

Delta Operations for Salmonids and Sturgeon (DOSS) Group
Conference call: 12/6/11 at 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://www.swr.noaa.gov/ocap/doss.htm>

DWR: Angela Llaban, Mike Ford, Edmund Yu, Kevin Reece, Andy Chu, Tracy Pettit

FWS: Leigh Bartoo, Craig Anderson, Roger Guinea

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

Reclamation: Josh Israel, Russ Yaworsky

DFG: Robert Vincik

EPA, SWRCB: not present

Agenda

1. Fish monitoring
2. Current operations
3. Spring-run surrogate release timing from Coleman National Fish Hatchery (CNFH)
4. Information included in DOSS notes after the meeting

Action Item [11/15/11]

Evaluate the data from Mill and Deer Creek RSTs, Tisdale and Knights Landing RSTs and compare the timing of spring-run Chinook salmon migration captured by each data set. **Carry until we get Mill and Deer Creek data overview from DFG.**

Discussion:

No data have yet been received. Reclamation (Israel) asked DFG (Low) for any information but has not received anything. It would be helpful to have a summary table for 10 years of data, similar to that of the Tisdale RST. The NMFS BiOp RPA requires monitoring at Mill and Deer Creeks (Action 11.2.1.3). Also, there are some benefits to continuing to monitor the traps to evaluate spring-run-size fish.

Action Item [12/6/11]: Bruce will coordinate with Mike Berry at DFG to get data summary for Deer & Mill Creek RST and update DOSS next week.

Fish Monitoring: The following table presents fish monitoring data 11/30/11 through 12/5/11. Unless otherwise noted, reported sizes are fork length. See: <http://www.water.ca.gov/swp/operationscontrol/calfed/calfedmonitoring.cfm>

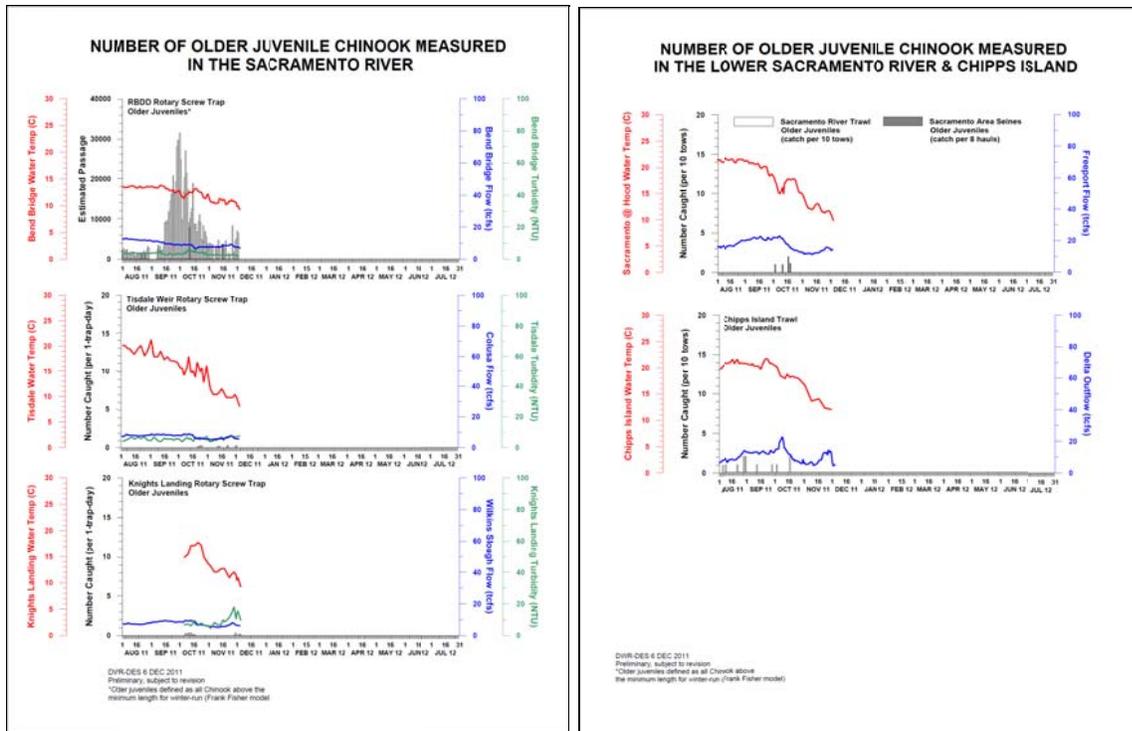
Location	Chippis Is. Midwater Trawl	Sacramento Kodiak Trawl	Mossdale Kodiak Trawl	Beach Seines	Knights Landing RST	Tisdale Weir RST
Sample Date	11/30	11/28, 30	11/28, 30	11/28–12/1	11/30, 12/1, 2, 5	11/30, 12/2, 12/5
Total Catch	3	0	0	1 (splittail)	2	2
FR						
WR					2	1 (12/2)
SR						1 (11/30)
Ad-Clipped Chinook						
DS	3 (59–61 mm)					
SH (ad-clip)						
SH (wild)						
W. Temp. (avg. °F)		52.0	52.3	52.2	51.3	49.3
Flows (avg. cfs)					6493	6,420
Turbidity (avg. NTU)					12.5	7.85
WR/LFR Avg. CPUE					0.11	0.086
FR/SR Avg. CPUE						0.083

