



Water Operations Management Team Notes

March 13, 2024

Members Attending

- Reclamation: Elizabeth Kiteck, Levi Johnson
- USFWS: Jana Affonso
- CDFW: Kristal Davis-Fadtke
- NMFS: Howard Brown, Garwin Yip
- DWR: Molly White, Lenny Grimaldo
- SWRCB: Matthew Holland

Topics/Actions

- Approval of meeting notes from last meeting: 3/12/24
- Upcoming Meetings:
 - Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) (weekly on Tuesday): 3/19/24
 - Smelt Monitoring Team (SMT) (weekly on Tuesday): 3/19/24
 - Feather River Operations (monthly first and third Thursdays): 3/21/24
 - American River Group (monthly on third Thursday, and as needed): 3/21/24
 - Stanislaus Watershed Team (monthly on third Wednesday): 3/20/24
 - Clear Creek Technical Team (quarterly on third Thursday): 3/21/24
 - Sacramento River Temperature Task Group (SRTTG) (monthly on fourth Thursday): 3/28/24
- Relevant Assessments
 - Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook 3/12/24 – 3/19/24
 - Proposed Action Assessment 3/12/24
 - SaMT ITP Risk Assessment Summary 3/12/24
 - SMT ITP Risk Assessment Summary 3/12/24

- Operational Updates
 - CVP: Trinity River release is 300 cfs. Sacramento River (Keswick) release is decreasing to 6,000 cfs by 3/19/24 to install the Anderson-Cottonwood (ACID) diversion dam. The dam is proposed to be finished in approximately one week; anticipated releases at the time of completion are TBD. Clear Creek (Whiskeytown) managed release is 200 cfs. American River (Nimbus) release is decreasing from 6,000 cfs down to 5,000 cfs on Friday (3/15/24). Stanislaus River (Goodwin) release is 1,500 cfs. Reclamation's Delta Pumping is at 2 units targeting 1,800 cfs. Federal share of San Luis Reservoir is 962 TAF.
 - SWP: Feather River (Oroville-Thermalito Complex) release is 10,000 cfs. Clifton Court Forebay exports are 1,500 cfs and moving regularly to jointly manage a -500 cfs OMRI limit. State share of San Luis Reservoir is at 523 TAF.
- Hydrology Update (DWR and Reclamation):
 - Very dry weather for this week, slightly warmer temperatures and anticipating some increased snow melt.

Upcoming Actions, Updates, and Discussion Items

- Reclamation:
 - No actions or updates.
 - Discussion Items: 1) Next steps regarding current operations at -500 cfs OMRI and when a change might be possible, and 2) Plan for communicating direction out of the Director's Meetings.
- FWS:
 - No actions, updates, or discussion items.
- CDFW:
 - No actions, updates, or discussion items.
- NMFS:
 - No actions or updates.
- DWR:
 - No actions, updates, or discussion items.
- SWRCB:
 - No actions, updates, or discussion items.

Discussion Items

- Discussion Item: Next steps on -500 cfs OMRI and when a change might be possible.

- Reclamation participated in a listening session with various NGOs regarding steelhead salvage. The main take away was that the general expectation is that higher steelhead salvage makes sense with a wet year following a wet year. The NGOs stressed that they would like to see maximum productivity given the conditions this year.
- Per direction from the Directors last week, DWR has mobilized efforts to perform acoustic tagging on 250 steelhead to better understand steelhead behavior in the south Delta at OMRI -500 cfs. Tagging started today (3/13/24), is expected to be completed on 3/14/24, and the fish are anticipated to be released on Friday (3/15/24) morning. This information was presented at the 3/12/24 SaMT meeting. DWR thanked CDFW and NMFS colleagues for supporting the study.
- Reclamation presented data that looked at historical cumulative steelhead salvage comparing numbers pre, and post, the 2009 BO, and dry vs. wet years. Used this data to try to understand historical patterns of typical tapering of steelhead salvage during wet vs. dry years. Noted that historically, salvage does not appear to taper at this time of year when conditions are wet.
- Based on the above, and the forthcoming results from the acoustic tagging efforts, Reclamation proposed their preference to “auto-elevate” future operations planning from SaMT discussion at next week’s WOMT meeting. The proposed scenarios Reclamation would like WOMT to consider next week are: 1) keep investigating Public Health and Safety levels, 2) hold at -500 cfs OMRI, 3) reduce restrictions to -2,500 cfs OMRI, and 4) reduce to -1,500 cfs OMRI.
- FWS asked for clarification that Reclamation is proposing to hold current operations at -500 cfs OMRI until next week and then WOMT will reassess at next week’s meeting.
 - Reclamation confirmed holding at -500 cfs OMRI and noted that there is a plan in place to brief the group with relevant information throughout this week, and prior to next week’s WOMT meeting, for an informed discussion at the 3/20/24 WOMT meeting.
 - DWR confirmed that with the information known today (3/13/24) that there is sufficient flow to maintain current operations at -500 cfs OMRI.
 - Reclamation acknowledged that these are challenging decisions and is hopeful that future OMR measures can be agreed upon at the WOMT level to avoid elevation to the Directors.
- Discussion Item: Plan for communicating decisions coming out of the Director’s Meetings.
 - Following the Director’s Meeting last week, where it was decided that the Projects would target a -500 cfs OMRI as soon as possible, Reclamation notified WOMT via email on 3/8/24 of this decision. They would like to confirm that this approach works, and/or hear from the group on an alternative method for communications from the Director’s down to the WOMT level.

- The group discussed their internal protocols on how this information is typically disseminated. It was also noted from last year's WOMT facilitator that this topic came up during a past meeting, that there was agreement on how WOMT decisions would be documented and disseminated, and that the process could apply to Directors' decisions. The Final WOMT notes that captured this discussion and decision will be sent out to the group to ensure that the protocol previously agreed upon is maintained.

Elevation Items

- No elevation items

Action Items

- The WOMT facilitator from last year will send out notes that solidified communication protocol for decisions coming out of Director's Meetings [Completed: 3/13/24].

Next Meeting

- Wednesday, March 20, 1- 1:50pm