

CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP
JANUARY 26, 2000 MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS

Review of December 8 meeting notes

No revisions were made to the December 8, 1999 CALFED Ops meeting notes.

Announcements

Ops Group E-mail Reflector:

Reclamation has taken the lead on developing an Ops Group e-mail reflector. The reflector will provide a means for Ops Group participants to receive up-to-date information regarding Ops Group activities. The reflector should be operational by the next meeting.

Ops Group Web Page:

DWR has taken the lead on developing an Ops Group web page. The web page will be operational by the next meeting and will provide access to current Ops Group notes, the agenda for the next meeting, and various documents that are relevant to Ops Group activities.

The following handouts were provided at the meeting:

1. State Water Resources Control Board Scheduling for Phase 8 of the Bay-Delta Water Right Hearing, January 25, 2000, SWRCB, Nick Wilcox
2. SWP Operations Package, DWR, John Leahigh
3. Preliminary drawings of Old River Temporary Spring Rock Barriers, DWR, Mark Holderman
4. ESA Proposed 4(d) Rules for Pacific Salmon and Steelhead, December 1999, NMFS, Michele Simpson
5. Letter from FWS to DWR concerning CVPIA, Section 3406 (b)2, January 25, 2000
6. Letter from South Delta Water Agency to USBR, SWRCB, and Engineering Associates regarding comments to petitions for temporary urgency permit change, January 24, 2000

Weather Briefing

Statewide, the average rainfall increased from 43% in December to 75% in January which is the result of a major improvement in the water picture between January 12 and January 25. The statewide snowpack was 66%; northern portion was 75%;

central portion was 66%; and southern portion is 56%. Under the worst case scenario, if the rest of the water year were dry, water year 2000 would become the 10th driest since records were kept beginning in 1922. However, this is an unlikely scenario.

SWRCB

The SWRCB adopted a Bay-Delta water right decision, D-1641, on December 29, 1999. Any person objecting to the decision may file petitions for reconsideration. Objections must be based on: a) irregularity in the proceeding, b) the decision is not supported by substantial evidence, c) there is relevant evidence which, in the exercise of reasonable diligence, could not have been produced, or d) an error in the application of the water code. The SWRCB expects a number of petitions will be filed by the January 28, 2000 deadline.

Several parties to the Bay-Delta Water Rights Hearing have recently been negotiating agreements to satisfy their responsibility for implementation of the 1995 Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. A request was received from one party that the SWRCB schedule a hearing prior to the commencement of a general Phase 8 to consider such agreements. Though the SWRCB encourages continued negotiation, a letter was sent to parties establishing February 14, 2000, as the final date to submit fully executed agreements. Agreements concluded after this date will be considered in Phase 8.

Parties were also informed in this letter that the SWRCB has set aside 23 days for hearings between March 27 and July 1. Therefore, either a special hearing to consider agreements or a general Phase 8 will begin in late March; a Supplemental Hearing Notice will be issued to parties in mid to late February.

On December 14, 1999, the USBR petitioned the SWRCB for a temporary urgency change of its water rights pursuant to Water Code Section 1435. Approval of the petition would allow the USBR to divert water under its rights at the SWP Banks Pumping Plant. The SWRCB circulated Public Notice of the petition on December 30, 1999. As temporary urgency change petitions are subject to CEQA, an Initial Study/ draft Negative Declaration was prepared and submitted to the State Clearinghouse on January 3, 2000. An objection to the petition and the environmental document was received from the South Delta Water Agency.

A Public Notice was issued by the SWRCB for the Yuba River hearing on December 21, 1999. Six days of hearing are scheduled between February 22 and March 9, 2000. Written testimony for this hearing is due January 28, 2000. The purpose of the hearing is to gather relevant new information relating to Yuba River

fish populations, river flow and water temperature requirements, diversion facilities, and the effects of proposed and recommended fishery protection measures on the use of water for non-fishery purposes.

Fishery Status

Central Valley Steelhead and Spring-run Chinook Salmon Draft Biological Opinion:

NMFS has distributed a draft biological opinion and is awaiting comments from USBR and DWR. The biological opinion addresses the proposed operation of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) during the period between December 1999, and March 2000, and its effects on Federally threatened Central Valley steelhead and threatened Central Valley spring-run chinook salmon pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The consultation addresses the upper Sacramento River, Clear Creek, Feather River, American River, Stanislaus River and the Delta. The draft biological opinion concludes that the proposed operations of the CVP and SWP between December 1999, and March 2000, are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of Central Valley spring-run chinook or Central Valley steelhead, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat for these species. However, some incidental take of steelhead and spring-run chinook salmon is anticipated. Draft terms and conditions for incidental take include:

- Ramping rates for key streams to minimize stranding of juvenile salmon and steelhead following flood control and temperature operations. The effected streams are Clear Creek, the Feather River, the American River, and the Stanislaus River.
- Fisheries monitoring for stranding and studies to develop long-term ramping rates for Clear Creek, the Feather River, and the Stanislaus River.
- Increasing flows in the low flow channel of the Feather River to provide additional spawning habitat for steelhead.

Minimizing the adverse effects associated with fisheries monitoring on steelhead in the Stanislaus River.