Key: FR = Fall run; LFR = Late-fall run; SR = Spring run; WR = Winter run; SH = Steelhead; DS = Delta smelt; LFS = Longfin smelt; SPTL = Splittail, CPUE = catch per unit of effort, ACT = acoustical tag

Red Bluff Diversion Dam (RBDD): (See also bi-weekly report from USFWS 12/5/11 appended to these notes.) For juvenile salmon passage, currently, the most prominent race emigrating is the winter-run Chinook. Winter-run emigration levels peaked in October at the RBDD RSTs. The total to date for winter-run past the RBDD is 797,008. About 1,000–4,000 winter run/day are still coming through the RBDD reach of the Sacramento River but these numbers are decreasing.

NMFS is awaiting official data from DFG on the 2012 winter-run spawner escapement, and also working on a winter-run juvenile salmon production estimate (JPE). The Winter-Run Chinook Project Work Team will meet on Wednesday (12/7) to discuss and recommend changes to NMFS.

Below are the graphs prepared by DWR (Llaban) for the capture of older juvenile salmon in the Sacramento River and Chipps Island trawls.



Fish Salvage Data

No listed species were salvaged at either fish facility from 11/28 to 12/4/2011.

White sturgeon: White sturgeon were salvaged at the Federal facility (weekly expanded salvaged = 4) but not at the state facility; the season salvage total from 10/1 to present is 60.

Steelhead: There was 1 non-clipped steelhead (239 mm) salvaged at the state facility on 12/5 for an expanded salvage of 4. This is typical size for steelhead smolts captured at the facilities.

DFG (Aasen) will begin to send daily reports on Chinook to DOSS from now on. Steelhead density reporting begins January 1. The peak for steelhead salvage at the projects is during February/March. There are hatchery steelhead releases in February and the wild steelhead will tend to move downstream with them (“Pied Piper” effect). About 50% of the emigrating steelhead have moved through the Delta by early April and the rest by the end of April or early May. These fish seem to linger in the Delta; the facilities will pick up an occasional steelhead smolt in salvage during June, but these fish don’t appear to be moving out of the tributaries at this point in time. Export reductions at the projects are meant to protect the emigrating steelhead smolts from the San Joaquin basin while increasing the ratio of flows in the San Joaquin River (E/I ratio) will provide better conditions in the Delta for emigrating fish.

Operations (12/6/11)

SWP		CVP	
Exports (cfs)			
Clifton Court Forebay	6,680	Jones Pumping Plant	4,200
Reservoir releases (cfs)			
Feather - Oroville	5,500	American - Nimbus	2,000 (reduced from 2,250 this

			morning; will hold at that level throughout December)
		Sacramento - Keswick	5,400 (will be reduced tomorrow to 5,200 and to 5,000 on 12/8)
		Stanislaus - Goodwin	500 (will be maintained at this level)
Reservoir Storage (in TAF, % of capacity)			
San Luis (SWP)	936 (88)	San Luis (CVP)	849 (87)
Oroville	2,779 (79)	Shasta	3,151 (69)
		Folsom	468 (49)
		New Melones	1,966 (81)
Delta Operations			
DCC	Closed (12/1)	Sacramento River at Freeport (cfs)	14,714
Outflow Index (cfs)	3,800	San Joaquin River (cfs)	1,609
Total Delta Inflow (cfs)	16,988	OMR (daily) (CDEC)	-8,438
Water Temperature (°F)	49.1	OMR 5 day (CDEC)	-8,535
X2 (km)	79	OMR 14 day (CDEC)	-5,009
E/I	58.5%		

DOSS was asked whether data, such as that for operations or fish, added after the calls can be included in the notes. If there are any data that need “interpretation”, they will be discussed during the call; data that do not need interpretation or discussion will be included in the notes after the call.

