

CENTRAL VALLEY ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT BIOLOGICAL OPINION AND SACRAMENTO RIVER FALL CHINOOK STOCK COLLAPSE

California Water Projects

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued a biological opinion and conference opinion (Opinion) on June 4, 2009 to determine whether the Central Valley Project and State Water Project Operations Criteria and Plan (OCAP), as proposed by the Bureau of Reclamation, are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the following populations listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA):

- Sacramento River winter Chinook
- Central Valley spring Chinook
- Central Valley steelhead
- Central California Coast steelhead
- Southern Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of North American green sturgeon
- Southern Resident killer whales.

The Opinion also determines if the actions proposed under the OCAP will destroy or adversely modify the designated critical habitat of the listed salmon and steelhead species, or proposed critical habitat for the Southern DPS of green sturgeon.

The Opinion 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, the Southern DPS of North American green sturgeon, and Southern Resident killer whales.

The Opinion included sections on reasonable and prudent alternatives (RPA), amount of incidental take expected, and conservation recommendations. A news release (Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 1) provides a brief overview of the findings and the executive summary (Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 2) lists the RPA. The Opinion also included a section on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) conservation consultation affecting primarily fall and late-fall run Chinook salmon (Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 4). The complete Opinion is available on the Council Briefing Book CD (Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 4).

Ms. Maria Rea, from NMFS Protected Resources Division in Sacramento, will provide an update on the OCAP Opinion.

Sacramento River Fall Chinook Stock Collapse

Following Council discussion at the April 2009 Council meeting regarding the collapse of the Sacramento River fall Chinook stock, a letter was sent to NOAA Administrator, Dr. Jane Lubchenco, summarizing recommendations for optimizing salmon production from California River systems (Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 5).

Council Task:

Receive information and discuss implications.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 1: News Release Regarding the Biological Opinion on the Long-Term Central Valley Project and State Water Project Operations Criteria and Plan.
2. Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 2: Executive Summary of the Biological Opinion on the Long-Term Central Valley Project and State Water Project Operations Criteria and Plan.
3. Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 3: Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Consultation
4. Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 4: Biological Opinion on the Long-Term Central Valley Project and State Water Project Operations Criteria and Plan **(on CD only)**.
5. Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 5: Letter to Dr. Jane Lubchenco recommending steps to optimize California salmon Production.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Report on Biological Opinion
- c. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. Council Discussion

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PFMC
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