BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Water Operations Management Team Notes

January 27, 2023 – Off-Cycle Meeting

Members Attending

- Reclamation: Liz Kiteck
- FWS: Jana Affonso
- CDFW: Brooke Jacobs, Kristal Davis-Fadtke
- NMFS: Garwin Yip
- DWR: Molly White, Lenny Grimaldo
- SWRCB: No Water Board members present

Topics/Actions

- Review Agenda and Goal of Meeting
- DWR and Reclamation to provide update on written rationale (Attachment).
    - DWR shared their justification for OMRI no more negative than -5,000 cfs being protective of Delta Smelt.
    - WOMT agreed that the format provided—bullet points, concise information, and appropriate citations—is efficient and effective.
    - FWS thinks it is important for the rationale to be collectively from Reclamation and DWR. DWR agreed to reach out the Reclamation staff at the Bay Delta Office to agree on a joint justification that could be provided to WOMT via email and appended to the meeting notes.
    - For next week, DWR and Reclamation plan to send the same operations proposal and justification. FWS and CDFW asked that it be updated with current conditions, and DWR agreed to update with most current data available.
- Discuss Processes for proposals for changing operations e.g., OMR management during Turbidity Bridge Avoidance
    - CDFW raised a concern that the justification and rationale presented to WOMT on Wednesday and today was not considered or evaluated by SMT. It does not work process-wise to bring these to WOMT first, because technical

representatives need a chance to review. The State Water Project ITP requires that materials and analyses be distributed at least 2 days before SMT so the technical people have the key information to evaluate.

- FWS wants to make sure that information gets in front of SMT and WOMT in a timeline that works for reviewing and discussing. Having the rationale is important so we can properly evaluate actions. SMT needs to see the information before WOMT so they can advise WOMT effectively.
- DWR understands this need, but also thinks WOMT also has a role to ensure that SMT considers all the available information and believes this past week not all relevant peer-review literature was considered, including information on factors that affect entrainment risk at the tail of a first flush action. In addition, DWR communicated that it does not appear that SMT considered how elevated San Joaquin River flows (>20,000 cfs) often results in a seaward distribution of Delta Smelt and subsequent low proportional entrainment losses. DWR proposes that [DWR and Reclamation] provide the Outlook and Rationale (similar to what DWR provided today) prior to the SMT meeting so that SMT can review and discuss.
- DWR suggested that WOMT decisions may want to include mid-way check-ins with monitoring data and conditions to adjust operations if we changing conditions that affect risk.
- Timeline
    - Proposed Operations and Written Rationale would be provided prior to SMT. WOMT agrees that it could be distributed to SMT with the Outlook on Mondays
    - Note to check in about this again as we move into larval and juvenile season so we can talk about process proactively. May want to talk about this starting next week

- Discuss Process for situations when SMT does not reach consensus or provide a recommendation.
    - For Federal PA, there isn't a specific role defined for SMT, but the Guidance Document says they provide "input". FWS is not sure that non-consensus is a problem, but wants to support harmonizing between State and Federal process
    - CDFW agrees that non-consensus is not problematic, but wants to make sure SMT has all the information they need to evaluate risk and that the discussion is captured in the notes. WOMT can look at documentation coming out of SMT and move forward as long as they understand the discussion and positions.
    - WOMT looks to SMT to provide an evaluation of risk.
    - CDFW notes that draft SMT meeting notes are not usually available until Wednesday, so they may not be available on the timeframe for WOMT

        - WOMT agrees that the Outlook, PA Assessment, Proposed Operation and Rationale, and Risk Assessment Summaries will be used. May reassess in the future if other documentation may be needed.

- Discuss Documentation for WOMT decisions.
    - Reclamation noted that WOMT needs to have a clear process for informing everyone once a decision is made instead of just stating it in the notes. It can take days for the notes to be finalized and approved and, in the meantime, there is a lot of confusion about what the decision was.
    - WOMT discussed and agreed to work together during WOMT meetings to write a Decision Statement, which the Facilitator would send out to the WOMT distribution list after the meeting. WOMT members would then forward the statement appropriately both up (e.g., Directors) and down (e.g., SMT and SaMT) their chain of command.
- Decisions and Next Steps:
    - Two items were raised for future WOMT discussion:
        - WOMT would like to understand why certain hydrologic conditions would or would not result in breaking turbidity bridge for future situations.
        - Will want to proactively revisit the discussion of "process" as we move into larval and juvenile season.
    - DWR will coordinate with Reclamation to complete a joint Justification and email it to WOMT. This Justification would be included as an attachment to WOMT notes.

Next Meeting

- Wednesday, February 1, 1-1:50 p.m. (Guest Facilitator)

Attachment – Rationale for Proposed Operations being Protective of Delta Smelt

As provided to WOMT on 1/25/2023, please see DWR and Reclamation's justification for the operations of no more negative than -5000 cfs (on a 5-day average):

- The Projects have operated at -2000 cfs for 19 consecutive days (first flush @ 14 days and turbidity bridge @ 5 days). The Projects operated to OMR no more negative than -3500 cfs for an additional 5 days thereafter. The cumulative effects of these actions reduced the entrainment footprint of the Projects for a period that extends through average upstream movement period of delta smelt (23.6 days see Sommer et al 2011; also see Grimaldo et al. 2009)
- Once Delta Smelt move upstream, they have limited movements (Polansky et al. 2017). Therefore, the risk of additional delta smelt moving into the interior Delta or getting entrained at the Projects is likely low
- DWR pointed out that the 2008 FWS BiOp had an offramp for OMR triggers once SJR flows elevated above 10,000 cfs. As of 1/25, SJR flow (@ Vernalis) was 17,462 cfs. SJR flows peaked above 24,000 cfs last week and remained over 20,000 for six consecutive days between 1/18 and 1/23. Data pre-2008 shows that when SJR flows reach such high levels, adult entrainment and calculated proportional losses are relatively small (Kimmerer 2008; Smith et al. 2022) because delta smelt distribution shifts seaward away from the influence of the Projects.
- DWR and Reclamation propose that the Projects operating to -5000 cfs OMR will not create conditions that results in any additional movement of delta smelt into the interior Delta. DWR noted the intent of first flush and turbidity bridge was never to expect zero salvage or zero fish movement into the interior Delta as delta smelt are capable of swimming to upstream locations under high outflows (Gross et al. 2021). The intent was to severely reduce a large proportion of the delta smelt from moving into the entrainment zone which historically (pre-2009 FWS BiOP) led relatively high proportional population losses.