CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP
MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS
February 20, 2002

Announcements

Review of December 7 meeting notes

No comments were received.

Review of February 7 meeting notes

The meeting notes were inaccessible. Comments will be received at the March 27 CALFED Ops group meeting.

Welcome

Lowell Ploss replaced Dan Fults as the Project Administrator of the San Joaquin River Group.

Handouts

1. Update on Winter-Run Chinook Salmon and Steelhead and Spring-Run Chinook, dated February 20, 2002; Bruce Oppenheim, NMFS.
2. CALFED OPS GROUP Operations Briefing, dated February 20, 2002; Curtis Creel, DWR.
3. 90% and 50% Exceedence Forecasts for the San Joaquin River at Vernalis; Peggy Manza, USBR.
4. 90% and 50% Exceedence Forecasts for the B(2) Accounting with EWA, dated January 31, 2002; Paul Fujitani, USBR.

SWRCB Activities

Update on SWRCB activities

- The SWRCB has received the revised Water Level Response Plan for use of the Joint Point of Diversion and comments on the revised Plan from the South Delta Water Agency. The Executive Director will take these materials under consideration and draft a response. Two issues regarding the Plan were brought up by the south Delta diverters which are: (1) they feel they should be protected by the total export and not incrementally; and (2) the shifting of water from the summer to the spring for the fish hurts the diverters. It was mentioned that two earlier Plans were submitted, in 1998/1999 and in 2000/2001. It was then suggested that if the SDWA disagrees with the Director's decision, then they could petition the SWRCB. If a meeting with the Director were desired, then it would be an "open" meeting and would be before the SWRCB in a formal setting. There are clear provisions in the California Water Code for petitioning. The SWRCB has decided that the current Plan provides adequate protection for the water level in the Delta. Another issue arose regarding protection for senior water right holders. If they felt they weren't being protected, they should go through the proper process. The courts have jurisdiction over diverters. A study

on legal diverters was performed in the 1970's by the USBR. The results were that there was a patchwork of legal diverters and the amount of water illegally diverted is unknown.

- The SWRCB will hold an informational workshop on March 21, 2002, in which parties to the Phase 8 Settlement Agreement will describe their progress toward implementation of the Agreement. This is the second in a series of workshops that will be held during the lifetime of the Agreement.
- The SWRCB will hold a hearing in mid-June on the water right applications filed by the cities of Fairfield, Vacaville and Benicia. The applicants seek water rights to divert water using the North Bay Aqueduct's facilities based upon area-of-origin protections. The Department of Water Resources, the Contra Costa Water District and Environmental Defense are among the protestants to these applications.
- The files for the southern Delta water users who are believed to be in violation of Term 91 have been referred to the Water Rights Compliance Unit for appropriate action, including the administration of civil penalties. The water right holders may request a hearing on this matter.
- There will be a workshop on April 10, 2002, to receive comments on the recent report to the SWRCB by Joseph Sax. This report addresses the SWRCB's permitting authority over appropriations of groundwater and proposes certain changes in the criteria for diversions that would be subject to the SWRCB's jurisdiction. The report is posted on the SWRCB website at http:\\www.waterrights.ca.gov , then click on Hearings Programs, and then click on Special Projects.
- The letter regarding the relaxation of the E/I was received last week. The SWRCB has no objections.

On-going Activities Related to Ops Group

Update on Tools

The USBR is aggressively pursuing the Intertie and the lining repair, both of which may impact the south Delta. Santa Clara Valley Water District wanted San Luis Reservoir maintained at a 200 TAF by low point.

The USBR is working on the b(2) accounting and will determine how it affects EWA. Also, the methods of using JPOD are being evaluated.

The possibility of surcharging San Luis Reservoir is still being considered. The question of whether the water level would be at the brim of the spillway or store in the SWP share arose. The priority established in the 2002 Interim Protocols for the Operation of the Environmental Water Account would be followed.

The February 4, 2002 forecast included the following tools in determining the CVP allocation: lining repair, surcharging San Luis Reservoir (approximately 8 to 10 TAF), and the efficient use of operations in dealing with CVP demands and rescheduled water. One of the tools not included in the forecast is the wheeling.

In May or June, if demands are lower than projected, then the SWP operations could be refined such that the contractors get more. The issue of what the SWP can commit to (conveyance capacity or storage) still needs to be determined.

Water Level Response Plan

The status of the water level response plan was discussed (see SWRCB Activities).

