

Salmon Monitoring Team (SaMT) Weekly Meeting

1/6/26 at 11:00 a.m.

Actions

- CDFW requested the SaMT notes include a record of the email exchange from DWR clarifying the First Flush triggers and operations the week of 12/29/2025.

The email exchange included clarifications on First Flush operations and OMR (Old and Middle River) flow targets during late December 2025 and early January 2026. Clarifications included:

- First Flush operations officially began on 12/25/2025, with both projects initially targeting -3,500 OMRI, but switched to -5,000 OMRI on 12/26 due to QWEST flows >10,000 cfs.
- The required trigger for operational change from -5,000 OMRI to -3,500 OMRI is two consecutive days of natural winter-run or spring-run Chinook salmon salvage during the -5,000 OMRI operational window starting 12/26.
 - Salvage occurred on 12/24–12/25, but these did not trigger the change because they were outside the -5,000 OMRI window.
 - Effective salvage dates were 12/26–12/27, which led to the SWP operating to its proportional share of -3,500 OMRI starting 12/29.
 - Given the timing of salvage reporting and CCF radial gate operation, the change in SWP operations to make the -3,500 OMRI response on 12/28.
- Both projects operated to -3,500 OMRI on 1/3 but returned to -5,000 OMRI on 1/4 when QWEST again exceeded 10,000 cfs.
- DWR provided the following initial written estimate of the total allowed exports at both the SWP and CVP facilities that would be required to meet the operational criteria as per COA 8.7.

	Total Allowed SWP and CVP Export to Meet	40% of Total Allowed Export	Actual CCFB Inflow
	Daily -3500 OMRI (cfs)	Daily (cfs)	Daily (cfs)
12/29/2025	5172	2069	1992
12/30/2025	4719	1888	1799

12/31/2025	4507	1803	1694
1/1/2026	4419	1768	1691
1/2/2026	5037	2015	1691

- CDFW (Crystal Rigby) will confirm and follow-up if any rotary screw traps are out on the Stanislaus River right now.
- CDFW (Crystal Rigby) will share the contact information for Gretchen Murphy and Steve Tsao with DWR (Brett Harvey) for information on genetic sampling of adults on the Tuolumne and its tributaries.
- Kearns & West will coordinate with DWR and Reclamation regarding the request for operators to read aloud the operations.
- CDFW (Crystal Rigby) will provide language to Kearns & West for WOMT regarding the upcoming Spring-run yearling surrogate release and agency approvals.

Participants

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- California Department of Water Resources (DWR)
- State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
- Kearns & West (K&W)

Welcome & Housekeeping

- No updates.

Meeting Summary

Updates on Biological Conditions

Biological Context

Relevant Actions & Triggers

- **Delta Cross Channel (DCC) Gate operations (PA 4.10.5.3):** Gates are currently closed.

- **Onset of OMR Management (PA 4.10.5.10.1, COA 8.3):** OMR Management for WY 2026 may begin in November, December, or January depending on what biological triggers are met. Due to First Flush (COA 8.3.1) being triggered on 12/23/25, OMR management Season has begun.
- **SWP ITP Winter-run Chinook Salmon Annual Loss Thresholds (COA 8.4.3):** DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with COA 8.4.3 of the ITP. These values will be based on the BY 2025 juvenile production estimate (JPE), which will be finalized in January 2026.
 - The natural-origin Winter-run Chinook salmon Annual Loss Threshold for this year is based on the initial length-at-date (LAD) identification of natural-origin older juvenile Chinook salmon and the thresholds described above. If genetic analysis of natural-origin older juvenile Chinook salmon observed in salvage at the SWP or CVP subsequently confirms that any given Chinook salmon is not genetically identified as a CHNWR that fish will not count towards the loss threshold. This threshold is loss of natural-origin winter-run Chinook salmon from the CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 0.5% of the winter-run Chinook salmon JPE (loss threshold = TBD). If cumulative loss of natural-origin CHNWR in a brood year exceeds 50% of the annual loss threshold (loss > TBD), then Permittee shall, in coordination with Reclamation, adjust south Delta exports to achieve a 7-day average of the OMR index no more negative than -3,500 cfs for 7 consecutive days. If a CHNWR is salvaged during the 7-day action, the action will be extended for another seven days. At the conclusion of the action, Permittee, in coordination with Reclamation shall revert to the weekly distributed loss threshold until the 75% threshold is reached or throughout the end of the OMR Management season. If the 75% loss threshold (loss > TBD) is exceeded AND the Winter-Run Chinook salmon Machine Learning Model predicts that an OMR index of -2,500 cfs would shift the model output to a classification of CHNWR absence with a minimum probability of absence prediction of 0.559 for 1 of 30 sub-models for any of the 7 most recent prediction days, then a 7-day average OMRI index of -2,500 cfs will be operated to for 7 consecutive days. Thereafter, each winter-run observed in salvage will trigger a 7-day OMR index of -2,500 cfs for 7 consecutive days IF the Winter-Run Chinook salmon Machine Learning Model predicts that an OMR index of -2,500 cfs would shift the model output to a classification of CHNWR absence with a minimum probability of absence prediction of 0.559 for 1 of 30 sub-models for any of the 7 most recent prediction days.
 - The hatchery-origin Chinook salmon Annual Loss Threshold for WY 2026 is loss of both LSNFH and Battle Creek clipped CWT winter-run Chinook salmon from the CVP and SWP greater than or equal to 0.12% of the winter-run Chinook salmon hatchery-origin JPE (loss ≥ TBD and loss > TBD, respectively). If the 50% and 75% thresholds are exceeded, the same process will occur as

