

Delta Operations for Salmonids and Sturgeon (DOSS) Group

05/18/10 Conference call 9:00 am

Objective: Provide advice to the Water Operations Management Team (WOMT) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on measures to reduce adverse effects from Delta operations of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project to salmonids and green sturgeon. DOSS will coordinate the work of other technical teams. DOSS notes and advice can be found at: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocap/actions.htm>

Attendees:

Mike Ford, Carol Stroble, & Andy Chu (DWR); Craig Anderson, Roger Guinee (FWS); Jeff Stuart, Garwin Yip & Barbara Byrne (NMFS); Thuy Washburn (USBR); Dan Kratville (DFG), Greg Wilson & Kari Kyler (SWRCB)

Agenda: fish monitoring, Delta water operations, Water transfers requests to SWRCB

Fish Monitoring:

Mill and Deer Creek

(This 5/18 report from Colleen Harvey Arrison, DFG, was distributed after the DOSS call and is included here for reporting purposes)

“The Mill Creek trap fished daily during this reporting period. The trap catch included: 99 YOY Chinook: 39-105 mmfl, 2 yearling spring Chinook: 120 and 140 mmfl and 7 steelhead: 36-244 mmfl. Flows ranged from 385 to 533 cfs. Snow melt started this weekend with turbidity increasing to 14 ntu's. Typically we see an increase in steelhead smolts with the increase in snowmelt in the spring. Current snow depth in upper Mill Creek is 185 inches which should provide migration flows into June.

The Deer Creek trap also fished daily. The trap catch included: 49 YOY Chinook: 53-93 mmf, no yearling Chinook and 1 steelhead at 222 mmfl. Flows ranged from 477 to 571 cfs. Deer Creek is not as influenced by snowmelt as Mill Creek.”

Knights Landing (5/11-5/17): Over approximately 14 trap-days of sampling, 25 Chinook salmon were caught: 24 fall-run (none of which were ad-clipped), and 1 spring-run. The average CPUE (fish/trap-day) for the week was 1.69 for fall/spring-run, 0 for winter-run/late fall, and 0.0 for non-clipped steelhead.

FWS Sampling Data (5/9-5/15):

Beach Seines: 3 fall-run Chinook, 1 ad-clipped Chinook, & 791 splittail

Liberty Island Seines: 53 splittail, & 2 delta smelt

Sacramento Midwater Trawls: 23 fall-run Chinook, 3 spring-run Chinook, 3 ad-clipped Chinook

Chipps Island Midwater Trawls: 308 fall-run Chinook, 74 spring-run Chinook, 70 ad-clipped Chinook, 1 steelhead, 1 splittail, & 2 delta smelt

Mossdale Kodiak Trawls: 2 fall-run Chinook, 2 spring-run Chinook & 843 splittail.

CVP and SWP Fish Salvage Facilities (5/10-5/16):

The SWP has curtailed pumping from 5/11/2010 to 5/21/2010 to install a transformer yard for the South Bay Pumping Plant. Therefore, no salvage or larval sampling will occur at the SWP until pumping resumes.

No winter-run Chinook were reported at either facility for the week. Total combined loss of non-clipped winter-run YTD remains at 1,661 (total combined salvage = 1068).

The loss of non-clipped spring-run Chinook at the CVP and SWP was 255 and 156, respectively, for a total weekly loss of 411 (salvage = 318). No ad-clipped spring-run Chinook were reported at either facility for the week.

12 non-clipped steelhead were salvaged at the CVP. 8 ad-clipped steelhead were salvaged at the CVP and 4 ad-clipped steelhead were salvaged at the SWP for a weekly total of 12. The YTD non-clipped cumulative total for steelhead is 874; the take limit is 3000.

No green sturgeon, delta smelt, or longfin smelt were salvaged this week.

Daily loss densities for Chinook salmon: No loss of older juveniles occurred this week.

CWT data: 3-new tags have been collected, probably from Coleman or Nimbus releases of fall-run Chinook.

DOSS subgroup update (reconstruct 2nd OMR Trigger): The subgroup is reviewing data.

Operations:

CVP

Approximate releases:

Trinity = 4000 cfs

Keswick = 8500 cfs

Nimbus = 5000 cfs

Goodwin = 800 cfs

The Jones pumping plant is running one unit for an export rate of approximately 800 cfs. Another unit is expected to be added at Jones on Thursday, then turned back off on Friday.

Approximate OMR flows are:

5-day = 100 cfs

14-day = 850cfs

SWP

800-900 cfs is being released for instream needs from Oroville.

The Banks pumping plant is currently shut down due to planned maintenance of power transmission lines. Inflows to Clifton Court Forebay are planned according to the following schedule:

Monday, 5/17 – 700 cfs

Tuesday, 5/18 – 700 cfs

Wednesday, 5/19 – 700 cfs

Thursday through Sunday it is expected that there will be no inflow to Clifton Court Forebay. While Banks is expected to come back online Friday afternoon and pumping will resume, it is not expected that additional water will need to be drawn into Clifton Court Forebay until early next week.

