

SMELT WORKING GROUP
Thursday, February 4, 2010

Recommendation for the remainder of the week of February 1, 2010:

No recommendation at this time because the criteria for implementing Action 1 have not been met. The Working Group will meet again via conference call on Monday, February 8.

Summary:

The FWS convened a special mid-week conference of the SWG following the salvage of an adult delta smelt at the CVP on Wednesday February 3rd. The FWS sought advice from the SWG on whether any action was necessary to protect delta smelt.

The evidence suggests that the peak of the first flush had likely passed and that the system is now on the declining limb. The objective of Action 1 is to provide protection to adult delta smelt during the early part of their spawning migration, which is thought to occur at or before peak pulse flows. The Service will determine the appropriateness of protective measures under Actions 1a or 1b, considering that the time period for these actions has passed.

1. Current Environmental Data

Turbidity data for the three criterion stations is:

HOL	16.2 NTU @ 5 am	three-day average 15.66 NTU
PPT	31.6 NTU @ 6 am	three-day average 37.20 NTU
VCU	7.0 NTU @ 5 am	three-day average 7.20 NTU

A 400 cfs pulse flow on the Stanislaus should reach the Delta soon; the Bureau will begin releasing 1000 cfs on the Stanislaus to keep Vernalis at 2280 cfs. Combined exports are currently at about 7500 cfs and daily OMR is at about -5400 cfs. The NMFS biological opinion is presently controlling OMR flows at no more negative than -5000 cfs.

2. Survey Data

The most recent full SKT data was reviewed by the Working Group on January 19. The results of Supplemental Survey 11, conducted January 27-28, were available. 225 delta smelt were collected in 25 of 31 tows; of these, 87 were male, 134 were female and 4 were undetermined. All sampling was conducted at a single station on the lower Sacramento River at Decker Island, near channel marker 17.

3. Discussion

Aside from the adult delta smelt salvaged at the CVP on Feb 3rd, Delta conditions were generally unchanged from the previous SWG meeting 3 days prior.

The SWG felt that the available flow and turbidity data suggested that the first flush had already occurred in the delta. There was some concern that the turbidity criterion associated with Action 1b in the B.O. may be ineffective at identifying the early stages of the first flush because the Victoria Canal station may not be an appropriate monitoring location. The objective of Action 1

is to provide protection to adult delta smelt during the early part of their spawning migration, which is thought to occur at or before peak pulse flows. The SWG may in the future provide advice to FWS on how to better define the onset of the first flush and the appropriate monitoring data required to detect it. The presence of native fish in DWR sampling and salvage of a delta smelt at the CVP indicate that fish are indeed moving in the system

The distribution of delta smelt ascertained from monitoring data, together with the salvaged adult, suggest that upstream migration has started. Aside from the single salvaged individual, no delta smelt have been detected at any sampling stations between Decker Island and the south Delta export facilities.

The Working Group concluded that under present Delta conditions, entrainment risk is likely low. The Working Group will continue to monitor Delta conditions, salvage, and survey data.

The next meeting of the Working Group will be Monday, February 8 at 10:00 am via conference call.