# Appendix AB-J, Winter and Spring Pulses and Delta **Outflow**

# **Attachment J.5 Flow Threshold Salmon Survival Model**

### **J.5.1 Model Overview**

A flow threshold model was used to assess potential effects of changes in flow in the Upper Sacramento River on juvenile Chinook salmon as a result of flow-survival relationships. The flow thresholds from Michel et al. (2021) were applied to Sacramento River at Wilkins Slough. The model estimates the annual mean probability of juvenile Chinook salmon survival in the Sacramento River between the confluence of Deer Creek and Feather River between March 15 and June 15, during the spring outmigration period. Annual mean survival was calculated from daily survival estimates.

### **J.5.2 Model Development**

#### **J.5.2.1 Methods**

For this analysis, the following flow thresholds from Michel et al. (2021) were applied to Sacramento River at Wilkins Slough and corresponding survival probabilities (Deer Creek confluence to Feather River confluence) were used:

- $0 4,259$  cubic feet per second (cfs): 0.030 (3%)
- $4,259 10,712 \text{ cfs: } 0.189 \text{ (about } 19\%)$
- $10,712 22,872 \text{ cfs: } 0.508 \text{ (about } 51\%)$

Note that the upper threshold of the 3rd range (22,872 cfs) does not represent realistic hydrology for the system. The 3rd range is summarized as any WLK flow value greater than 10,712 cfs.

Red Bluff Diversion Dam (RBDD) passage estimates are used in this analysis. RBDD passage estimates used include all runs of juvenile Chinook salmon from 2005 – 2022 Red Bluff RST subset from January 1st to July 1st removing any catch values greater than 80,000 and making a linear interpolation of missing RBDD sampling days. Catch values greater than 80,000 were removed from the dataset following Michel et al. (2021) since it may be indicative of a hatchery release prior to the date.

The model merges daily median flow from Wilkins Slough (WLK, flow) from the March 15th to June 15th spring period with RBDD catch data for each alternative. The code uses parametric bootstrapping where a logit-transformed survival distribution from the Michel et al. (2021) model, given a set of daily Wilkins Slough flow values, were resampled relative to the expanded daily RBDD Chinook salmon catch. A season-wide mean survival for March 15 to June 15 was calculated from mean logit-scale daily survival estimates and then rescaled (inverse-log transform). As an example, if the RBDD screw trap collected 1,500 juvenile Chinook on a single day, the model calculation produced 1,500 parametric bootstrapped estimates for survival on that day using the provided mean and standard error for the flow ranges provided in Michel et al. (2021). This is repeated for all days between March 15th and June 15th to generate an estimate of annual mean survival probability. 5th and 95th percentiles were calculated to present variability in yearly annual survival.

The mean annual proportional juvenile Chinook salmon survival based on Michel et al (2021) flow-survival threshold analysis was applied to modeled alternatives: EXP1, EXP3, NAA, Alternative 1, Alternative 2 With TUCP Without VA, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Without VA, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Delta VA, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Systemwide VA, Alternative 3 and Alternative 4. Modeled daily Wilkins Slough flows (1922-2021, USRDOM) were used in the analysis.

#### **J.5.2.2 Assumptions / Uncertainty**

This model allows for the simulation of population-level survival effects of flow operations over a 3-month long season using the somewhat rigid and approximate survival thresholds published in Michel et al (2021). Hydrology in the natural world does not follow rigid survival thresholds. It is more likely that there is a steep gradient in survival rates around these published thresholds.

USRDOM does not incorporate functional flow pulses, it creates daily flow patterns utilizing tributary inflow information and averaged monthly Sacramento flows to simulate daily flows. Flow volumes, which are part of certain alternatives are not shaped to achieve functional flows. There is uncertainty about how the duration, intensity, or rates of changes, which may influence fish outmigration behavior, would be implemented in alternatives.

#### **J.5.2.3 Code and Data Repository**

Fish inputs: Historic RBDD data available from Reclamation upon request.

Exports inputs: USRDOM modeled exports available from Reclamation upon request.

Analysis file: R script(s) Michel\_FlowThresh\_12.05.2023 available online at Michel FlowThresh 12.05.2023.R.

## **J.5.3 Results**

Average annual mean survival probability was highest during the Wet WYT across all alternatives and decreased as the WYT became drier (Table J.5-1). Average annual mean survival probability was the lowest during the Critical WYT across all alternatives.

During the **Wet WYT**, Alternative 3 had the highest mean survival (28.91%). Alternative 1, Alternative 2 With TUCP Without VA, Alternative 2 without TUCP without VA, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Systemwide VA, and Alternative 4 had a similar mean survival (26.19%, 26.11%, 26.12%, 26.05%, 26.13% respectively). Alternative 2 Without TUCP Delta VA had the lowest mean survival (25.87%).

During the **Above Normal WYT**, Alternative 3 had the highest mean survival (24.57%). Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 Without TUCP Systemwide VA had a similar mean survival (22.05% and 22.68% respectively). Alternative 2 Without TUCP Delta VA had the lowest mean survival (20.51%) but was only slightly lower than Alternative 2 With TUCP Without VA, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Without VA, and Alternative 4 (20.92%, 20.95% and 20.92% respectively).

During the **Below Normal WYT**, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Systemwide VA had the highest mean survival (17.66%), though this was only slightly higher than Alternative 1 (17.16%). Alternative 2 With TUCP Without VA, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Without VA, and Alternative 4 had similar mean survival (16.61%, 16.42%, and 16.34% respectively). Alternative 3 had the lowest survival (14.98%). Alternative 2 Without TUCP Delta VA had slightly higher survival  $(15.14\%)$ .

