

Delta Smelt Working Group Meeting/Conference Call Minutes

March 6, 2006

Participating: Gonzalo Castillo (USFWS), Mike Chotkowski (USBR), Kevin Fleming (CDFG), Lenny Grimaldo (CDWR), Bruce Herbold (USEPA), Tracy Hinojosa (CDWR), Ann Lubas-Williams (USBR), Matt Nobriga (CDWR), Ted Sommer (CDWR), Jim White (CDFG) and Victoria Poage (USFWS, convener and scribe)

For Discussion:

1. Incidental take by the Projects has reached the concern level of 144
2. Ongoing discussion of VAMP recommendation

Recommendation for WOMT:

Because inflow is high and expected to increase due to the recent rains, pushing the export-to-inflow (E/I) ratio to 4.9% today, and because salvage patterns in recent years suggest that very little additional adult salvage is expected this year, the Working Group did not have a recommendation for WOMT for this week.

1. Cumulative salvage reached 144 adult delta smelt taken at the export facilities since December 1, triggering a meeting of the Delta Smelt Working Group. Points of discussion included:
 - The SWP expects to operate Clifton Court Forebay at 2500 cfs for the next few days, to reduce their surcharge into the CVP share of San Luis Reservoir. An exchange is occurring at O'Neill Forebay at a rate of approximately 4 TAF per day; at this rate, the Projects will need about 20 days to eliminate the surcharge. The 3-day export-to-inflow (E/I) ratio has been dropping over the last week or so and today is at 4.9%. Delta conditions have triggered X2 compliance at Port Chicago for 20-25 days in March; however, the Projects do not anticipate changes in operations for perhaps the next two weeks.
 - The supplemental Spring Kodiak Trawl (survey 12), conducted last week, collected 108 delta smelt at four stations in the ship channel and another 17 delta smelt at station 340 in the Napa River. Females outnumbered males by 66.4 to 32%; most were stage 3 or 4. In all, six Napa River stations were sampled but adults were collected only at the station closest to the river mouth. Discharge on the Napa River may have been a factor in the survey sampling.
 - It appears that there was a salvage event at the CVP (March 1-3), but it is likely over and, using previous years' salvage patterns as a guide, we don't expect much more adult salvage this year. The Working Group will continue to watch for sharp upturns in Delta water temperature, which may indicate that spawning has begun, and will monitor the condition of adults taken in salvage (this data is not yet available for the adults taken last week) and in routine survey sampling.

Since the Kodiak Trawl Survey has recently collected relatively good numbers of adults in the ship channel, the Working Group discussed the habitat conditions existing in that part of the Delta. The ship channel is turbid and deep and the banks are heavily

riprapped, and ships' passage, though relatively infrequent, may be problematic. However, there have also been good numbers of delta smelt seen in the Yolo Bypass this year. Implications for the population as a whole are unclear.

2. The season's continued cool weather may result in an abrupt warming of Delta temperatures and a highly punctuated spawning season beginning around the end of March. Based upon past years, we would expect to see indications of spawning by this time; however, based upon temperatures, we may not see appropriate conditions until the end of the month. Short spawning seasons result in the production of few cohorts, increasing the risk of catastrophic loss. If Delta temperatures warm abruptly, the Working Group may consider recommending that the VAMP period be moved forward in time, to provide protection for newly-hatched larvae that have not yet been detected in routine survey sampling. At the very least, the Working Group would not recommend that the VAMP period be pushed back in time, as it was last year. The Working Group will need to discuss the factors that would lead to a recommendation for a pre-VAMP shoulder to protect larval delta smelt at the next scheduled meeting on March 13.

Action Items:

1. All will give further thought to concerns that would trigger a recommendation for a pre-VAMP shoulder and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.
2. Bruce Herbold and Victoria Poage will attend the upcoming meeting of the San Joaquin River Agreement Management Group on Wednesday, March 8 in Modesto.

Next Scheduled Conference Call: Monday, March 13 at 3:00 pm.

Submitted,
VLP