

California Department of Water Resources NEWS

California Department of Water Resources and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

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Rising Smelt Take at Delta Pumps Will affect Water Exports

Rising Delta smelt counts at Delta pumps have prompted agreement among an interagency group of government fish biologists and water project operators on a plan to moderate water exports over the next few days to reduce risk to the fish.

A State-federal agreement triggers such action when a certain number of the small fish are detected at the pumps which export water from the Delta.

Starting on Thursday, May 16, total water exports from the Delta will be limited to 3,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) through Monday, May 20. This is an amount lower than had been projected.

Meanwhile, fish biologists are assessing the situation and the plan will be reviewed on Monday.

The State Water Project (SWP) and the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) both export water from Delta plants. The State operates the State Water Project's Banks Pumping Plant near Clifton Court Forebay. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation operates the nearby Tracy Pumping Plant of the Central Valley Project.

Coordination of CVP and SWP operation is encouraged in the Delta Accord, the December 1994

agreement among State and federal agencies and environmental and water-user groups regarding Delta water use and quality.

State and federal water system operators, upon advice of the interagency operating group, can--and do--change pumping plant locations from one project to another and adjust pumping rates to help protect vulnerable fish populations, including the Delta smelt--tiny fish which inhabit the Delta--and salmon which migrate through it.

To protect outmigrating salmon from the San Joaquin River, exports for the period April 15-May 15 were held near 1,600 cfs.

These restrictions on pumping are expected to have no major near-term impacts on water supplies south of the Delta. Reductions in pumping currently occurring are intended to be made up later this year. In addition, San Luis Reservoir near Los Banos, the main Central California storage facility for the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project, is near capacity.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs. The State Water Project provides water to two-thirds of California's population.

The Bureau of Reclamation, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages the Federal Central Valley Project, a massive system of 20 dams and reservoirs as well as canals, powerplants, and other facilities. THE CVP provides irrigation and urban water, produces commercial power, and provides flood protection, fish and wildlife, waterfowl, recreational, and water quality benefits. Project features extend from the Cascade Range near Redding in the north to the plains along the Kern River near Bakersfield in the south. The CVP has capacity to store about 12 million acre-feet of water.

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