

Delta Smelt Working Group Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2005

Participating: Bruce Herbold (USEPA), Jim White (CDFG), Matt Nobriga (CDWR), Mike Chotkowski (USBR), Kevin Fleming (CDFG), Zach Hymanson (CBDA), Ryan Olah (USFWS), Gonzalo Castillo (USFWS), Victoria Poage (USFWS)

Agenda:

1. Debrief the February action
2. Discuss potential spring fish actions (spring HORB)
3. IEP "action plan" for delta smelt
4. IEP delta smelt review
5. Write-up on potential spring actions

Recommendation for WOMT:

The Group had no recommendations at this time; however, we will present a request for particle tracking modeling, to be done ASAP to aid in formulation of recommendations for spring actions.

1. Debrief of February action: On January 28 the DSWG met via conference call to discuss the elevated incidental take of pre-spawning adults at both export facilities (see notes from January 28, 2005). The DSWG recommended an export reduction to 1500 cfs combined for 7 days, to take effect as soon as possible, using EWA assets at both Projects. WOMT directed the implementation of 3000 cfs combined exports for 7 days, and after reviewing the available monitoring data on February 3, the DSWG recommended ramping up exports over three days. Daily incidental take declined from a peak of 153 (combined) on January 27 to zero by about the middle of February (as of today, cumulative take is 2,018. As a result of the February action, EWA incurred a debt to the SWP of about 35 TAF and to the CVP of about 14 TAF (plus 17 TAF of carryover debt from WY 2004). About 11 TAF of (b)(2) water may have been used at the CVP; this is a policy call that has not yet been finalized. EWA debt in San Luis Reservoir is presently "spilling" as the Projects fill their respective shares. It is not possible to accurately estimate the population-level effect of the February action.

2. Spring fish actions: The DSWG discussed the alternatives available for potential spring fish actions in the Delta: a pre-VAMP shoulder, VAMP both with and without the HORB, and post-VAMP shoulder. To date, the Spring Kodiak Survey has collected most adults on the Sacramento side of the Delta. Of the females caught in the most recent survey (12), about 30% were spent and another 60% were ready to spawn. Based on these results and consideration of Delta temperatures, it seems likely that most of the delta smelt will have spawned by April 1. Thus, the group thinks that a pre-VAMP action could provide a benefit for newly-hatched smelt larvae by decreasing larval entrainment losses. This year, flows on the San Joaquin River have been high, and could potentially lead to VAMP flows as high as 7000 cfs. However, in a dry hydrology, even

smelt hatched on the Sacramento side can be drawn toward the pumps. The group requests that particle tracking modeling be done to further inform our spring decision-making process. To this end, the DSWG created the following five paired PTM comparisons:

Pre-VAMP Apr. 1-14	VAMP Apr. 15-May 15	Post-VAMP May 16-31
Baseline vs. Vamp level of exports; particle release points in Cache Slough and Rio Vista	HORB in vs. HORB out; particle release points at Turner Cut and Franks Tract	Baseline vs. Vamp level of exports; particle release points at Turner Cut and Franks Tract
	Current CCF gate ops vs. 24-hour CCF gates open	HORB in vs. HORB out
Decision points:		
-if <10% difference in proportion of particles in Central Delta, then concern is low -if >30% difference, then concern is high	recommend not installing the HORB if there is a >30% difference in particle entrainment	if the HORB is in, recommend removal on May 15 if there is a >30% difference in particle entrainment

Jim White noted that, without the HORB in place, the VAMP export parameters may not apply.

3. IEP “action plan” for delta smelt: This topic follows up the discussion led by Ted Sommer at the January 13 meeting. So far, there is nothing to discuss. Bryan Manly, a consulting statistician, has been retained to independently analyze the data and either confirm or refute the apparent decline of Bay/Delta biota by looking at long-term trends or step-changes in the FMWT and the Bay Study. He will attempt to estimate the probability that 8 of 11 species showing a decline in 2002-2004 could be due to random chance. Gonzalo Castillo pointed out the need to carefully evaluate this probability as the condition(s) that led to this multiple species decline may persist in future years. The “G-8” will eventually produce a study plan but currently have no due date.

4. Delta smelt review by IEP: This will be done this year. Gonzalo Castillo is looking for input as to what would be appropriate to present at the SAG briefing.

5. Write-up on potential spring actions: Victoria Poage needs final review and comments ASAP in order to get the document to the WOMT/CalFed Ops group in a timely manner.

Action Items:

1. Victoria Poage will again bring the need for PTM to the attention of the WOMT.

2. Bruce Herbold will write up the PTM scenarios for pre-VAMP, VAMP and post-VAMP time periods.
3. Kevin Fleming will provide injection points based on data from Kodiak survey 12.
4. Matt Nobriga will discuss availability of input files and staff support with DWR staff.
5. Victoria Poage will re-circulate the write-up of potential spring actions for review and comment.

Next meeting time and place: Monday, March 28 from 1-4 pm at Cottage Way

Submitted,
VLP

One Attachment

Post-Delta Smelt Working Group Meeting
EWA Salmon Biologists Conference Call Notes

March 10, 2005

Participating: Sheila Greene (CDWR), Tracy Pettit (CDWR), Roger Guinee (USFWS), Nick Hindman (USFWS), Victoria Poage (USFWS)

Agenda: Brief the EWA Salmon Biologists on the outcomes of the DSWG meeting

Nick Hindman reported from the morning B2IT meeting that San Luis Reservoir is expected to physically fill within the next few days. The difference between a virtual fill and a physical fill is the SWP's surcharge into CVP storage and EWA debt (new and carry-over) to the CVP of approximately 31 TAF. Exports at the SWP are currently low, about 1000 cfs, and could continue at that rate until mid-next week.

Tracy Pettit reported that during the pre-VAMP period the SWP could be pumping about 7000 cfs, to meet demand. Projected VAMP operations are:

Hydrology	Flows	Exports
90%	4450	1500
50%	5700	2250

The HORB cannot be safely installed unless flows on the San Joaquin River are 5000 cfs or less. This could be problematic for the VAMP this year, as SJR flows were projected to remain high. As of the time of this call, there were no plans for a post-VAMP pulse flow on the Stanislaus River.

Victoria Poage told the salmon biologists that the DSWG had not been able to formulate a recommendation for a pre-VAMP shoulder, as monitoring to date had not provided strong indicators. Concern was still high because of the apparent low abundance indicated by the FMWT; however, few fish have been sampled subsequently and current distribution and abundance are uncertain. Spawning has apparently begun. The DSWG will ask DWR for several PTM runs and will meet again on March 28 to review them. This review, plus review of the latest monitoring data, will inform the DSWG's recommendation. The DSWG was aware that the salmon biologists had a vested interest in whether or not they recommend changes to the HORB, and regretted that they were not able to provide a recommendation at this time.