

Delta Operations for Salmonids and Sturgeon (DOSS) Group

Conference call: 11/30/10, 9:00 a.m.

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 on 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.htm>

DWR: Angela Llaban, Mike Ford, Brian Schreier

FWS: Nick Hindman

NMFS: Barb Byrne, Barbara Rocco, Bruce Oppenheim, Jeff Stuart

DFG: Dan Kratville

Reclamation: Thuy Washburn, Josh Israel

SWRCB & EPA: not present

Agenda

- 1) Fish monitoring
- 2) Operations
- 3) Spring run surrogate releases
- 4) Other business

Fish Monitoring (11/22 to 11/29/10)

Knights Landing: no species of concern. It was not necessary to call the DCC gate operators to hold an emergency meeting. Things were quiet but we're seeing some fish in the upstream monitoring stations now. Water temperatures are down to about 48°F, which may have something to do with the lack of fish movement.

Tisdale & Moulton Weirs: Flows 7,000 cfs, Tisdale caught 3 winter-run and 1 late-fall run, Moulton caught 10 winter-run and no other species of concern

Mill & Deer Creeks: Ten spring-run yearlings caught on 11/29 (83–104mm) at the Mill Creek trap; only one or two over the past few weeks were caught, so this is a good sign that yearlings are beginning to move out of the tributaries.

Sacramento Trawl: 0 fish

Chippis Trawl: 1 late-fall Chinook (117mm) and one delta smelt

Mossdale Trawl: 0 fish

Seines: 2 spring-run Chinook, 5 winter-run Chinook, 1 late-fall run Chinook; One winter run at Elkhorn Slough on November 22, one winter run at Miller Park that was about 63-80 mm long, at Verona: 2 spring run (30, 36mm), and one winter run on November 26.

OMR flows: New gages and sensors are being installed. The USGS gages will be down for about 4–5 days. DWR will use other CDEC stations.

Salvage Data: No species of concern have shown up in salvage this week. They did get one or two splittail. Late report: two salmon (166 mm & 155 mm) in the daily report on Monday (11/29); probably late-fall Chinook

Operations: Central Valley Project

Sacramento River: Keswick releasing 5,800 cfs

American River at Nimbus Dam: Reclamation releasing 7,000 cfs now but will go down to 3,800 cfs tomorrow, and then back up to 7,000 cfs over the weekend. A few more pulses are being scheduled after this weekend.

Stanislaus River at Goodwin Dam: 200 cfs

Clear Creek at Whiskeytown Dam: 200 cfs

Forecast: Verona should be 17,000 cfs by December 4 with storm event coming. We are showing precipitation nearly every day beginning December 1 (Wednesday) through December 3 (Friday). We should get about ¼ inch of rain; it should then clear up after that for a few days; however, another storm is coming next week.

State Water Project

DCC Gates: The gates are currently open but will be closed tomorrow (12/1) as scheduled. Water quality is doing well so we'll be able to close with no issues. DOSS does not need to provide advice. Incoming precipitation events should freshen up the Delta as far as water quality. There is a storm heading our way on Wednesday and Thursday, which should produce a pretty good pulse.

Spring-Run Surrogate Release: We discussed this last week. Hatchery data were circulated so group should look at that and look at DWR summary of releases and what shows up at facilities. We had one release in December last year and one in January 2010. We combined two groups in the January release because, in previous years, we've gotten so few returns from the releases in November and December that we thought it would be better to combine two releases in January to get a better pulse of fish coming down. We exceeded the target of 0.5% slightly from the January released and were at 0.551%. By the time we found out, the fish had already gone through the Delta. The lag time for reading the tags is an issue. We had a few suggestions for getting more of a real-time tag process going; **action:** decided to use same releases as last year and defer real-time tag reporting to a separate mtg with Fish Facility staff (Bruce will follow up with hatchery staff and DWR)

There was a question about using the Feather River fish as surrogates. The releases need to be surrogates for "yearling" spring run; therefore, Coleman Hatchery late-fall Chinook have been used reliably because they are released in the upper Sacramento River where spring-run Chinook yearlings emigrate from Mill and Deer Creeks. Although Feather River Hatchery (FRH) spring-run Chinook are a listed stock in the ESU, it is not clear whether its release strategy or size fits

the characterization of a surrogate. DOSS decided that since FRH releases enter the Sacramento River so far downstream from the spring-run tribs (Mill, Deer, Antelope Cr) they would not encounter similar conditions.

Typically, the surrogates are tagged and clipped just before their release. Coleman hatchery tries to release both production and surrogate fish when there's a good storm event but must stagger them. We will most likely do what we did last year as far as timing of releases. It's good to keep surrogates separated from production fish so they don't comingle. Late-fall production fish tend to stimulate wild fish to in the river to move with them at the same time, including steelhead. We should stagger the releases between the two by 1–2 weeks.

Other Business:

- 1) Smelt Working Group meeting: The first meeting was yesterday. No delta smelt have yet been salvaged. The fall midwater trawl index is 11, which is higher than last year but not nearly what it has been in previous years.
- 2) WOMT: There is a WOMT call tentatively scheduled for this afternoon to discuss up-coming operations in December.
- 3) USGS Study: The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is conducting a new study called “The First Flush Study”. FWS sent NMFS a copy of the study to do a biological opinion (BO). NMFS issued a BO for winter run, spring run, and steelhead. Study will look at turbidity and the first flush event for delta smelt near the Rio Vista Coast Guard station; they believe that turbidity will influence movement. They are looking for lateral and longitudinal distribution (upstream and downstream points). Flows: triggered based on first significant flush coming down.

It might be early for delta smelt moving upstream right now. The smelt working group touched on it briefly yesterday; we have another call on Monday to see how things are progressing. We will check on the criteria for initiation of the study based on the BO. Historically, they have seen delta smelt this early but usually it's mid-December or later (adult spawners) before they show up. DFG will be scheduling people through February for this study. The study will run for 3 weeks, sampling every other day for 24 hours a day. USGS could have also done some salmonid studies at the same time, but they didn't coordinate with the salmonid folks to combine studies with them. We did detect some tidal and turbidity effects on Chinook with fish moving laterally and up and down with the tide. Salmon sort of hold in one area and circulate with the tide. Fish were recirculating back and forth with the tides and not moving down to the bay as presumed.

DOSS Advice for NMFS and WOMT: No advice this week

Next Meeting

Conference call: 12/7/10 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.