



# Delta Monitoring Workgroup

## Meeting Record 03/19/2024

### Working Group Members in Attendance

- USBR: Elissa Buttermore, Randi Field, Erika Kegel, Cat Pien, Brian Mahardja, Nick Bertrand, Grace Easterbrook
- USFWS: Leif Goude
- NMFS: Not in attendance
- CDFW: Erica Meyers
- DWR: Mike Ford, Farida Islam, Brian Schreier, Nicole Kwan
- SWRCB: Not in attendance
- Water Contractors: Shawn Acuña (MWD), Chandra Chilmakuri (SWC), Darcy Austin (SWC), Heidi Williams (Valley Water), Tom Boardman (WWD), Cindy Meyer (SLDMWA), Scott Petersen (SLDMWA), Yuan Liu (CCWD), Deanna Sereno (CCWD)

### Review Operations Outlook (USBR, DWR)

- CVP and SWP operations are limited to an OMRI of no more negative than -500 cfs as decided from the 3/7 Director's meeting; USBR proposes to operate to -1,500 cfs OMRI following the conclusion of the SaMT, WOMT, and Director process this week.
- Whiskeytown Dam is currently releasing 200 cfs downstream on Clear Creek and increasing to about 900 cfs later this week for a spring geomorphological pulse flow.
- Releases on the Sacramento River will decrease from 6,000 cfs to about 4,000 cfs by the end of the month for ACID Dam installation.
- Nimbus Dam is currently releasing 5,000 cfs on the American River with potential opportunities for adjustments for storage conservation at Folsom Dam.
- Goodwin Dam is currently releasing 1,500 cfs downstream on the Stanislaus River and will remain at this flow rate due to slight encroachment at New Melones.
- Freeport daily average flows yesterday were approx. 48,400 cfs.
- Vernalis daily average flows yesterday were approx. 5,350 cfs.
- Net Delta Outflow Index is approx. 56,950 cfs.
- JPP exports today (3/19/2024) are 1,800 cfs to meet OMRI requirements.

- Clifton Court exports today (3/19/2024) are about 1,300 cfs and holding pending other changes in the system.
- Refer to the Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook for more information.

### ***Additional Questions or Comments***

- Question: When do you expect to fill CVP shares at San Luis Reservoir this week and what would it mean for exports?
  - Answer: We are currently at about 965,390-acre feet – about 99.7% full. We anticipate filling our part of CVP shares tomorrow, Wednesday (3/20/2024). This does not impact our exports; there are some planned exchanges and demand will start picking up in the system.
- Question: What is the basis of the relaxation of the OMRI requirement from no more negative than -500 cfs to -1,500 cfs? Is it because the number of salvaged steelhead are likely coming more from hatchery releases? I am curious about the -1,500 OMRI justification.
  - Answer: This recommendation is based more on policy-level decisions rather than clearly describable biological reasons. To my knowledge, there is not conclusive evidence that there are large amounts of untagged hatchery fish in salvage at this point. The team is trying to capture and evaluate the information we think is most relevant to the risk to steelhead and understand the expected consequences of adjusting the OMRI by adjusting flow scenarios in the Tillotson model (see description on page 19 of the PA Assessment, and in Table 7 on page 11).

### **Review PA Assessment (USBR)**

USBR then provided the PA Assessment update. For more information, please refer to the PA Assessment document.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Additional Questions or Comments***

- Question: Was information from the acoustic study launched last week considered in the analysis presented today?
  - Answer: Yes, we've added that information. However, there are not many observations at this point, but the PA Assessment includes a paragraph describing what has been observed (see page 17 of the PA Assessment).
- Questions: Has there been any analysis in terms of the out-migrating steelhead from the San Joaquin River so far this year and how the pattern compares to data used in the 2019 Biological Opinion? Is there any comparison to historical data?
  - Answer: We have some observations of tagged fish and our weekly screw trap data, but we do not have data from genetic analysis right now. This question has not been explicitly explored yet.

- Comment: The 2019 Biological Opinion establishes fish take limits that were intended for the Sacramento River. The limit increases by 3,000 fish on April 1st. We don't know how many tagged fish are from the Sacramento River versus the San Joaquin River. I believe there is a good rationale for us to off-ramp from -500, given there will soon be a larger take limit allowed. This consideration should be factored into future decision-making and the rationale behind OMRI recommendations.

### Review ITP Risk Assessment (DWR)

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

### ***Additional Questions or Comments***

- Question: Even though it's not the standard sampling that CDFW conducts, to what extent is the UC Davis data for LFS being considered in the Assessments?
  - Answer: The example being brought up is UC Davis sampling in Alviso Marsh, which is well outside the entrainment zone and outside of the freshwater Delta. While we do track the general health of the LFS population with all the available information, the CA Endangered Species Act (CESA) does not take into account the relative population with respect to proportional take or anything similar to that. Our focus is on minimizing take of the LFS that do occur in the areas that are at elevated risk of entrainment – primarily the twelve stations in the central and south Delta locations.
- Question: Can the Technical Team notes get posted to the USBR site?
  - Answer: The Facilitation team will follow up with USBR for these reports, but it can be delayed due to the accessibility and ADA compliance process.
- Comment (Facilitator): The Facilitation Team will follow up with this group if there are any operational decisions coming from the WOMT process this week that should be shared with this group.

### 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
- ITL – Incidental Take Limit
- 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