
- DS – Delta Smelt
- FNU – Formazin Nephelometric Unit
- I:E – Inflow to Export
- IOP – Interim Operations Plan
- ITP – Incidental Take Permit
- JPE – Juvenile Production Estimate
- LFS – Longfin Smelt
- NTU – Nephelometric Turbidity Unit
- OBI – Old River Bacon Island Station
- OMR – Old and Middle River Tidally Averaged Flow
- PA – Proposed Action (Federal)
- PTM – Particle Tracking Model
- SaMT – Salmon Monitoring Team

- SLS – Smelt Larval Survey
- SMT – Smelt Monitoring Team
- SWP – State Water Project
- SWRCB – State Water Resources Control Board
- TFCF – Tracy Fish Collection Facility
- TUCP – Temporary Urgency Change Petition
- TUCO – Temporary Urgency Change Order
- USBR – United States Bureau of Reclamation
- WCS – Winter Run Chinook Salmon
- WOMT – Water Operations Management Team
- WQ – Water Quality
- YOY – Young of Year