ESA Assurance/Tier 3

As a result of the recent federal court decision on b(2) accounting, the Project and Management Agencies are re-evaluating the baseline conditions as set forth in the CALFED Record of Decision. Tier 1 is functional, however, the court decision impacts the amount of water available under Tier 1. Tier 2 includes an operating EWA that consists of the variable assets, 185 TAF of fixed assets, 100 TAF of source shifting, and 100 TAF of stored water for backstopping EWA actions as needed. Protocols have been developed for Tier 3.

The EWA protocols will address functionality. A discussion of the Tier 3 Protocols occurred at the Ops Group meeting. The primary issue raised addressed the need for all EWA assets to be exhausted before triggering use of Tier 3 assets. The Project and Management Agencies will discuss this further to ensure that was the intent of the protocol.

Communication with Stakeholders

The issue is that Information is coming to the management level from staff and decisions are made at WOMT that may have impacts with broad implications. The Project Agencies provide summaries of decisions made at WOMT via email. It was suggested that R. Denton schedule an OFF call with representatives from the Agencies to discuss input and the rationale for major decisions made at WOMT. If the decision is minor, then an OFF call is not necessary. A suggestion was made to continue discussions at the DAT/OFF level prior to the WOMT meetings on Tuesday. This will continue to provide stakeholders with a forum for input to the WOMT. It was also suggested that the Management Agencies give notice to have an OFF call if there is an issue with fish. If a potential problem exists, it would be beneficial to be notified earlier.

EWA Strategy for 2002

During dry periods when SWP allocations are relatively low, south-of-Delta water users would be using their own resources to meet demands and would not be able to provide access much to groundwater for the EWA. During wet periods when SWP allocations are relatively high, very little pumping capacity would be available to move EWA assets from sources upstream of the Delta. Thus, the acquisition strategy for the EWA is to purchase options for water both upstream and south of the Delta. During dry periods, the EWA will exercise its option upstream of the Delta and utilize excess SWP pumping capacity to move the water. During wet periods, it will purchase additional EWA from

south-of-Delta interests. Source shifting would be used as needed to avoid low point concerns at San Luis Reservoir resulting from EWA actions.

February 5 Court Decision regarding b(2)

The offset/reset mechanism was ruled inappropriate. The b(2) accounting was redone beginning with the February forecast. The use of offset/reset was discontinued in the February CVP operations. There aren't any credits for offset or reset in the earlier forecasts. The model is more sensitive by the daily operations than it is by the monthly operations, however, the daily forecast may not be needed. The base case operations are now different, but how different and how to get a reasonable comparison is difficult to determine. Determining the Water Quality Control Plan (WQCP) costs have not yet been performed. The February forecast will be posted on the website. Reclamation will try to include the comparison tables. It is working on obtaining 800 TAF this week. Two VAMP questions arose which are: (1) is VAMP under the WQCP, and (2) can b(2) be used. These questions were not answered. It was decided to take care of the CVP VAMP costs first. Approximately 600 TAF is available between February and September. The potential actions lost due to the February 5 court decision are as follows: (1) shoulders on VAMP (which would extend the export reductions beyond the 30-day period), (2) a June placeholder for ramping, and (3) any upstream actions (which depend on hydrology). It was also determined that the monthly accounting for the base flows in the Sacramento or American Rivers is not useful and may have to change to a daily accounting. Reclamation though has an idea of what is the base case. The base case will be according to the WQCP in measuring b(2). Input regarding assumptions is needed from the stakeholders. A discussion on the base case followed.

A meeting with Bennett Raley and Mary Nichols is scheduled on March 11, 2002 to discuss operations and the February 5 court decision. All CALFED agencies will be involved. The focus of the meeting is to address whether (1) the 15 percent increase in south-of-Delta CVP agricultural allocations established by CALFED can be achieved, and (2) whether sufficient assets exist to provide adequate protection for fish and allow for ESA commitments.

The short term accounting effects need to be addressed quickly. The long term accounting effects can be discussed in the b(2) IT meetings. A stakeholder meeting at the end of March regarding b(2) accounting was suggested, but was not formalized. The court decision does not permit the b(2) to behave similar to EWA.

An OFF Call is scheduled for February 25, 2002 at 3:30 to receive feedback on the b(2) changes resulting from the court decision and to discuss the Tier 3 protocols.

