

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
UPDATE ON NMFS DRAFT BIOLOGICAL OPINION FOR
CALIFORNIA WATER PROJECTS AND WINTER RUN CHINOOK FISHERIES

The Habitat Committee (HC) received an update on the status of the Biological Opinion on the Central Valley Project and State Water Project Operations Criteria and Plan (OCAP). The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued a draft biological opinion in December of 2008 which concluded that the OCAP is not likely to adversely affect Central California Coast steelhead and their designated critical habitat; however the OCAP is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of, and destroy or adversely modify critical habitat for, Sacramento River winter Chinook, Central Valley spring Chinook, Central Valley steelhead, and Southern distinct population segment of North American green sturgeon. The draft Opinion did not reach a conclusion on the effects of the OCAP on Southern resident killer whales, as that consultation was ongoing.

The HC would like to encourage the Council to forward the work group report on the Sacramento River fall Chinook stock collapse to NMFS Southwest Region staff as a resource in developing the final Biological Opinion.

Among the issues the HC discussed in relation to this Biological Opinion were mitigation, monitoring and evaluation of funding responsibilities as potentially part of reasonable and prudent alternatives or conservation recommendations. Given information in the report on the Sacramento River fall Chinook stock collapse regarding the role of anthropogenic effects on freshwater habitat and shallow water rearing habitat in the Bay-Delta, increased attention should be given to mitigation and restoration of these habitats.

PFMC
04/05/09