

Delta Operations for Salmonids and Sturgeon (DOSS) Group

11/17/09 Tues conf. call 9:00 am

Objective of the DOSS group: Provide recommendations to WOMT and NMFS on measures to reduce adverse effects of Delta operations of the CVP and SWP to salmonids and green sturgeon and will coordinate the work of the other technical teams.

Meeting Objective: Review fish monitoring data and provide recommendation to the Water Operations Management Team (WOMT) as to triggers for Delta Cross Channel (DCC) gate closures in the NMFS 2009 OCAP biological opinion.

Attendees: Andy Chu, Mitch Goode & Carol Stroble (DWR), Thuy Washburn & John Hannon (USBR), Matt Nobriga (DFG), Nick Hindman & Roger Guinee (FWS), Bruce Oppenheim, Garwin Yip & Jeff Stuart (NMFS)

Agenda items:

- 1) DCC gate operations
- 2) Delta Action 8 study proposal (see attached)
- 3) review of last weeks notes
- 4) Thanksgiving schedule

Notes: FWS data (Sacramento Trawl and seine sites) were not available. For fish data at other monitoring sites, see:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/swp/operationscontrol/calfed/calfedmonitoring.cfm>. No salmonids or sturgeon have been reported salvaged at the fish salvage facilities since October 1st.

KL data since last week:

Date	Flow	W.Temp (F)	CPUE
11/09/09	3986	59	0
11/12/09	4068	57	0
11/15/09		55	0

1) DCC gate ops: The gates were closed last week from Thurs 11/12 to Friday 11/13 to help meet the Rio Vista Flow Standard. The gates are expected to be closed again this week on Thurs 11/19 for the same reason and possibly until the end of November unless there is a significant increase in precipitation. Rain is predicted this week on Weds and Friday, but not enough to significantly increase Sacramento River flow. Precipitation at Stockton also factors into the calculation for the Rio Vista flows because the rainfall volume at the Stockton Firehouse is used in the calculation of net Delta flows at Rio Vista.

Shasta releases are being reduced to conserve storage with the goal of being at 3250 cfs (minimum release) by the end of the month. Wilkins Slough flows are 4,000 cfs (just above the Feather River confluence). Export pumping in the Delta is 4,000 cfs.

2) Delta Action 8 Study: proposed DCC gates open Dec. 1 – 15.

NMFS (Garwin) is reviewing the study plan for approval; the DOSS needs to provide a biological rationale for BiOp exception to the DCC closure rule. The group's rationale is that DCC gates must be closed for half of the month of December. Further into December, the likelihood of significant salmonid presence in the vicinity of DCC increases. Thus, closing the DCC during the second two weeks of the month can generally be expected to be the most protective use of this operational flexibility. After Dec. 15, the DCC gates have to be closed to meet the 45 days of closure in December and January that is specified in SWRCB D-1641. The long-term benefits of the study were discussed such as improvement of in-reach survival estimates. Garwin noted we should not be comparing the benefits of the study to opening the gates, but how to best protect salmonids during the proposed opening.

Suggested criteria for gate study:

- a) use real-time ops based on weather, proportion of population pass gates
- b) if it stays dry wild fish are unlikely to move past the gates until after the experiment anyway
- c) only a small number of wild juveniles would be exposed to gates (dry hydrology)
- d) no significant flow increases are predicted in the next 2 weeks
- e) if fish show up at KL between Dec 1-15, use an agreed on number to close gates (2 day travel time from KL to DCC)

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DOSS decided Bruce O. to notify Pat Brandes (FWS) of possible criteria for gate closures during the proposed study and to invite her to the next conf. call to discuss criteria. Also, the gates may be closed during the study for the Rio Vista flow standard, which DOSS cannot over-ride.

3) review of last weeks notes: Several people provided comments, final notes were sent out 11/15. Jeff Stuart provided verbal comments on the method of assessing other NMFS required actions in the Delta. The salvage data has a high level of uncertainty for several reasons (*i.e.*, pre-screen loss to predation) and only provides information after fish have already arrived in the southern Delta at the facilities. Actions in response to the increase in salvage (e.g., OMR flow requirements), are designed to prevent further diversion of fish into the south delta region.

4) Thanksgiving schedule: A conference call was scheduled for Tues, 11/24 to discuss Dec. 1st gate opening for Delta Action 8. A meeting in person was identified for Dec. 1-15, possibly at NMFS office, downtown.

Other Items: Delta Smelt Working Group (DSWG), DOSS discussed the need to have NMFS involvement in the first meeting of this group in December. Jeff Stuart, will most likely be the NMFS contact person for the DSWG.

Garwin proposed moving the DOSS calls to Thurs because having DOSS on Tuesday morning, only allows a few hours before WOMT. NMFS management needs more time if a recommendation is necessary. Thurs would not work for real-time operations, since it would be 5 days before WOMT meets again (operational changes such as DCC gates closures usually take 3 days). Also, the DSWG meets Monday at 10:00 am. DOSS could meet on Monday but 3 people on the DSWG could not attend (Jeff, Matt, and Bruce H). Possible that Monday at 2 pm could work, gives 24 hr notice required in the NMFS BiOp to WOMT. Need to run by agency management.

Recommendation for the week of 11/15 – 11/21:

DOSS had no recommendation this week. DOSS does not anticipate any fishery problems arising from the proposed DCC closure on 11/19 in order to meet the Rio Vista Standard. DOSS thinks this action will not harm juvenile salmonids and will likely increase protection for those juvenile salmonids that remain in the area. Green sturgeon impacts from the action were not discussed.

Next Mtg: 11/24/09 at 9:00 am

Agenda items: Delta Action 8, and DOSS change to Monday