what occurs for the natural-origin winter-run Chinook salmon (as discussed in above bullet).

- **SWP ITP Spring-run Chinook Salmon Protection Action and Surrogate Annual Loss Thresholds (COA 8.4.5):** From 1/1/26-6/30/26, DWR and Reclamation will operate Banks Pumping Plant and Jones Pumping Plant consistent with COA 8.4.4/PA 3.7.4.5.4 of the SWP ITP/CVP PA. These values are based on the product of the weekly percentage of natural-origin CHNWR present in the Delta, scaled to 100% (Table 4, Column E of the SWP ITP), and 50% of the natural-origin CHNWR annual loss threshold (COA 8.4.3/PA 3.7.4.5.3).
 - The weekly thresholds for the previous week and the upcoming weeks are provided below:
 - 1/1/26 - 1/7/26: 3.46
 - 1/8/26 - 1/14/26: N/A due to the JPE not being finalized
 - If the 7-day rolling sum of loss exceeds the above thresholds in any given week, the required response is to reduce SWP and CVP exports to reach an average OMR index of no more negative than -3,500 cfs for seven consecutive days. DWR and Reclamation shall restrict exports in response to initial LAD identification of natural-origin older juvenile Chinook salmon. If genetic analysis of an individual natural-origin older juvenile Chinook salmon observed in salvage at the SWP or CVP indicates that it is not a winter-run, that individual shall not count toward the loss threshold and continued export restrictions under the PA or COA are not required if the weekly loss threshold has consequently not been met.
- **SWP ITP Spring-run Chinook Salmon Protection Action and Surrogate Annual Loss Thresholds (COA 8.4.5):** From 10/1/2025–6/30/2026, DWR will operate Banks Pumping Plant consistent with COA 8.4.5 of the ITP. The ITP Hatchery Surrogate Loss Threshold for WY 2026 will include three late fall-run release groups from Coleman National Fish Hatchery (CNFH), and six spring-run release groups from either Feather River Fish Hatchery (FRFH) or CNFH. If cumulative loss from CVP and SWP is greater than 0.25% for any release group, the required response is to reduce SWP exports by its proportional share, according to COA 8.7, that would be required to reach an OMRI of -5,000 cfs for 7 consecutive days in November and December, or an OMRI of -3,500 cfs for 7 consecutive days if the action is exceeded from January-June.

Weekly Fish and Water Operations Outlook, Current Operations

- SaMT reviewed the Fish and Water Operations Outlook document.

Questions/Discussion on the Operations Review

- CDFW asked for clarification on the operational intent for CVP and SWP operations being expected to be implemented so that the 14-day average OMR will not be more negative than -5,000 cfs.
 - DWR responded that the operational intent is correct, however First Flush operations are what is being operated to currently.
- Reclamation clarified that JPF is an acronym for Jersey Point Flows and is specifically used for Smelt monitoring.
- CDFW requested an explanation for the Daily OMR range being decreased to -6,250 cfs for the week.
 - DWR explained that although this range is not likely for the next couple of days, it is possible that OMRI may decrease to -6,250 cfs due to storm flex.
- Reclamation shared that they are including data related to unclipped steelhead; however, there is no operational threshold for unclipped steelhead. There is a threshold for clipped steelhead, which is about 600 fish based on Coleman and Nimbus releases. Reclamation expects that number to change as the season goes on.