Smelt Working Group (SWG):

Delta smelt were salvaged at the CVP on Saturday (5/15) and Sunday (5/16) for a weekly total salvage of 11. Larval delta smelt were found in larval fish samples at the Federal facility on 5/12/2010. Longfin smelt were salvaged at the CVP for a weekly total salvage of 12. No Delta smelt or longfin smelt were observed at the SWP from 5/10-5/16.

The 20mm trawls show Delta smelt and longfin smelt are located primarily in the Sacramento River deepwater ship channel with a few near the confluence and minimal presence in the southern delta. One longfin smelt was observed at Frank's Tract.

SWG will meet next on May 24th.

DCC Operations:

Nothing new to report, same schedule as proposed last week.

Water Transfers:

Announcement: SWRCB has issued several public notices for temporary changes. Five transfers (see additional information below) may be relevant to DOSS since they would involve additional pumping of water in the Delta. The transfers involve both groundwater substitution and some crop idling. Similar actions were approved last year through the drought water bank. The SWRCB often receives comments saying that approval will have impacts on fish; was noted that the fishery agencies seldom offer comments on transfer requests.

It was also noted that other transfers that don't need SWRCB approval (e.g. transfers involving pre-1914 water rights holders) could be initiated this summer and might affect operations and capacity at the pumping facilities.

The project description of the OCAP Biological Assessment identified the transfer window as being from July-September. It was asked whether the SWP anticipated enough capacity to move the amount of water involved in the transfer requests to the SWRCB. DWR noted that the extra 500cfs of pumping allowed at Banks July-September is related to the EWA Yuba water and that with a 40% allocation, the capacity for transfers is diminishing.

(the following information was provided by Greg Wilson (SWRCB) after the DOSS call):

Per our discussion on today's DOSS call, here is the link to the State Water Board's webpage for Transfers and Temporary Urgency Changes:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/applications/transfers_tu_notices/

The five transfers that involve additional pumping in the Delta (at either Barker Slough or Clifton Court) are:

- South Sutter Water District proposes to transfer up to 10,000 acre-feet (af) of water to eight State Water Contractor Agencies. Water would be used within the State Water Project (SWP) service area. Water would be made available through groundwater substitution within Sutter County.
- Goose Club Farms proposes to transfer up to 653 af of water to eight State Water Contractor Agencies. Water would be used within the State Water Project (SWP) service area. Water would be made available through crop shifting/idling within Sutter County.
- Garden Highway Mutual Water Company proposes to transfer up to 5,802 af of water to eight State Water Contractor Agencies. Water would be used within the SWP service area. Water would be made available through groundwater substitution within Sutter County.
- Tule Basin Farms proposes to transfer up to 3,520 af of water to eight State Water Contractor Agencies. Water would be used within the SWP service area. Water would be made available through groundwater substitution within Sutter County.
- The City of Sacramento and Sacramento Suburban Water District propose to transfer up to 4,377 af of water to eight State Water Contractor Agencies. Water would be used within the SWP service area. Water would be made available through groundwater substitution within Sacramento County.

Stanislaus Operations Group (SOG): There is a SOG meeting tomorrow (5/19). On the agenda are discussions about the temperature outlook for late spring and summer and the gravel plan due next month. The spring pulse flow required under Action III.1.3 is currently in the rampdown phase.

VAMP update: The bubble barrier is not deterring as effectively as last year. Preliminary data following the initial release groups showed just 50% (compared to 83% in 2009) of fish remaining in the mainstem San Joaquin rather than heading down Old River. The decibel level of the acoustic deterrence component is being increased in an attempt to improve the deterrent effect of the barrier. Was noted that with higher flow levels, it's possible that fish are being swept along more rapidly and may be less able to react to the barrier. Survival this year is over 80%, compared to survival in the high 60% range in 2009.

DOSS advice for NMFS and WOMT*:

DOSS advises that the projects be operated according to (1) the VAMP criteria (expected to control exports through May 26th, (2) Action IV.2.1 relating to Vernalis flows and the I:E ratio (expected to control exports from May 27th through May 31st), and (3) Action IV.2.3 relating to OMR flows (expected to control exports from June 1st-June 15th, unless the temperature off ramp is triggered).

Announcement: The IEP Workshop is happening next Tuesday and Wednesday at Sacramento State.

Next Meeting: May 25 at 8:00 am. (early call to accommodate those attending the IEP Workshop)

**This DOSS advice was provided before learning of the federal court's May 18th "Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law" regarding the request for preliminary injunction against implementation of some components of the NMFS Biological Opinion.*