

Central Valley Settlement Implementation Results Briefing Sheet

- In January 2012, Public Water Agencies, State of California and Federal agencies filed a joint stipulation regarding project operations during April and May 2012 in the litigation relating to the Biological Opinion (BiOp) on long-term operations of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project issued by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).
- The objectives of the joint stipulation were (1) to provide minimum protections for out-migrating juvenile steelhead by managing flow conditions in the Delta in a manner expected to allow salmonids to successfully exit the Delta; (2) attempting to increase water exports consistent with (1), above; and (3) generating real-time tracking information to better understand how pumping rates, flows in Old and Middle River and juvenile migrations relate to one another. In addition to installing a rock barrier, the stipulation called for OMR flows to be managed at an adaptive range between -1,250 and -3,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) during April, and between -1,250 and -5,000 cfs during May. Export levels would be adjusted to ensure adequate protection was afforded to out-migrating steelhead.
- The overall results included a modest increase in water exports of approximately 57,000 acre feet over what would have occurred under the NMFS BiOp, significantly improved real-time tracking of migration patterns of the juveniles over the course of differing flow and pumping regimes, and higher than expected straying of juvenile steelhead into the south Delta.
- Over 160 acoustic tagged hatchery steelhead were released into the San Joaquin River just downstream of Stockton every two weeks, beginning April 15. Water exports were set at varying levels for each two-week period and only reduced if a set amount of acoustic tags were detected at receivers within the South Delta channels. The export levels were adjusted to ensure adequate protection was afforded to out-migrating steelhead.
- A sizable portion of the tagged fish (25-30 percent during each period), more than expected, turned into the southern Delta under all conditions. While the results were not what were predicted, this process and information it generates should allow the parties to refine operating parameters over time to meet both juvenile survival and water supply objectives more efficiently.
- This experiment was the first of its kind, to study the fine scale movements of acoustically-tagged steelhead within and throughout the Delta, and to utilize some of the data to inform in-season management and water operations. While the initial results were not as predicted, this tagging and tracking program will enable better and more efficient decisions on improving fish survivals and water supply reliability in the future. Full analysis and conclusions of the acoustic study is still ongoing.