Part 3. Salvage Reports

- CDFW shared the weekly salvage report.
- Most unclipped fish are Fall-run sized with a few late-Fall-run sized.
- Hatchery fish are from the SCARF releases and some from the Coleman National Fish Hatchery releases in Nov/Dec 2025.
- The single hatchery Winter-run LAD has yet to have its coded wire tag read.
- Some wild and clipped steelhead have been observed.
- Three Spring-run surrogate yearlings were salvaged at the CVP; one having been salvaged on 1/3/2026 from Skinner needs to be genetically confirmed. The results will be shared when this is complete.
- No operational notes for the week.

Questions/Discussion

- No questions/discussion.

Part 4. Species Distribution

- Carcass surveys are still ongoing on the Stanislaus River for Fall-run Chinook. CDFW confirmed juvenile fall-run Chinook Salmon have been seen at the Calaveras RST and juvenile spring-run Chinook Salmon at the Tuolumne RST.

- It was noted that EBMUD has already been seeing fish in their rotary screw traps.
- Feather River Hatchery had a fall-run Chinook Salmon fry release week of 1/5/2026 which may affect salvage over the next few weeks.

Part 5. ITP Assessments

Spring-run Assessment

- DWR shared an updated version of the Spring-run Chinook Salmon Risk Assessment document.
- DWR noted that due to the new calendar year, the averaging period in the historical migration table distribution table on SacPAS has changed. DWR will continue to use the previous averaging period for the SR Assessment through the remainder of the season. Values in the assessment and on the Salmon Monitoring Team page may not be in agreement due to the difference in the averaging period.

Questions/Discussion

- CDFW asked why DWR believes that the genetically identified spring-run sized fish observed in salvage at the CVP over the past few weeks were San Joaquin origin, as opposed to what the genetic testing showed them as which was Feather River origin.
 - DWR explained that any fish that is salvaged and genetically identified as Feather River origin may be from the San Joaquin River Reintroduction Program because the program used Feather River brood stock.
 - RST data from the Tuolumne showed a spike in young-of-year SR out-migration and flows that preceded salvage by just a few days and preceded increased flows on the Sacramento River at Freeport. This, combined with the concurrent salvage of SJRRP releases, indicated that SJR basin fish were being salvaged at the CVP which supports the young-of-year SR that were observed were more than likely coming from the San Joaquin basin.
- DWR asked who is actively collecting genetic samples of adults on the Tuolumne?
 - CDFW recommended reaching out to CDFW staff members Gretchen Murphy and Steve Tsao who are knowledgeable about activities in that watershed and its tributaries.

Items to Raise to WOMT

- SaMT members reviewed the proposed third yearling surrogate release group and are requesting that this request be sent to WOMT for their consideration and approval.

- The 2024 SWP ITP COA 8.4.5 requires three late fall-run Chinook Salmon releases from Coleman National Fish Hatchery for yearling spring-run Chinook Salmon surrogates. The tentative release plan is as follows:
 - 1st surrogate release (~75k fish): ~3 days after a production release. Production release group went out on 11/17/25.
 - 2nd surrogate release (~75k fish): Late December, ideally preceding (by ~3-7 days) a precipitation event and at least a week after the previous surrogate release.
 - 3rd surrogate release (~75k): Mid-January, ideally preceding (by ~3-7 days) a precipitation event and at least a week after the previous surrogate release.
- **Surrogate release groups approved by WOMT on 11/14/25 and 12/17/25:**
 - 1st Surrogate Release: Release of ~70,000 fish occurred on 11/17/25.
 - 2nd Surrogate Release: Release of ~60,000 fish occurred on 12/22/25.
- **Surrogate release group not yet discussed and approved by WOMT:**
 - 3rd Surrogate Release: Release of ~75k by January 16, but ideally as soon as possible due to the precipitation event and since it has been at least a week after the previous surrogate release
- SaMT participants shared the following:
 - USFWS has no concerns
 - SWRCB has no concerns
 - CDFW is in support
 - DWR is in support
 - NMFS is in support

Next SaMT Meeting

- The next SaMT Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 1/13/26 from 11am-12pm.