

Water Operations Management Team Notes

February 15, 2024 – Off Cycle Meeting

Members Attending

- Reclamation: Elizabeth Kiteck, Levi Johnson
- USFWS: No representatives present.
- CDFW: Kristal Davis-Fadtke
- NMFS: Garwin Yip
- DWR: Molly White, Lenny Grimaldo
- SWRCB: Matthew Holland

Topics/Actions

Natural steelhead threshold triggers and subsequent OMR flow management operations

- NMFS noted that after reviewing the Outlook this week, the trends are showing increasing losses. Given this and that operations have been at -3,500 cfs OMRI for a while now due to other action responses, NMFS recommends implementing measures to be proactive and avoid exceeding the 75% threshold. The steelhead losses are up even as of this morning so the situation warrants attention.
- Reclamation and NMFS discussed paragraphs within the PA to determine what actions are to take place, and if a reduced OMRI is within the bounds of the PA as written. It was noted that this scenario of exceeding the 50% threshold, and how to operate from there to avoid future losses and exceeding the 75% threshold, were considered when the PA was being drafted. The weekly assessments can discuss the losses and look at side boards (i.e., compare losses at -3,500 cfs and -2,500 cfs) that support modifications. If the assessments show that something less negative reduces the potential to exceed the 75% threshold, then we should implement that. This has not been considered in previous assessments, but is in the spirit of the PA as written. This could be used to see if a more restrictive approach would help reduce losses.
- NMFS and Reclamation discussed several proposals for reducing OMRI, when those modifications would be realized given time delays, how and when to reevaluate OMRI, and what a reduced OMRI would mean for operators.
- NMFS proposed the following recommendation: to target the -2,500 cfs OMRI as soon as possible (and according to Reclamation, it would likely be implemented starting on 2/21/24 due to power scheduling, the 3-day weekend, and other time delays) and maintained through 2/28/24 and reevaluate at the 2/28/24 WOMT meeting.
 - DWR noted that if the above was implemented it would result in a reduction of exports of approximately 1,100 cfs.

- CDFW asked if this change in operations occurred, would DWR and Reclamation be working in concert to implement. It was confirmed that this would be the case.

Following the above discussion, WOMT agency representatives voted on the following: Target the -2,500 cfs OMRI as soon as possible (likely beginning on 2/21/24 due to power scheduling, the 3-day weekend, and other time delays) and maintain through 2/28/24 and reevaluate at the 2/28/24 WOMT meeting.

WOMT agency representatives responded accordingly:

- Reclamation: Does not support.
- CDFW: Abstain, but in support from a biological standpoint.
- NMFS: In support.
- FWS: Abstain (due to no representatives present).
- DWR: In support.
- SWRCB: Abstain, but in support from a biological standpoint.

Following the official vote, consensus with the necessary agency representatives was not met. NMFS will elevate this item for discussion at the directors meeting today at 4 pm (2/15/24).

Elevation Items

- Natural steelhead threshold trigger and subsequent OMR flow management operations.

Action Items

- No action items.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, February 21, 1- 1:50pm