CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP
FEBRUARY 23, 2000 MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS

Review of January 26 meeting notes

No revisions were made to the January 26, 2000 CALFED Ops meeting notes.

Announcements

Work on the fishery standardize reporting form is still in progress.

The CALFED Ops website was announced and a screen print of the draft page was handed out for review and comments. The URL is

http://wwwoco.water.ca.gov/calfedops/index.html.

The page is not official yet and the address should not be widely circulated. The question was raised as to whether there would be a federal equivalent web page or a joint web page.

The CALFED Ops email reflector is still being worked on.

Interagency Ecological Program / Bay-Delta Modeling Forum Workshops at Asilomar (Feb. 29 – Mar. 3) were announced.

The current allocation for the SWP is 50% based on the February 1 forecasts, but an increase is anticipated based on wet conditions this month. On February 18, the CVP announced 50 % for agriculture users and 75% M&I and 100% for refuge and other water rights contractors south of the Delta.

The following handouts were provided at the meeting:

1. Screen print of draft CALFED Ops website page, DWR, Curtis Creel
2. State Water Resources Control Board Phase 8 of the Bay-Delta Water Right Hearing letter, February 17, 2000, SWRCB, Nick Wilcox
3. State Water Resources Control Board Notice of Public Workshop on Developing Key Issues for Phase 8 of the Bay-Delta Water Right Hearing, commencing March 27, 2000, SWRCB, Nick Wilcox
4. Designated Critical Habitat document, NMFS, Gary Stern
5. SWP Operations Package, DWR, Curtis Creel
6. Real time / Forecasting Activities , DWR
7. WY 2000 B2 Accounting Package
8. 90% and 50% Forecast Package, USBR
9. San Joaquin Hydrology Package, USBR
10. Summary of Potential (b)(2) Fish Actions for Oct 99 – Sep 2000 Water Year, February 18, 2000
11. Technical Consideration for Real Time Forecasting with Models in Support of Water Project Operations, DWR, Chris Enright

SWRCB

The SWRCB received petitions for reconsideration of D-1641 from 21 parties. The SWRCB will consider an order addressing the petitions at a closed Board Workshop on March 1, 2000. A draft order will be available for public review within a few days of the workshop, and will be considered for adoption at the March 15 Board Meeting.

The SWRCB sent a letter to interested parties on February 17, 2000, listing several important upcoming dates. DWR notified the SWRCB by the February 14 deadline that they had reached an agreement with the South Sutter Water District on Bay/Delta issues. The date for other parties to submit agreements was extended until March 21. A special session of Phase 8 of the Bay/Delta Water Right Hearing has been scheduled to begin April 11 to address the DWR/SSWD agreement. The general Phase 8 proceeding will begin June 6, 2000. Though a date for submittal of Phase 8 evidence and testimony has not yet been established, these items are likely to be due in early May.

The SWRCB issued a water right order on February 14, 2000 conditionally approving the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation temporary urgency petition to use the Banks Pumping Plant as a joint point of diversion. The order authorizes up to 194 TAF of joint point use. The Reclamation had requested approval of 244 TAF of joint point of diversion use. An objection to the petition was received from South Delta Water Agency. Among other things, SDWA contended that additional water taken under the petition would cause injury to water right holders within their agency. Accordingly, joint point use was limited to the amount of pumping that would have occurred under the base condition that showed DWR pumping an additional 194 TAF and storing the water in San Luis Reservoir because the Reclamation could utilize all of the available storage for CVP use. In accordance with Reclamation's request, the approval expires on April 15, 2000. The transmittal letter for the order informed Reclamation that the process established by D-1641 should be used for all future joint point requests.

Fishery Status

<u>Winter-run Chinook Salmon:</u>

Salvage data at both the Tracy and Skinner fish salvage facilities indicate that the yellow light level for winter-run chinook (2897 salmon in the winter-run size range) has been exceeded and there is concern that based on current salvage trends, the red light level (5794) might be reached by early March.

Few tissue samples were collected at the SWP from November through January, due to DFG staffing problems. Now, DWR fish facility staff has been working with DFG to collect tissues for genetic characterization.