- Operating the Delta Cross Channel gates to provide the maximum protection to Sacramento River juvenile steelhead and spring-run chinook salmon.
- Minimizing the effects of Delta exports on juvenile steelhead and spring-run chinook salmon by curtailing pumping for short periods of time when fish are emigrating through the Delta.

- Collecting tissue samples from fish at the Delta salvage facilities for genetic analysis.

Winter-run Chinook Salmon:

NMFS has sent the winter-run juvenile production estimate to the Winter-run Satellite Project Work Team for review. NMFS expects to provide this estimate, along with the authorized level of incidental take of winter-run juveniles for the CVP and SWP pumping facilities for the period of October 1, 1999 through May 31, 2000, in a letter to Reclamation by February 4, 2000.

Central Valley Steelhead:

NMFS provided a handout regarding the "ESA Proposed 4(d) Rules for Pacific Salmon and Steelhead" which includes three proposed 4(d) rules. The proposed steelhead 4(d) rule is relevant to the Central Valley and is open to public comments until March 6, 2000. NMFS expects to finalize the rule by June 19, 2000. When this occurs, the ESA section 9 take prohibitions will apply to most actions carried out by state, tribal, government entities, and private parties that may "take" Federally threatened steelhead; exceptions are identified in the 4(d) rule. Additional information on the proposed 4(d) rules are available at the NMFS Northwest Region Web Site at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>. NMFS also announced that public hearings on the proposed steelhead 4(d) rule were taking place on January 26th in Sacramento and January 27th in Modesto.

Splittail: No report was made.

Delta Smelt:

No fishery agency report was made, but there was discussion that the number of delta smelt salvaged at the CVP and SWP facilities increased while the number of delta smelt sampled at the confluence has decreased. These were considered potential indications of upstream movement.

OPERATIONS

CVP/SWP Operations Status:

DWR and Reclamation declared excess conditions in the Delta on 1/20/00. Currently, inflow to Clifton Court Forebay is at the maximum allowed (about 6,680 cfs plus 1/3 of Vernalis flow). CVP pumping at Tracy is also at maximum. Outflow

is high in 50,000 cfs range. DWR has reduced releases to the Feather River to 1,750 cfs. Although the current hydrologic conditions are wet, DWR reported there is a risk that it may not be able to fill the SWP share of San Luis Reservoir if weather patterns change and the northern state dries out.

The CVP Trinity storage is less than 2 million acre-feet. Shasta is encroached into flood reservation and in response, Reclamation increased Keswick releases to 14,000 cfs. Inflow to Folsom reached an hourly high of about 40,000 cfs requiring releases to be increased to about 10,000 cfs. San Joaquin River flows have also increased due to last major storm, but are only at 50% of expected flow. The CVP share of San Luis Reservoir is 555 TAF; this is about 400 taf below its maximum. The latest set of studies completed by Reclamation indicate the CVP will not be able to fill its share of San Luis without assistance from the SWP.

Delta Operations Criteria:

The E/I ratio for February is 35% and X2 will have to be maintained downstream of Chipps Island for 28 days. The Delta Cross Channel gates are closed and will remain so until May 20 ,2000. Operations may be controlled by the X2 standard. The Suisun Marsh requirements could also be a factor since these standards are more stringent in February than other months during the year.

Joint Point Of Diversion:

Due to hydrologic conditions SWP will not be able to provide access to Banks pumping for the CVP until February at the earliest. Several uses of extra capacity at Banks have been identified include Interruptible Water, wheeling for the CVP Cross Valley Canal contractors, and wheeling of water for CVP storage in San Luis Reservoir.

Temporary Barriers:

The temporary barriers project is in the permit processing phase with the application currently with the USACE. New preliminary drawings of the redesign were provided showing the "year around" installation of the culvert sections. This redesign required a supplement to the biological assessment which was filed with the State Clearinghouse. Consultation is in process and expected to be concluded by mid-March. Installation is expected to begin in early or mid-April.

Operations Plan for WY 2000:

An overview of chronology of events last November and December was presented. The chronology was developed to provide an accounting of actions taken to protect emigrating spring-run and water quality in the Delta.

Data Assessment Team / No Name Group

At the last CALFED Ops meeting, the DAT presented several alternative recommendations for managing water quality and protecting spring-run through DCC gate operations and export changes. Action taken before and after the last Ops Group meeting have been well documented in the chronology discussed above. Managing for the competing objectives of water supply, water quality, and salmon protection proved difficult in December. As a result, several new triggers were developed to facilitate decision making for DCC gate operations. For example, biologists developed alternative criteria for yearling spring-run for this dry year. The criteria are used to identify when a pulse of yearling spring-run enter the Delta, triggering a DCC gate closure current with a b(2) related export reduction. The water project operators have developed water quality criteria to indicate when the DCC gates may be closed without jeopardizing water quality.

The DAT recommended increased monitoring over the weekend of 1/15 and 1/16 because a big storm was expected which would result in the fish criteria being trigger. The DAT and NNG held conference calls over the weekend. When fish were observed at key sampling sites, along with various environmental cues, the DAT recommended that the DCC gates be closed and that exports be reduced. In response, the Reclamation closed the DCC gates and implemented a b(2) export curtailment at the CVP Tracy pumping plant on January 16. Juvenile salmon continued to be observed throughout the third week of January prompting continued closure of the DCC gates and extension of the b(2) export reduction at Tracy.

Agenda items for Next Meeting . . . February 23, 2000