

## Delta Smelt Working Group Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2005

Participating: Bruce Herbold (USEPA), Mike Chotkowski (USBR), Peter Johnsen (USFWS), Ryan Olah (USFWS), Ted Sommer (CDWR), Matt Nobriga (CDWR), Ryan Mayfield (CDFG), Mike Dege (CDFG), Kevin Fleming (CDFG), Gonzalo Castillo (USFWS), Jim White (CDFG) and Victoria Poage (USFWS, convener)

### Agenda:

Introduce Peter Johnsen (new to USFWS/Sac Field Office)

1. The FMWT thus far, and finalize the draft management brief; discussion of management implications
2. Brief discussion of preliminary findings from last week's POD PWT meeting, specifically, Herbold's analysis of winter salvage and Bennett's new data on fecundity
3. Very brief FYI on the addition of a "delta smelt recovery" page to the USFWS website; presentation on CDFG's DSRAM website

### Recommendation for WOMT:

See the attached Briefing Statement. There was no specific recommendation for action at this time. However, concern for the continued existence of delta smelt is extremely high.

### Handouts:

1. Draft management briefing paper (V. Poage)
  2. USFWS web page (V. Poage/R. Olah)
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1. The Recovery Index for 2005 is 4. The DSWG identified the need to make the point that the situation for delta smelt is dire; we are looking at losing the species. Most items in the Delta Smelt Action Plan won't take effect until after the preliminary POD recommendations are made, however, it was noted that some potential actions, such as the Pelagic Organisms Decline Account and EWA Decision-Making for Export Curtailment, could be implemented immediately. The DSWG will need to look at Modified Barrier Installation at the Head of Old River very soon to determine whether or not a recommendation is warranted for this spring. The question was raised as to how Article 21 deliveries are implemented, and whether or not they can be limited. Also, it may be desirable for CDFG and USFWS to initiate a joint press release explaining the importance of the low Recovery Index and outlining the management implications.
  2. Bruce Herbold reprised his presentation on November-through-March salvage patterns from the POD meeting last week in Davis. As winter exports have increased since 1999, delta smelt salvage has risen at the export facilities in terms of raw numbers, as well as numbers per acre-foot exported (density) and as a ratio of density to Fall Mid-Water Trawl indices. This observation holds for species other than delta smelt, including striped bass, inland silversides, longfin smelt, threadfin shad and

centrarchids. No theories are as yet attached to these observations; however, the management implication is that the observations represent a real relationship, until proven otherwise. A pivotal point is whether or not salvage of pre-spawning adults is the key to the decline of delta smelt and other species. Although problematic, good estimates of the delta smelt population and total entrainment losses by lifestage are needed to begin making this determination, along with information on other sources of mortality. Further phases of this investigation will look at the effects of Project operations, Delta hydrodynamics and fish behavior. The most significant fish entrainment events are expected to occur in January, thus the DSWG will focus its attention on that time period. Because of the urgency of the situation, the usual means available to the DSWG may not be adequate to deal with the level of export curtailment that may be recommended. It may be necessary to limit Article 21 deliveries in order to minimize the level of exports in January. The DSWG stressed that January export curtailments must not be construed as an experiment, or as an action with an expected outcome. January appears to be a time of increased impact, and the intent of recommended actions will be to protect pre-spawning delta smelt, a critical lifestage. A further reason for concern is that Bill Bennett has taken a new look at delta smelt fecundity, and the preliminary results indicate that fish are smaller and the relationship of egg number to body size is a steeper curve than previously thought, meaning that overall fecundity of wild fish has probably been overestimated. It may be appropriate to focus that use of whatever EWA and b(2) water is available on the January period.

3. CDFG and USFWS have been working on getting up-to-date information on the status of delta smelt posted to their web sites. USFWS has added a "delta smelt recovery" page that pulls information and documents on delta smelt status, OCAP and the Delta Smelt Working Group (including meeting notes) together in one place ([www.fws.gov/sacramento/es/delta\\_smelt.htm](http://www.fws.gov/sacramento/es/delta_smelt.htm)). CDFG is working on coding a self-updating version of the DSRAM that pulls in data including the Recovery Index, Delta water temperatures, salvage, X2 location, and distribution (centroid location). Data will be "clickable," to take the user to source data, and will be capable of generating graphs. The USFWS and the CDFG site, when ready, will be linked.

Next meeting: November 17, 10:00 am, at USFWS/Cottage Way, room T.B.A.

Action Items:

1. Investigate whether or not Article 21 deliveries can be limited, and if so, report back to the DSWG on procedures.

Submitted,  
VLP

One attachment (Briefing Statement dtd October 25, 2005)