Central Valley Steelhead:

In the last 2 weeks, 180 steelhead have been salvaged at the fish facilities, which represents a dramatic increase.

Delta Smelt:

The combined salvage of delta smelt at the project facilities was about 300 fish per day for the 14-day mean and had increased in recent days (the yellow light for delta smelt is a 14-day mean of 400 fish per day). Biologists believe the delta smelt being salvaged at this time are mature adults with some nearly ready to spawn.

Splittail: No report was made.

OPERATIONS

Fishery biologists recommended the projects decrease combined exports by 3,000 to 4,000 cfs for a period of at least one week as a protective measure for several species of fish (winter-run salmon, delta smelt, and steelhead). The export reduction preferred was a decrease in exports at Banks Pumping Plant where the salvage rates have been higher.

DWR and USBR agreed to voluntary decrease exports at Banks Pumping Plant from its current rate of about 9,000 cfs to 6,000 cfs. The curtailment was to begin as soon as practicable (which it did on February 24) and continue through March 1, 2000. While the curtailment is at the SWP pumping plant, it may actually reduce the amount of water that can be exported for the CVP (particularly the Cross Valley Canal contractors).

The purpose of the export reductions, as expressed by the biologists, is to avoid exceeding the red light incidental take level for winter-run salmon at this time or delay its potential exceedence until late March. Based on historical salvage data and current hydrology, the biologists believe the majority of the winter-run juveniles will have moved out of the Delta by the end of March and there will be less risk posed by export pumping to the fish at that time. NMFS acknowledged that reducing exports now would be taken into consideration if the red light level were exceeded later in the season.

Also, the USFWS said it recognized the potential benefit to young delta smelt production from an export curtailment at this time if incidental take of young-of-the-year delta smelt approached or somewhat exceeded concern levels later this year.

The USFWS, however, did qualify its statement by saying that no guarantees on USFWS actions to protect delta smelt later in the year, particularly if take greatly exceeds the incidental take levels contained in the delta smelt biological opinion.

Jason Peltier suggested a Memorandum of Understanding documenting the discussions leading to actions being considered for operations modification due to recent fishery concerns and any assurances agreed upon for voluntary actions. Enclosed is the subsequent letter from the Ops Group to the Water Operations Management Team documenting biological reasons for curtailing exports and the resulting decisions made regarding the proposed changes in exports.

The Delta smelt workgroup is scheduled to meet on February 25 to begin discussions of the increasing salvage and effects of export operations. In addition, the DAT and NNG teams will track the curtailment and the subsequent effects.

CVP/SWP Operations Status:

DWR achieved its goal of securing about 1,062,000 acre-feet of SWP storage in San Luis Reservoir on February 23; CVP storage in San Luis Reservoir totaled 700,000 acre-feet on February 23. On February 22, the SWP began wheeling Cross Valley Canal 1999 contract water that had been postponed because unused pumping capability at Banks Pumping Plant had not been available before that date. There are about 66,000 acre-feet of CVC 1999 water to be wheeled before the end of the USBR's contract year (February 29). The SWP direct water delivery demands have temporarily decreased due to the recent stormy weather. Current deliveries are about 3,500 cfs, but will likely increase unless the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California receive another series of storms.

Banks pumping has been about 9,000 cfs in order to fill SWP share of San Luis and to wheel CVC water. The SWP wheeling capability available for USBR use for CVC deliveries or Joint Point of Diversion pumping to fill the CVP share of San Luis Reservoir is equal to the difference between Banks exports and SWP's direct deliveries.

USBR is currently exporting the maximum it can at Tracy Pumping Plant (4,100 cfs is the maximum this time of year due to the capacity limitations in the Delta Mandate Canal).

Temporary Barriers:

The spring Head of Old River barrier is still in the permit processing phase. DWR is working closely with the Corps, and the fish agencies to secure Section 404 and 10 permits and a DFG Section 1601 Streambed Alteration Agreement. Both permits are expected by March 17. Temporary entry permits are being finalized with landowners and reclamation districts as well.

Agenda items for Next Meeting . . . March 22, 2000

Items not covered in this meeting due to a lack of time will be put to the top of the agenda for the next meeting.