DCC: DWR will begin to monitor water quality (WQ) closely with the incoming tide this weekend. Average outflow in November was close to 5,000 cfs; WQ concern will most likely begin in late December.

Officially, the Delta is declared as “in excess condition” now. Both projects are currently evaluating the criteria (i.e., storage management and the needs in the Delta) to go from excess to balanced conditions. There are uncertainties about whether the 4,500 cfs monthly outflow or salinity will be controlling the projects’ operations.

Weather forecast: Dry for at least the next 10 days. Long-term: no substantive storms are predicted for the next 90 days.

Oroville: Releases went up from 2,300 to 3,300 cfs on 12/1, to 4,500 cfs on 12/3, and to 5,500 cfs on 12/5 to meet Delta standards, and including exports, because the DFG spawning criteria ended November 30th. **See also DOSS notes from 11/29/11 conference call.**

Spring-run surrogate releases at CNFH: NMFS (Byrne) spoke with Kevin Niemela, FWS, about the release options (whether to use three separate releases and whether releases could be separated equally). Because of how the fish are tagged, we cannot split up groups (tag coding would be the same in each group) but we can do two releases of the same number of fish. We

can also do, for example, one release of two groups and another release of one group, or we can do three separate releases. No date is set yet for the production releases. . We would like to use the late-fall production release as surrogates and track them this year; however, we would plan to revise the RPA later, if this is viable. An analysis of the late-fall production releases recovered at the salvage facilities showed the January release exceeded the BiOp criteria (1%) in 2 out of 10 years (2003, 2004) when compared to the surrogate releases. We want to try to time the releases with the first storm pulse to more fully mimic the natural processes tied to weather events, as opposed to timing the release to the detection of spring-run sized fish at the Tisdale RST.

Now that the DCC gates are closed (as of December 1), there will most likely be fewer spring run fish exposed to the influence of the pumps. Spring run begin emigrating in December according to the Tisdale graph; half are counted by January. We should have a release in December. Because no rain is forecast for about 90 days, should we release in December or wait until a storm event to more mimic the natural process? It takes about 2 weeks for the hatchery to get ready with staffing, loading fish on the trucks, etc., and hatchery staff would like as much advance notice as possible. We could wait until the first storm and try to mimic “nature” or go with historical information of when they usually come out, which is December. The hatchery staff did not provide a specific schedule for releasing the late-fall production but indicated that there is usually a release between Thanksgiving and the end of December.

DOSS decided to wait another week to see whether the weather forecast changes in hopes of getting some rain. Most were in favor of mimicking the natural hydrology. One option was to give the hatchery a 1- to 3-week timeframe and leave it up to them to decide when to release. It was agreed to tell hatchery staff to schedule the first release between 12/19 and 12/23 to have a release in December. The exact date will be left to the hatchery, depending on the weather.

JPE: NMFS is also waiting for the official winter-run Chinook estimate on 2011 escapement. DFG (Low) will have finalized the upstream data and NMFS should have the information within 1 to 2 weeks. The adult escapement numbers are lower than last year; therefore, DOSS is anticipating a lower take limit at the pumps this year. Total incidental take last year was about 66% of what was permitted.

Smelt Working Group (SWG): The group did not meet this week (see 11/29/11 DOSS notes for discussion). A memo from Randall Baxter at DFG dated 11/29/11 to Carl Wilcox at DFG was sent regarding the fall midwater trawl (appended to these notes). All the POD species (delta smelt, longfin smelt, American shad, and striped bass) except threadfin shad are showing increasing abundance indices. The delta smelt summed September through November index (127) is the highest index since 2003. After December data are in, FWS should be able to calculate estimated take for the projects for the next 4 months.

Annual Review: The annual review report is scheduled to be released on Friday, 12/9/11.

DOSS advice to WOMT and NMFS: None

Next Meeting: December 13, 2011, at 9:00 a.m.