

Water Operations Management Team Notes

Ad-Hoc Meeting 3/25/2024

Members Attending

- Reclamation: **Elizabeth Kiteck, David Mooney**
- USFWS: **Jana Affonso, Matt Nobriga**
- CDFW: **Kristal Davis-Fadtke, Brooke Jacobs**
- NMFS: **Howard Brown, Garwin Yip**
- DWR: **Lenny Grimaldo, Mike Ford**
- SWRCB: **Matthew Holland**

Topics/Actions

- Reminder to review of meeting notes from last meeting.
- Upcoming Meetings:
 - Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) (weekly on Tuesday): 3/26/24
 - Smelt Monitoring Team (SMT) (weekly on Tuesday): 3/26/24
 - Feather River Operations (monthly first and third Thursdays): 4/4/24
 - American River Group (monthly on third Thursday, and as needed): 4/25/24
 - Stanislaus Watershed Team (monthly on third Wednesday): 4/17/24
 - Clear Creek Technical Team (quarterly on third Thursday): 6/13/24
 - Sacramento River Temperature Task Group (SRTTG) (monthly on fourth Thursday): 4/25/24
- Relevant Assessments
 - Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook 3/19/24 – 3/26/24
 - Off-cycle SaMT ITP Risk Assessment Summary 3/22/24

Upcoming Actions, Updates, and Discussion Items

- Reclamation:
 - No actions or updates.
 - Discussion Item: Steelhead Proposed operations for the upcoming week of 3/25/2024

- FWS:
 - No actions, updates, or discussion items.
- CDFW:
 - No actions or updates.
 - Discussion Item: Winter-run single-year loss threshold (SWP ITP Condition of Approval 8.6.1)
- NMFS:
 - No actions, updates, or discussion items
- DWR:
 - No actions or updates.
 - Discussion Item: Operations for Steelhead
- SWRCB:
 - No actions, updates, or discussion items.

Discussion Items

- Steelhead Proposed operations for the week of 3/25/2024
 - Reclamation talked through their rationale for looking for higher exports based on:
 - Historical trends in Steelhead salvage
 - Protections in place per the PA
 - Process for ongoing evaluation
 - Relative risks of three ops scenarios to steelhead
 - Public health and safety (total exports = 1,500 cfs)
 - -500 OMRI on a 14 day average
 - -2500 OMRI (2009, 2019 Biops)
 - Due to power scheduling, the first day Reclamation operators would not be able to make a pumping change at Jones Pumping Plant would be Saturday, 3/30 and only if a decision was made before 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, 3/26.
 - Reclamation seeking technical assistance from NMFS.
 - DWR reported the average OMRI since this year's first flush has been about -2000 cfs.
 - NMFS: As the Projects are over the incidental take limit for steelhead the decision about what this week's operations will be elevated to the Directors to make.

- Winter-run single-year loss threshold (SWP ITP Condition of Approval 8.6.1)
 - The threshold has been exceeded
 - The off-cycle SaMT meeting is an ITP requirement. The BiOp requirement is for technical assistance.
 - Elevate to WOMT.
 - SaMT wasn't given alternative scenarios to evaluate.
 - They concluded that an increase in exports will result in increasing loss of winter run.
 - Discussion of the justification for the -2500 cfs OMRI
 - Discussion of a -500 cfs OMRI
 - CDFW would like the technical information to be evaluated by SaMT in their regular meetings, not brought directly to WOMT
- DWR / Reclamation will discuss the -2500 cfs OMRI for winter run:
 - They believe it would be sufficient protection for winter run
 - They would like the genetic information considered in place of length-at-date.
 - Fish releases pursuant to evaluating the effectiveness of the Georgiana Slough non-physical barrier show fish moving west
 - Reclamation would like SaMT to analyze the operation scenarios brought to WOMT at this week's regular SaMT meeting
- CDFW reads SaMT advice of "a decrease in exports through a more positive OMRI is expected to decrease future loss relative to higher export rates, therefore lowering exports would contribute to minimizing subsequent loss this year" was proposed in consideration of current operations where OMRI is -500 cfs. Reclamation does not consider statements like that to be advice because they are self-obvious.
- SaMT will discuss Reclamation's scenarios for winter-run in their normal meeting
- CDFW noted that SWP ITP Condition of Approval 8.6.1 is based on the length-at-date (LAD) criteria, not genetics. While salvage of genetically confirmed winter-run has been much lower than LAD winter-run, the high salvage of fish of similar size to winter-run is an indication that winter-run are near the export facilities and at risk of entrainment.

Elevation Items

- Water operations for Steelhead, and
- Winter-run (SWP ITP Condition of Approval 8.6.1)

Action Items

- No action items.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, 3/27/2024, 1-1:50pm