During the **Dry WYT**, Alternative 4 had the highest mean survival (14.9%), which was only slightly higher than Alternative 1, Alternative 2 with TUCP Without VA, and Alternative 2 Without TUCP Without VA (14.45%, 14.53%, 14.42% respectively). Alternative 2 Without TUCP Delta VA had the lowest mean survival (11.72%) which was only slightly lower than Alternative 3 (11.76%). Alternative 2 Without TUCP Systemwide VA had a mean survival rate of 12.24%.

During the **Critical WYT**, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Without VA had the highest mean survival (11.14%). Alternative 2 With TUCP Without VA had the lowest mean survival (6.98%), which was only slightly lower than Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 (7.32% and 7% respectively). Alternative 1, Alterative 2 Without TUCP Delta VA and Alternative 2 Without TUCP Systemwide VA had similar mean survival rates (9.64%, 9.97% and 10.09% respectively).

Michel et al. (2021) identified an optimal flow threshold of 10,712 cfs for Chinook salmon outmigration survival. This threshold was similar to the historical average of natural spring flow conditions. High flows may reduce predation pressures on out migrating juvenile salmon by increasing turbidity, which provides cover for juveniles (Gregory and Levings 1998), and by decreasing transit times thus limiting exposure to predators and other hazards (Michel et al. 2021, Notch et al. 2020). Michel et al. (2021) also noted that flow and temperature were highly correlated. While temperature was not analyzed in the Michel et al. (2021) study, high water temperatures have been shown to impact physiological health and survival (Lehman et al. 2017, Marine and Cech 2004).

During the Wet WYT, mean daily Sacramento River flow below Wilkins Slough (CFS) was similar across all alternatives except for Alternative 3 which had higher flow from May to early-June (Figure J.5-1). This explains higher survival under Alternative 3 (Table J.5-1). The pattern for the Above Normal WYT was similar to the Wet WYT, except for a short period of time (mid-April to end of April), Alternative 2 Without TUCP Systemwide VA had higher flows than all

other alternatives which increased mean survival. Alternative 1 also had increased flows compared to all other alternatives except Alternative 3, from early to mid-May and late May to mid-June which increased mean survival. Alternative 3 had the highest mean survival across all alternatives. For the Below Normal WYT, Alternative 1 showed higher flows than all other alternatives from early April to early May and in early June to mid-June, while Alternative 2 without TUCP Systemwide VA had higher flows from early to late May which led to higher mean survival compared to all other alternatives. During the Dry WYT, Alternative 1, Alternative 2 with TUCP without VA, Alternative 2 without TUCP without VA, and Alternative 4 had a similar and higher outflow than other alternatives from late March to early May and again from late May to mid-June which result in the highest and similar mean survival. For the Critical WYT, Alternative 2 Without TUCP Without VA had the highest flow from late-March to mid-May and the highest mean survival.

#### **J.5.3.1 Tables**

Table J.5-1. Average mean annual seasonal survival percentage for different modeled scenarios by water year type. Percent difference from the NAA is in parentheses.

			Alt2wTUCP	Alt2woTUCP	Alt2woTUCP DeltaVA	Alt2woTUCP <b>AIIVA</b>		
<b>IWYT</b>	<b>NAA</b>	Alt1	<b>InoVA</b>	InoVA			Alt <sub>3</sub>	Alt4
Wet	24.91	26.19 (5.14%)	26.11 (4.82%)	26.12 (4.86%)	25.87 (3.85%)	26.05 (4.58%)	28.91 (16.06%)	26.13(4.9%)
Above Normal	19.83	22.05 (11.2%)	20.92 (5.5%)	20.95 (5.65%)	20.51 (3.43%)	22.68 (14.37%) 24.57 (23.9%)		20.92 (5.5%)
<b>Below Normal</b>	15.2	17.16 (12.89%)   16.61 (9.28%)		16.42 (8.03%)	15.14 (-0.39%)	17.65 (16.12%)	14.98 (-1.45%)	16.34 (7.5%)
Dry	12.08	14.45 (19.62%)   14.53 (20.28%)		14.42 (19.37%)	11.72 (-2.98%)	12.24 (1.32%)	11.76 (-2.65%)	14.9 (23.34%)
Critical	5.87	9.64(64.22%)	6.98(18.91%)	11.14 (89.78%)  9.97 (69.85%)		10.09 (71.89%)  7.32 (24.7%)		7 (19.25%)

Table J.5-2. Average mean annual seasonal survival percent for different modeled scenarios by water year type.





Table J.5-3. Mean seasonal survival for each alternative for each modelled CalSim3 year. WYT is the water year type for each modelled year. 95% confidence intervals are in parentheses.

















Table J.5-4. Mean seasonal survival for each alternative for each modelled CalSim3 year. WYT is the water year type for each modelled year. 95% confidence intervals are in parentheses.



















Figure J.5-1. Mean daily Sacramento River flow below Wilkins Slough (cfs) (March 15<sup>th</sup> to June 15th) of different alternatives by date across water year types (USRDOM, 1922- 2021).



Figure J.5-2. Mean daily Sacramento River flow below Wilkins Slough (cfs) (March 15<sup>th</sup> to June 15th) of different alternatives by date across water year types (USRDOM, 1922- 2021).



Figure J.5-3. Boxplots of mean annual seasonal March 15<sup>th</sup> through June 15<sup>th</sup> survival for different modeled scenarios by water year type.



Figure J.5-4. Boxplots of mean annual seasonal March 15<sup>th</sup> through June 15<sup>th</sup> survival for different modeled scenarios by water year type.

### **J.5.4 References**

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