A Bay Delta Forum is scheduled for March 12, 2002 and will be open to the public. A CALFED Policy Group meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2002 and will be closed.

Work Group Activities

OFF and DAT Update

There have not been any DAT calls since the last CALFED meeting. The DAT calls are continuing and lately the discussion has been about whether the E/I ratio should be relaxed.

Fishery Status

Status of Sacramento River Monitoring

Salmon are scarce in the Sacramento River and at both export facilities. There have been a few untagged salmon salvaged.

Steelhead, Winter-Run and Spring-Run Chinook Salmon

The NMFS are working with CDFG on the Juvenile Production Estimate (JPE) and should have it out in a couple of days. The preliminary range for the incidental take limit (2% red-light level) is between 37,000 and 39,000. There weren't any hatchery winter-run size salmon at the export facilities. The fish's location is unknown. They may come out when flows increase. CWT has been found in the southern Delta.

Reclamation is having difficulty meeting the Vernalis flow standard contained in D-1641. Reclamation has increased release from Goodwin Reservoir to at least target the minimum 7-day running average flow. The Management Agencies expressed three concerns about the Vernalis flow. The first concern was that they hoped that the criteria could be relaxed. The SWRCB may not be able to relax the criteria, but then it was suggested that if a best faith effort was shown, then it might be satisfactory. Both the second and third concerns were about the flow. Flow fluctuations may allow the steelhead adults to be stranded at 1,500 cfs. Decreasing the flows affect the rearing habitat for the steelheads.

Splittail/Delta Smelt

The deadline for accepting comments on listing the Sacramento splittail in the federal registry is October 15, 2002.

The smelt's distribution has been around Montezuma Slough and Jersey Point. Smelt have not been found in the southern Delta.

Operations Status

CVP/SWP Operations Status

Refer to the briefing package for information. There wasn't any time for a discussion.

Delta Operations Criteria

Refer to the briefing package for information. There wasn't any time for a discussion.

VAMP

The operations forecast was submitted to the San Joaquin River Group (SJRG) as official. The deadline was February 15, 2002. The flow target is based upon the flow estimated in the San Joaquin system between April 15 and May 15 in the absence of VAMP. It appears this year will be a "single step" year. The next hydrology meeting is March 13, 2002. There will be a joint hydrology and biology meeting on March 28, 2002.

Vernalis Flow Criteria

New Melones releases have increased from 275 to 525 cfs. A question about whether these releases are necessary or justified arose. It was addressed at the previous week's DAT call. The Delta Smelt Workgroup is aware that the Vernalis flow requirement of 2,280 cfs is not being met. The flow requirement is in Water Rights Decision 1641. The biological opinion also includes this requirement in the project description. The USBR in its Hearings stated that they couldn't meet the Vernalis requirement in all situations.

A letter has been written to SWRCB regarding the Vernalis flow requirement. A question on the flexibility of meeting the requirement if the requirement could not be met arose. A higher standard exists west of Chipps Island which can trigger the 2,280-cfs flow requirement. The 7-day average is approximately 1,900 cfs. The biological opinion states that 80% can be met which would be 1,824 cfs.

Three alternatives have been defined for reducing the impacts on New Melones Reservoir storage: (1) make releases from San Luis Reservoir, (2) "buy back" 15 TAF of water committed to Oakdale Irrigation District (OID) or South San Joaquin District (SSJ) for this year, and (3) reduce flows. The first alternative is not feasible this year due to the amount of environmental documentation that would have to be completed. The second alternative does not change the storage condition in the reservoir since the water usually is not used until Fall. Alternative 3 is being worked on by Reclamation and USFWS. The February end-of-month storage affects water quality, fish and CVP contracts. A question arose about how the hole in New Melones would be filled if releases were not made and the adjusted value was used. This could jeopardize the reservoir next year. Another issue is the Stanislaus flow. If releases were not made

from upstream reservoirs, and there were zero flow in the San Joaquin River, then OID takes a portion of the river flow which would affect fish and the water users.

Action Items

- Trash on the screens of the culverts at the HOR barriers. The south Delta diverters want to have the problem fixed.
- Link to the website was not working.
- Revisit the Tier 3 protocols to ensure the Management and Project Agencies intend for them to be as specific as they are in the draft.
- OFF Call scheduled on February 25, 2002
- Post the current b(2) accounting on website.
- The Project Agencies will initiate an OFF call when major decisions are made.